



Proceedings of the 2006 Weinberg Founders Conference

Strategies for the Multifront War against Radical Islamists

SEPTEMBER 15–17, 2006



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THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY
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EDITOR'S NOTE

These conference proceedings include summaries of presentations and panel discussions. The summaries should not be cited as actual transcripts of speaker remarks. The presentation made by keynote speaker Philip Zelikow is included as an edited transcript and may be cited as such.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| PREFACE | IX |
| THE SPEAKERS | XI |
| BUILDING SECURITY IN THE BROADER MIDDLE EAST | I |
| EDITED TRANSCRIPT | |
| Philip Zelikow <i>Counselor to the State Department</i> | |
| REGIONAL SECURITY IN THE WAKE OF THE ISRAEL- HIZBALLAH WAR | 13 |
| RAPPORTEUR'S SUMMARY | |
| Ephraim Sneh <i>Head of Labor Party faction, Israeli parliament</i> | |
| Horst Freitag* <i>Middle East director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Germany</i> | |
| Kristen Silverberg* <i>Assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs</i> | |
| LEBANON, BEFORE AND AFTER THE ISRAEL-HIZBALLAH WAR | 19 |
| RAPPORTEUR'S SUMMARY | |
| Jamil Mroue <i>Editor-in-chief, Daily Star (Beirut)</i> | |
| Misbah al-Ahdab <i>Member, Lebanese parliament</i> | |
| COUNTERING ISLAMISTS AT THE BALLOT BOX: ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES | 25 |
| RAPPORTEUR'S SUMMARY | |
| Soner Cagaptay <i>Director, Turkish Research Program, The Washington Institute</i> | |

*Speaker's remarks were off the record.

F. Gregory Gause III
Director, Middle East Studies Program, University of Vermont

Mona Makram-Ebeid
Former member, Egyptian parliament

IN THE ERA OF HAMAS: ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN AND ISRAELI-ARAB RELATIONS

31

RAPPORTEUR'S SUMMARY

David Makovsky
*Director, Project on the Middle East Peace Process, The Washington
Institute*

Mohammed Yaghi
Columnist, al-Ayyam

Uzi Dayan
Former national security advisor, Israel

Hassan Barari
*Former coordinator, Israeli Studies Unit, Center for Strategic Studies,
University of Jordan*

IRAQ: CIVIL WAR, THE MALIKI GOVERNMENT, AND U.S. STRATEGY

37

RAPPORTEUR'S SUMMARY

Jeffrey White
Berrie defense fellow, The Washington Institute

Eric Davis
Professor, Rutgers University

Peter Galbraith
Author, The End of Iraq

THE RISE OF SHIITE POLITICS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

43

RAPPORTEUR'S SUMMARY

Kassem Jaafar
Former Middle East and defense correspondent, BBC

Mehdi Khalaji
Next Generation fellow, The Washington Institute

Martin Kramer
Wexler-Fromer fellow, The Washington Institute

| | |
|---|----|
| ISRAEL: WAR AND CONSEQUENCES | 49 |
| RAPPORTEUR'S SUMMARY | |
| Uzi Arad | |
| <i>Head of the Institute for Policy and Strategy, Lauder School of Government, Strategy, and Diplomacy, Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya</i> | |
| Uzi Dayan | |
| <i>Former national security advisor, Israel</i> | |
| Ephraim Sneh | |
| <i>Head of Labor Party faction, Israeli parliament</i> | |
| JIHADIST THREATS TO THE WEST, IN THE WEST | 55 |
| RAPPORTEUR'S SUMMARY | |
| Frank Cilluffo | |
| <i>Director, Homeland Security Policy Institute, George Washington University</i> | |
| Ronald Sandee | |
| <i>Executive director, Nine Eleven/Finding Answers (NEFA) Foundation</i> | |
| DEALING WITH IRAN'S NUCLEAR AMBITIONS, POST-LEBANON | 61 |
| RAPPORTEUR'S SUMMARY | |
| Shahram Chubin | |
| <i>Director of studies, International Training Course, Geneva Centre for Security Policy</i> | |
| Gary Samore | |
| <i>Director of studies, Council on Foreign Relations</i> | |

Preface

VIRTUALLY NO CORNER of the world remains immune to the threat of radical Islamists. Africa, Asia, Europe, the two Americas—in different ways, using different means, and operating under different guises, jihadists of various stripes have waged war against “infidels” (America, Israel, the West) and “apostates” (non-Islamist Muslims) around the globe.

In some respects, the radicals are in ascendance. The summer war between Israel and Hizballah may have left the militia-cum-terrorist group battered and bloodied, but the star of its leader has risen, at least in the currency of the Arab media and what passes for Arab public opinion. The successes of Islamists in a handful of recent Arab elections have tempered with caution the voices of democracy advocates around the region, while giving Arab autocrats an excuse to grip the reins of power even more tightly. Perhaps most important, the messianic leadership in Iran—emboldened by recent events—appears bent on pursuing a policy of brinkmanship, including its quest for nuclear-weapons capability.

But in this still-emerging conflict, there is some heartening news. Leaders around the world have recognized Hizballah as the aggressor in this summer’s hostilities, and have also understood that the Lebanon conflict was a proxy contest for the larger battle between Iran and the West. In Arab and European capitals, alarm bells once heard only in Washington and Jerusalem regarding Iranian intentions now ring loud and clear. And, with welcome clarity, leaders and commentators are beginning to refer to the global contest now underway as a battle against radical Islamism, not just an amorphous and ill-defined “war on terror.”

Five years after the September 11 attacks, The Washington Institute convened its annual Weinberg Founders Conference to discuss the evolving nature of the threat that jihadists—both Sunni and Shiite, state and nonstate—pose to Western interests, the various theaters in which those threats are manifest, and the range of strategies at our disposal to address them. The summaries presented in the following pages provide a compelling record of those important discussions.



■ Robert Satloff is executive director of *The Washington Institute* and author of *Among the Righteous: Lost Stories from the Holocaust’s Long Reach into Arab Lands* (2006).



The Speakers

MISBAH AL-AHDAB, founder of the Future Youth Association, is a member of the Lebanese parliament representing the Democratic Renewal Movement Bloc. A graduate of the London School of Economics and the European Business School in Paris, he serves on the legislature's Finance and Budget Committee and as Honorary Consul of France in the North.

UZI ARAD is head of the Institute for Policy and Strategy and professor of government at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya's Lauder School of Government, Strategy, and Diplomacy. In addition, he serves as advisor to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. Previously, he was a senior official in Israel's foreign intelligence service, the Mossad, and served as foreign policy advisor to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu.

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SONER CAGAPTAY is a senior fellow and director of the Turkish Research Program at The Washington Institute. In addition, he serves as chair of the Turkey Program at the State Department's Foreign Service Institute and as an assistant professor at Georgetown University. His publications include *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who Is a Turk?* (2005) and the Institute study *Turkey at a Crossroads: Preserving Ankara's Western Orientation* (2005).

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ERIC DAVIS is a professor of political science at Rutgers University and an expert on Iraq. His recent works have included *Strategies for Promoting Democracy in Iraq* (2005) and *Memories of State: Politics, Historical Memory, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq* (2005).

UZI DAYAN, a major general (res.) in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), previously served as IDF deputy chief of staff and director of Israel's National Security Council. During the 2006 Israeli parliamentary elections, he led the Tafnit Party list.

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MARTIN KRAMER is The Washington Institute's Wexler-Fromer fellow and author of the highly acclaimed Institute monograph *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America* (2001). He is also a senior fellow at the Shalem Center's new Institute for International and Middle Eastern Studies in Jerusalem.

DAVID MAKOVSKY is a senior fellow and director of the Project on the Middle East Peace Process at The Washington Institute. His Institute publications include *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizballah War: A Preliminary Assessment* (2006), *Engagement through Disengagement: Gaza and the Potential for Renewed Israeli-Palestinian Peacemaking* (2005), and *A Defensible Fence: Fighting Terror and Enabling a Two-State Solution* (2004). In addition, he is an adjunct lecturer on Middle East studies at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

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2006 WEINBERG FOUNDERS CONFERENCE



Building Security in the Broader Middle East

Building Security in the Broader Middle East

Philip Zelikow

EDITED TRANSCRIPT

I'VE BEEN ASKED to take on the small topic of “building security in the Broader Middle East,” a region that currently seems to be aflame from end to end. And I'm reminded of the proverb of the student who wants to learn the Talmud. He says, “Rabbi, teach me the Talmud while standing on one foot.” And the rabbi of course answers him gracefully, saying, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you; all the rest is commentary.” Discussing the topic at hand in just a few minutes is a formidable task, but I'll try to do so by covering ten points.

POINT ONE: UNDERLYING SOURCES OF INSECURITY

We tend to look at a few things over and over when we think of the underlying sources of insecurity in the region. We look at the generational challenge that modernity poses for the Arab and Muslim world. What, after all, do we mean by modernity? By modernity we mean abstract institutions—a civic culture and a civil society that owe allegiance to abstract concepts. We mean a society that is dominated by the constancy of change, even in Arab and Muslim societies that are built on deep reservoirs and pillars of tradition, where loyalty is owed to family, clan, and tribe, and where change is threatening. As the Arab and Muslim world confronts modernity, we are faced with many issues of political development, economic development, and, indeed, human development. Chapter two of the 9-11 Commission report tried to succinctly summarize some of these issues, and they're familiar to many of you.

Another underlying source of insecurity one has to reckon with in this region is the centrality of Islam; not in a critical sense, but simply as a dominant cultural fact of life for the region. So here it's important, for example, to notice the lingering significance of the Iranian revolution of 1979 and what followed—not just because of its effects on Iran itself, but because it created a dynamic in which religious radicals across the Middle East competed for primacy with demonstrations of zealotry and outreach in their own versions of evangelism. In places like Saudi Arabia, for example, it created a dynamic of competition for ideological dominance that



■ *Philip Zelikow is counselor to the State Department, serving as the secretary of state's senior policy advisor on a wide range of issues. Previously, he served as executive director of the 9-11 Commission.*

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had some important and, in some ways, quite negative and serious results. We saw the rise of political Islam, its decline in the 1990s, and perhaps now we're seeing its resurgence again. We're seeing the growth of violent Islamic extremism, which President Bush has referred to using a more commonplace and less academic phrase: Islamic radicalism.

Another underlying source of insecurity is the fragile polities. The people who form the ruling elites in these states, and the states themselves, are weak in their sheer administrative capacity to do even simple things that we take for granted in modern states, such as collecting taxes or putting forth even the most basic efforts to monitor their borders.

POINT TWO: ENDURING REGIONAL FLASHPOINTS

These are familiar to us all. There is of course the enduring flashpoint of the Arab-Israeli conflict, about which I need add no more. There is also the enduring flashpoint of Iran confronting the Arab world, which is coming back to the fore again.

And, of course, there are flashpoints within particular countries. Lebanon is one notable example that has been in the news recently, along with Iraq and other cases we could point to.

POINT THREE: TERRORISM AS A CORROSIVE AGENT

I choose those words because I don't want to present terrorism alone as the force that overthrows governments. I find it useful to think of terrorism instead as working the way a powerful acid would work on the bonds that hold a society together, corroding them and weakening them, thus enabling other forces to tear them apart more easily.

The terrorist threat itself is multifaceted. At least three facets are worth noting, each distinct, although they overlap. First there is al-Qaeda, along with its affiliates and adherents. Their ideology is familiar. The president has given a speech recounting at some length the kind of ideas al-Qaeda espouses. What is notable about these ideas is that, when you step back and look at them, you see that they are basically fantasist. The organization and its operations have been significantly broken by our efforts since September 11 and are now largely atomized, though still quite dangerous. Speaking as a onetime historian, I believe it is reminiscent in some respects of the threat that anarchism seemed to pose to the civilized world one hundred years ago. All sorts of cells around the world were believed to be affiliated with each other and somehow seemed to be working together. They were animated by a common ideology without formal structure but drew shared inspiration from ideologues like Prince Kropotkin in London. This was a movement that venerated the "propaganda of the deed," as they called it, practically worshipped the new technology of dynamite as a great equalizer, and was responsible for the murder of half a dozen heads of government around the world, including an American president.

A second facet is Shiite extremists—who often have Iranian support. It is worth noting that both the Shiite extremists and their Iranian sponsors often forge opportunistic connections to Sunni terrorism. Those who argued that Iran would never work with Sunni terrorists will find a number of examples where Tehran has forged alliances of convenience to serve its purposes.

A third facet is local insurgencies that overlap with transnational terror networks in various ways. You have, for example, the special case of Iraq, an insurgency that really deserves a chapter of study all its own and that is predominantly Iraqi. Even al-Qaeda in Iraq is overwhelmingly Iraqi in its makeup. There are foreigners in middle management, maybe one in top management. They use a number of foreigners as ammunition, in effect, expending them as they arrive. But it's a predominantly Iraqi organization. At the same time, it clearly has ties to transnational terror. And then there's the Taliban, as well as various organizations in Southeast Asia and Africa.

When you step back from this phenomenon, it is difficult to avoid noting the historically unprecedented nihilism and barbarity of these particular terrorists. There is simply no precedent for it. An anarchist of 1906 would regard the terrorist activities perpetrated by these groups—the beheadings on television and so forth—with shock. The anarchists are people who would plant dynamite in a public street, yet they would be appalled by the things that today's groups are willing to do and countenance. Today's groups both create and play to what I'm afraid I can only call a desensitized and debased public sensibility—a public so callous that it does not recoil anymore at the shocks that are being inflicted on it and the appalling contrast to civilization that these groups present. These groups exploit—and, really, reflect—inchoate hatreds, insecurities, and alienation. They have a nominal ideology, but it is in many ways utopian and can't be taken seriously in the real world. Their meaning is often, I believe, defined more existentially—and in some cases the clues to their existence can better be found in the works of Albert Camus than in their own ideological tracts.

Insight into these organizations comes by looking past their political veneer to the study of cults or racketeering organizations. They have assets. They exploit our globalized society. And, in terms of their potential to acquire weapons of mass destruction, they exploit the vulnerabilities of complex systems—a term I use here metaphorically as well as literally.

POINT FOUR: OLD BARGAINS HAVE DISAPPEARED

Old bargains, and the often-illusory sense of security they provided, seem to be disappearing. What do I mean by that? I mean old bargains like the enforced secularism we saw in countries such as Turkey and Egypt, and the notion that they could “keep a lid” on religious groups. That kind of apparent deal, which seemed to provide security and stability, is expiring. By keeping a lid on these groups, states drove political activity into

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the mosques and Islamicized it. Then it emerged in forms that we can all witness today.

We saw the bargain of state-controlled religious practice, as in Saudi Arabia—where the state cuts a deal with the religious establishment in ways that I think even many in the Saudi government would quietly regard as problematic, particularly as they cope with the consequences. We saw the bargain that permitted oppression of Shiites, and the assumption that that arrangement could endure stably and indefinitely. We saw bargains with the terrorists themselves, some of whom were called “freedom fighters” not so long ago—even Yasser Arafat. We saw the more sordid bargains: “Don’t attack us here, attack somewhere else, leave us alone here.” They cut their deals, and those deals have now come back to haunt them.

As those old bargains disappear, we are seeing transformation across the Middle East. This of course leads to the challenge of how to build security in an environment of such understandable and, in some ways, inevitable turmoil.

POINT FIVE: PRACTICAL IDEALISM

The secretary of state has spoken of practical idealism, and a number of other phrases have been tossed out—“progressive realism” and so forth. The point of these phrases is that we can avoid the simple dichotomy between being a realist and being an idealist, which I believe is a false description of American history and American political ideas. It is also a false way of pigeonholing people today. It is possible to have both ideals and be realistic and practical in how you implement them. The challenge is whether we can execute such a vision. But in a policy of practical idealism you accept the inevitability of change and then work to help others shape its course.

For the Bush administration, there are several important landmarks in this regard. In the Arab-Israeli conflict, President Bush’s statements in 2002 and 2004 moved toward a new vision of future relations between Israel and the Palestinians. There is the liberation of Iraq and the resulting empowerment of the Shiites there in 2003 and beyond. There is the president’s Second Inaugural Address at the beginning of 2005. There were the moves that pushed Syria out of Lebanon, at last. That allowed Lebanon to attain a truly national government that began to represent more of the Lebanese people than before. And other changes in other parts of the Middle East are still underway.

But it is absolutely true, as many have observed, that trying to shape such change has posed a tremendous challenge to our imagination, to the imagination of our policymakers—my colleagues and myself—and to our institutions. Our institutions weren’t built for this world or these challenges, and they are struggling to adapt to them and to find the capacities to help others cope.

Beyond that, there is also the challenge to Arab and Muslim leaders. After all, they are the ones who will have to provide the leadership that will shape the future of their societies. The United States can be their partner, their friend, their source of support. But ultimately the shape of the political cultures, the shape of the economies, and the shape of the societies will be determined by Arabs and Muslims themselves.

And of course there is the challenge to the rest of the world to take interest, get off the sidelines, and try to take part in a constructive way as well. Some countries have stepped up to that challenge, and I think they're confronting the same strains on their imagination and institutions that we confront. With that general point in mind, let me turn to a few of our particular policy efforts aimed at confronting this problem more directly.

POINT SIX: SHAPING THE ENVIRONMENT— THE CONDUCT OF THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

I don't think we can really separate the way we conduct the war on terror from American policy in the Middle East. I don't think we can separate what we do—say, in Guantanamo or with detainees elsewhere—from American policy and fortunes in the Middle East. The secretary of state does not think so, and neither does the president.

That's why—in addition to adopting a whole series of new strategies for combating terrorism, including ideas about the way institutions are changing, new attention to the role of Islamic radicalism, the willingness to confront those ideologies directly, and the efforts we're giving to public diplomacy—President Bush has announced a comprehensive new approach to the issues of detainees. This topic has been a source of attacks on America and its ideals throughout the world.

In the debates we've heard over the past few days—dominated in the newspapers by arguments over the details of the pending legislation—the larger picture has been obscured. What is at stake is a comprehensive new policy—a paradigm shift in our approach to these detainee issues. Let me just tick off some of the ingredients that illustrate the comprehensive nature of these changes:

- The decision that we need a sustainable policy for the long haul built on partnership: domestically with the Congress, internationally with allies and partners.
- A new and public army field manual and Defense Department directive providing baseline policies for the detention and treatment of captured terrorists.
- An entirely new approach to military commissions, already underway before the Supreme Court's decision, and now informed by it as well.
- Employing these military commissions for major war criminals, not people like Osama bin Laden's driver. These commissions will finally

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bring the September 11 conspirators to justice and, I hope, usher in a process that reminds America what the struggle is all about.

- The decision announced in the East Room of the White House that America does intend to close Guantanamo. Indeed, the description of that decision will prepare the way for closure in the repatriation of prisoners to their home countries and the prosecution of war criminals. It is necessarily a difficult process to work on problems that involve thirty-three different countries, many of which don't want these individuals back.
- The decision to disclose and explain a particular CIA interrogation program, and the vigorous defense of the need to preserve a small program of this kind.
- The decision to change such a program so that today, aside from the existing facilities in the U.S. criminal justice system and the law of war facilities we have in Iraq and Afghanistan, there are currently no detainees held by the United States who are not at Guantanamo. All of them are filed with, and have access to, the International Committee of the Red Cross. No one is being held in secret prisons as we go through this transition period. These issues will continue to be worked on in consultation with Congress so that we can sustain an important intelligence collection program for the future.
- Giving the program a durable legal framework that reiterates our commitment against torture and also accepts, as a minimum standard, that America will adhere to Common Article III of the Geneva Convention. There has been some controversy in the papers over whether we're reinterpreting that article. I can strongly defend the position that we are not narrowing its scope. We are trying to clarify the interpretation of vague provisions, but not in a manner that will limit the way the article would be interpreted under our laws or, I think, international law. We do need to clarify the application of Common Article III under American law because there are issues of felony liability associated with violating it.
- Telling foreign governments that we've listened to their concerns and are challenging them to work with us on what the president called "a common foundation to protect our nations and our freedoms."

Iran has weaknesses. It is not a fundamentally strong, prosperous, or unified country.

POINT SEVEN: THE CHALLENGE OF IRAN

Iran is a central issue in thinking about a comprehensive strategy for the region. Any such strategy is premised on understanding the significance of Iranian revolutionary ambitions, seeing them as a central threat not only to Israel, but also to the Arab world. Iran wants to challenge the status quo, vie for primacy in a number of respects, and tear things down.

Right now, a lot of people are writing about Iran's confidence: "They're feeling good; things are working out their way." As a historian it's sometimes useful to maintain perspective—there's always a moment when the enemy looks ten feet tall, then a few months later maybe nine-and-a-half feet. Iran has weaknesses. It is not a fundamentally strong, prosperous, unified country. It is a weak base from which to challenge the region, and it's useful to keep those weaknesses in mind.

There are questions that Iran's leaders must answer. I'd summarize the questions very simply: We see you can tear things down, but what is it that you want to build? Or, more fundamentally, what do you want your country to become? You believe that you're the heirs of a great civilization, and that's a fair statement, but what should the country with that inheritance become? Should it gradually become a kind of pariah state feared and reviled by its neighbors, increasingly isolated from the rest of the world, its economic prospects, its cultural influence, and its prestige shrinking accordingly? Or is there another more positive future that Iran should try to reach?

The goal of American diplomacy is, in effect, to pose those questions and oblige Iranian leaders to answer them and make hard choices. To make Iran's leaders look at those hard choices, you have to present them with diplomacy that has serious costs associated with their current policies. That's largely what is being debated right now. What's being tested is whether we have a viable diplomatic strategy that can present Iran's leaders with the questions that both we and our allies agree Iran must and should answer.

Meanwhile, we must work together to stand up to Iran in the region alongside our Arab friends: stand up to Iran in Iraq—standing for the cause of Iraqi nationalism, not Iraqi dependence—stand up to Iran in the United Nations and in Europe and East Asia. Notice President Bush's message as expressed in his recent *Washington Post* interview with David Ignatius: we take the diplomatic road very seriously, and we want diplomacy to work.

One of the concerns I have about my friends, some of them on the conservative side, who argue that we don't have the resolve to face up to the binary, uncomfortable choice we should face between war and peace is that they've already shoved the diplomacy aside. They're anxious to get to the real issue, the interesting issue, the glamorous issue. When we assume that diplomacy won't work, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Instead, let's talk about the choice between war and peace now rather than later. We should try to make diplomacy work, because Iranian leaders do need to face that choice. That's the message the president was conveying.

The status quo that produced the Lebanon war is already changing.

POINT EIGHT: THE CHALLENGE OF LEBANON

The conventional wisdom is that Hizballah and Iran won this summer's conflict, while Israel and America lost. I would urge everyone to stop, reflect, and look again. The situation is changing. Events are on a course

The terrorists in Iraq do not represent a nationalist movement that has gripped the imagination of the people.

where, if they continue, the situation could be very different a few months from now, contradicting the conventional wisdom in the first seventy-two hours after UN Resolution 1701 was passed.

After all, the fundamental goal of American policy was to be sure that the status quo that produced the last war will change so that the likelihood of another war is lessened. How are we doing in that regard? Let's look at the strategic priority. How are we doing on reducing the danger of Israel being attacked from Lebanon? That's the enemy's perspective: to use Lebanon as a proxy battlefield from which they can launch another assault on "occupied Palestine."

Thousands of international troops, with unprecedented rules of engagement, are streaming into southern Lebanon. That is a more robust force than the conventional wisdom predicted. And they are standing there as a buffer to help protect Israel from renewed attack. The Lebanese armed forces have deployed to that part of the country for the first time in a generation to work with the international force.

It's not perfect yet. The Syria-Lebanon border isn't secured the way it should be. There are flaws and issues we'll need to confront. Yet the status quo that produced the war is already changing. The Lebanese government has come out stronger in many ways than it was before.

For its part, Hizballah faces new dilemmas, new choices. When Hassan Nasrallah says he wouldn't have started the war if he knew what would have happened, that's not a crow of victory. His group will face new constraints.

And Syria, which left Lebanon last year, remains out of Lebanon. Contrary to the advice that some of my friends here in Washington were offering, we did not invite Syria to once again become the central power broker in Lebanon, since it would simply use the country as a vehicle to negotiate over Golan. So Syria is a loser in this affair. My hope is, of course, that the Syrians won't act out in certain ways because of that fact.

In general, then, Lebanon's prospects could turn out to be better than people think if we can realize the potential of the moves that are already underway.

POINT NINE: THE CHALLENGE OF IRAQ

Our major strategies in Iraq are relatively easy to summarize, but a little harder to execute. There are three basic pillars: first, security as a foundation, beginning with Baghdad; second, pressing hard for a national reconciliation process so that Iraq's leaders can show their people and us that they will work out a way to live together and share power; and third, reinforcement and leverage through an international compact that brings key outside stakeholders on Iraq together. Such a compact would say to Iraq, "If you reach national reconciliation, transform your political economy, and address some of the other things that are needed to turn your country around, the whole world will be behind you, and we'll help invest in your future."

There is so much gloom about Iraq right now that any commentary I might add about the problems there would only reinforce things you've already heard. But we have some assets on our side. The terrorists are not popular in Iraq. They scare people, but they are not popular. They do not represent a nationalist movement that has gripped the imagination of the people of Iraq. The Iraqi government is better—much better—than it was. It is more capable of carrying out the kind of strategy I just outlined than its predecessors. Also, the U.S. government is experienced in these issues.

Moreover, the Shiite and Sunni militias that cause a lot of the violence do not actually wish to overthrow the Iraqi government. They have a more limited agenda, often centered on self-help and autonomy. This fact gives us the sense that there is a basis for some kind of political understanding. And there is a widespread belief among Iraqis that they want the Iraqi nation to succeed because all of their “Plan Bs” are less certain and less secure than the Plan A of a successful Iraq.

But the challenges there are immense. We and the Iraqi government have to fight overwhelming, enervating fear. We have to fight the impatience of Iraq's friends. We have to fight a deep mistrust that exists within Iraq among its communities, often well founded by bitter experiences that each of the communities has had with each other.

The fundamental challenge is a classic one: initiating collective action. We can see that if they would all come together in certain ways, they would all be more secure. They would all be more prosperous. Yet, coming together requires such an intricate set of concessions and bargains that it is hard for any one side to propose and stand for it. It's a classic political problem that Iraq's leaders must step up to resolve with the strong and continuing help of friends like the United States.

POINT TEN: ISRAEL AND ITS NEIGHBORS

The significance of the Arab-Israeli dispute across these problems is obvious to all of us. I would emphasize that in viewing the threats in the way I've just described them, the question becomes what sort of coalition we would need to amass in order to combat those threats. Who are the key members of such a coalition? We can imagine the United States, key European allies, the state of Israel, and the Arab moderates—Arabs who seek a peaceful future. We could call it the coalition of the builders, not just a coalition of the willing: a coalition of builders to oppose the coalition of the destroyers.

What would help keep that coalition together is a sense that Arab-Israeli issues are being addressed, that they see a common determination to sustain an active policy of dealing with the problems of Israel and the Palestinians. We no longer wish to see the real corrosive effects that this issue has, or the symbolic corrosive effects it causes in undermining some of the friends whose help we need in confronting the serious dangers we all face.

The corrosive effects of the Israeli-Palestinian problem are undermining some of the friends whose help we need.

We need a coalition of the builders—not just a coalition of the willing—to oppose the coalition of the destroyers.

I've tried to give a broad overview of key points that can help improve understanding of the administration's approach to building security in the Broader Middle East. It's an extraordinary challenge. It's the kind of challenge that America and its friends have lived through before in times that sometimes seemed very dark. It is important to understand the breadth of the challenge we face and to try working together—sometimes across party lines and some of our pettier divisions—in dealing with them and forging a brighter future.

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Regional Security in the Wake of the Israel-Hizballah War

Regional Security in the Wake of the Israel-Hizballah War

Ephraim Sneh, Horst Freitag, and Kristen Silverberg**

SUMMARY

ASSESSING THE PRACTICAL RESULTS of the war in Lebanon both reinforces previously accepted notions and exposes new realities. First, it confirms that Israel remains the strongest military power from Baku to Casablanca. Despite certain flaws, the capabilities of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)—both the ground troops and the destructive power of the air force—prove the continued dominance of the Israeli military in the Middle East. At the same time, the myth of the invincible Israeli soldier has been somewhat tainted.

Another notable outcome is that Hizballah has lost much power, actual and perceived, within Lebanon. Psychologically, it is apparent that much of the Lebanese populace blames Hizballah for the losses and misery suffered during the war. Now replaced by the Lebanese army for the first time in more than thirty years, Hizballah has lost its strategic position as the popular defender of the south. With Lebanon now exercising sovereignty over the entire state up to its border with Israel, Hizballah has been further marginalized domestically. The original theory of its leader, Hassan Nasrallah, which said that Israeli society was weak and would implode under military pressure, was demonstrated to be false. In fact, Israeli citizens of the north, who had been in bunkers for more than four weeks through the heat of the summer, urged their government to keep fighting until it realized its goals.

Militarily, new factors emerged as important for the region. Hizballah's short-range rockets proved to be effective as both bothersome and aggressive weapons. Although they are primitive in nature, the fact that they are not easily detected by even the most sophisticated air reconnaissance gives them a high capacity for survival. Additionally, a new international force, with a different mandate, has entered southern Lebanon. Its impact is uncertain, but what is clear is that Europe has become a more active and significant player in the region.

In addition, UN Security Council Resolution 1701 provides new instruments to address the major security issues now facing Lebanon. It leaves



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*Speaker's remarks were off the record

some questions unanswered regarding border security, disarmament, and efforts to curb Hizballah control over internal Lebanese politics. Nevertheless, there is still potential for success, however limited. In the process of negotiations over Resolution 1701, Lebanese prime minister Fouad Siniora was somewhat enhanced as a national leader, and Syria became further marginalized and now faces possible international investigations. By resisting international pressure for an immediate ceasefire, both the United States and Israel saw more favorable outcomes.

For regional security, there are other implications. It is now significantly more difficult for Iran to use Lebanon as a springboard for aggression against Israel, and also less convenient to use Hizballah as its main agent for this purpose. In this context, Tehran could risk its main strategic objective in Lebanon, which is to turn the country into a new Islamic republic. Furthermore, Iran will now accelerate its efforts to achieve nuclear capabilities and become a global power. This raises concerns not only for Israel and the United States, but also for most Arab countries.

Accordingly, Iran, Syria, and Hizballah will expand their efforts to oust the Siniora government. They will try in various ways to overthrow and replace it with a government more obedient to their interests. Bashar al-Asad may also be tempted to embark on a limited military occupation in the Golan Heights or to resume terrorist activity there. Such a move could come at Tehran's behest or result from Asad's own considerations and emotions. Asad envies Nasrallah and is being attacked in Damascus for not helping the Hizballah leader in a moment of need.

Syria could become a viable peace-process partner only if it were to act on three issues: first, closing the border with Lebanon and preventing Iranian rearmament of Hizballah; second, effectively sealing its border with Iraq and helping the United States fight the insurgency; and third, expelling Khaled Mashal and the Hamas headquarters from Damascus. By taking these actions, Syria could abandon the status of pariah state and be accepted into the family of nations, which would please many in the Syrian ruling elite.

On the Gaza/West Bank front, the smuggling of short-range rockets into the Palestinian territories will increase as a result of their proven efficacy in the recent conflict. This may encourage terrorist entities, most notably Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), to use this weapon more broadly in the territories, given their proximity to the heart of Israel. On the other hand, the desire of the Palestinian populace for negotiations with Israel may strengthen. Their inclination to imitate Nasrallah is not as strong as their fear that Gaza and the West Bank may share the fate of southern Lebanon. Given the results of the war, they believe it is best to avoid another armed struggle or intifada against Israel. Such attitudes may indicate an improved chance for resuming talks with the Palestinian president.

For Israel, the war was a wake-up call. It learned its own weaknesses and what is needed to correct them and to better prepare for future hostil-

It is now significantly more difficult for Iran to use Lebanon as a springboard for aggression against Israel.

ities. Israel will likely be ready to act in a stronger manner if it sees trucks loaded with rockets traveling from the Damascus airport into Lebanon. Israel showed restraint between 2000 and 2006 for two major reasons. First, the IDF had been fighting a war with the Palestinians and did not want to engage on another front. Second, various Israeli administrations were hesitant to be responsible for reentering Lebanon in light of Israel's previous trauma there.

For its part, Iran learned the limitations of its proxies. It also learned the strength and military capability of Israel. Iran has lost its ability to strike at the center of Israel with long-range rockets. The regime will therefore make an extensive effort to regain this potential and to replenish Hizballah's stockpiles of long-range rockets, which were almost totally destroyed by the IDF. These resupply efforts may be a pretext to resume fighting at some point in the future. But as long as the regime in Tehran tries so aggressively to become a global power and pursue regional hegemony through terror and brute force, the next round is unavoidable. Israel has learned that it must prepare seriously for that inevitability.

For Israel, the war was a wake-up call. It learned its own weaknesses and what is needed to better prepare for future hostilities.

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Lebanon, Before and After the Israel-Hizballah War

Lebanon, Before and After the Israel-Hizballah War

Jamil Mroue and Misbah al-Ahdab

SUMMARY

JAMIL MROUE

BETWEEN 1990 AND 2000, Lebanon had no chance to build a functioning state. Syria's operatives in the country, led by Ghazi Kanaan, engaged in political cleansing throughout the decade, and once the Lebanese formed their own government, they realized that the existing power structure was deeply flawed. For example, the Taif Accord, which brought an end to the Lebanese civil war in 1989, was full of loopholes that were meant to be addressed in subsequent years. Soon after it was adopted, however, U.S. president George H. W. Bush and Syrian president Hafiz al-Asad traded Syrian participation in the 1991 Gulf War for Asad's takeover of Lebanon—without addressing the need for reform.

In 2005, Lebanon was resurrected following the withdrawal of the Syrians, who had maintained their grip on the country with U.S. and Israeli approval. Simply forming a government was not sufficient to repair the damage the Syrians had done, however. Business could not continue as usual because there was no business to continue. And now, after the tragic summer war between Hizballah and Israel, Lebanon must go back to the drawing board. Indeed, Hizballah cannot rightly be called a “state within a state” because Lebanon is not a true state to begin with.

One positive outcome of the war is the presence of an international framework and diplomatic umbrella between Lebanon and its aggressive southern neighbor, Israel. Between June 2000 and June 2006, after Israel's May 2000 withdrawal from southern Lebanon, Israeli forces entered Lebanon 11,984 times, according to UN observers.

Another positive outcome is that Lebanon showed it has a real prime minister capable of running the state. The new government is only six months old, however, and remains fragile. To avoid another tragic breakdown, the Lebanese government must convince the international community—above all, the United States—that it needs a respite. Specifically, it cannot take on the responsibility of disarming Hizballah at present.

It is important to remember that Hizballah grew under the noses of the Israelis; its military wing prospered under the Israeli occupation.



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Moreover, Hizballah is not blindly anti-Israeli; the group welcomed Israeli forces in 1982 as they fought the Palestine Liberation Organization. Today, however, Hizballah regards Israel with distrust, in part due to Israeli treatment of other armed groups. At one point or another, every Christian military group in the area has worked with and been armed by Israel (and often the United States or Saudi Arabia). The South Lebanese Army (SLA), headed by Antoine Lahad, collaborated with the Israelis for twenty years during their occupation of the South. Following the Israeli withdrawal, however, Lahad was reduced to selling falafel in Tel Aviv, and the SLA soldiers were marginalized by Israeli society. This serves as a lesson about how Israel treats its friends.



■ *Misbah al-Ahdab is a member of the Lebanese parliament representing the Democratic Renewal Movement Bloc and serving on the legislature's Finance and Budget Committee.*

MISBAH AL-AHDAB

FORMER LEBANESE prime minister Rafiq Hariri was assassinated on February 14, 2005. On March 8, Hizballah organized a rally asking the Syrians to remain in Lebanon. On March 14, a second large rally was held in reaction to both the assassination and the Hizballah rally. These two rallies revealed a persistent division within Lebanon.

Today, Lebanon stands before two possible paths. On the first path, the country would remain a proxy battlefield for all regional confrontations, including the Israeli-Arab conflict and other items on the Syrian and Iranian agenda. On the second path, Lebanon would focus on building up its governmental and economic institutions. Clearly, the March 8 rally represented the first path, and the March 14 rally the second.

In the months since the rallies, the March 8 coalition represented by supporters of Syria and Hizballah has proven stronger than the March 14 coalition. Members of the former constituency have had a more active presence on the ground, assuming positions of authority and running the country according to their own interests. They have also attempted to create new societal divisions based on religious identity.

Fortunately, Lebanon is not divided along the sharp sectarian lines seen in Iraq. Not all Shiites agree with Hizballah. Although some hope to link developments in Lebanon to outside agendas, others want a modern country that is open to the world and free of conflict. In fact, Shiites participated alongside other opposition elements at the December 2005 Bristol Hotel conference in Beirut, asking Syria to leave Lebanon and calling on Hizballah to give up its arms. These Shiites did not have millions of dollars to spend, nor did they have government favors to pass out to those backing them. The failure to protect these Shiites was a mistake—they began disappearing soon after the conference, one by one, and now they are no longer part of the coalition.

The supporters of the March 14 movement need the backing of a cross-confessional faction that is not linked to the corruption of old. The problem of corruption itself must be addressed as well. To do so, the coalition must present an alternative to the old ways.

For its part, Hizballah will likely concentrate on reconstruction in the short term. Although it gained sympathy throughout the Arab world, the group was shaken by the destruction of its infrastructure, which triggered criticism from religious Shiites in southern Lebanon and led them to question Hizballah's claims of "victory." Despite this focus on reconstruction, the Lebanese government will be unable to disarm the group any time soon. Hizballah's arsenal is linked to the Lebanese consensus that they have the right to resist as long as their territory is occupied, by which they mean the Israeli presence in the Shebaa Farms. But if Shebaa was no longer occupied and the hostages were freed, would Hizballah actually surrender its weapons? The Israeli attacks of this summer gave Hizballah a stronger reason to remain armed and to accuse the March 14 coalition of plotting with Israel.

In order to secure Lebanon's future, Beirut and the international community should take three key steps. First, the central government and Prime Minister Fouad Siniora need international support. At the August 31 Stockholm Conference for Lebanon's Early Recovery, Beirut received twice the amount of money it was expecting—a clear message of support for the government. In addition to financial assistance, the international community should talk to the Lebanese in a constructive way. Israel says it supports the Siniora government, but its actions this summer were not the best way to express that support.

Second, the Lebanese political structure should begin to include new Shiite politicians. Although Syria dismantled Lebanon's family and clan structures over the past twenty years, those structures are still present in the memory of the people. Young Shiite politicians who share views with the March 14 coalition should be promoted.

Third, Lebanese abroad, with the help of key international institutions, should continue their efforts to create a support fund for Lebanon. This fund will be managed as a private-sector enterprise in order to avoid the corruption inherent in government channels. Once in place, it will play an important role in spurring job creation and improving the overall economic situation.

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Countering Islamists at the Ballot Box: Alternative Strategies

Countering Islamists at the Ballot Box: Alternative Strategies

Soner Cagaptay, F. Gregory Gause III, and Mona Makram-Ebeid

SUMMARY

SONER CAGAPTAY

THE DEMISE OF NON-ISLAMIST parties in Turkey and the Middle East can be attributed to several factors. In Turkey specifically, the secular ruling parties of the past seem fractured, weak, and unable to present a united front against the rise of Islamist political parties. Corruption, often exposed by Turkey's vigorous free press, has also contributed to their fall.

In the Arab world, liberal secular parties have long been repressed. Yet, even in instances where the playing field is level, the Islamist parties are still winning. One reason for this is the incredible amount of money that Islamists have access to, enabling them to provide social services that secular parties have failed to provide. Also, the Islamists' utopian, revolutionary vision of a new life is more attractive than secular parties' empty repetition of the same reform proposals talked about for fifty years.

Despite the significant challenges that secular parties and Western governments face in the Middle East, there is still room for hope. This is not the first time that the United States has faced opponents taking over at the ballot boxes. In Italy at the end of World War II, the communist movement won the majority in parliament with support from the Soviet Union; however, over time, Italy was brought firmly into the hands of Christian democrats. The United States played an important role in removing the communist movement from power, supplying covert support to liberal movements and organizations. The Italian media was also used as a tool to influence public opinion. New governmental organizations, including the National Security Council, were set up specifically to deal with the threat of Italian communism.

In order to succeed against today's Islamist threat, we must recognize that this is not a case of the West versus Muslims, but of Muslims who are Islamist versus Muslims who are not. The United States' allies are those Muslims who are not Islamists, and they must be engaged. The West must study what the Islamists are doing and do it better; fund what they are funding, but with more money. There needs to be a massive effort here to



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support a force of highly qualified, educated Muslims who have the necessary language and cultural skills to deal with this threat.

F. GREGORY GAUSE III

TO PROPOSE AN ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY: the United States should stop encouraging democracy in the Arab world. The rationale behind encouraging democracy is that its spread means less anti-American terrorism. However, this correlation has no historical proof, and social science research gives us no evidence of a relationship between regime type and terrorism. The roots of terrorism do not lie in regime type.

It is also unlikely that if these democracies were set up, they would be of the pluralistic, tolerant type, or that they would have good relations with the United States and Israel. In nearly all Middle Eastern nations, if there were to be democratic elections today, the Islamists would win. The recent Iraqi and Palestinian Authority elections are examples of this; despite the level playing fields, the secular liberals were unable to compete. They are not selling something that most voters want to buy, so building them up does not seem to be a viable option for the United States right now.

This creates a difficult situation, because the United States cannot pursue a policy of democratization without encouraging fair elections, yet encouraging fair elections leads to Islamist party victories. Yet, consider: it is possible that Islamists might, in fact, be better governors of Arab nations. They are probably closer to their populations and more honest, though probably not as close to U.S. foreign policy interests in the region. Islamist governments do, of course, run the risk of mirroring Iran's social revolution, but that type of bottom-up revolution is historically rare.

The real problem is not that Arabs or even Islamist Arabs cannot be democratic leaders; it is that the United States would not like the governments that Arab democracies produce. Yet the United States cannot do much to stop Islamists, and this current environment should be viewed not as a problem to be fixed, but rather as a condition to be endured.

MONA MAKRAM-EBEID

THE LEBANESE TRAGEDY has emphasized four dynamics: the assertion of Islamist identity, Shiite empowerment, the rise of anti-West defiance, and the reality of domestic challenges to autocratic Arab regimes. In this atmosphere, three major dilemmas have emerged: (1) the inherently antidemocratic nature of autocratic ruling regimes that are unwilling to relinquish control; (2) the weakness of the opposition parties, which lack the structural organization needed to compete; and (3) the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood, an organization that has amassed a wide support base for a private agenda that supersedes national interests.

There is no doubt that the rise of Islamist parties is a source of great concern for the West, secular Arabs, and the secular Arab governments that cannot control such parties. However, the main problem, especially



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in Egypt, is that there is no alternative to the Islamist parties. It is becoming clear that they cannot be eradicated; the remaining alternative is to legalize them and open the door to their participation in politics.

This strategy is clearly one with large risks; however, the examples of Turkey and Algeria show that it is the best approach. Turkey's Islamist political parties were integrated successfully, while Algeria's repression of Islamist parties led to periodic violence and other negative consequences. In Egypt, because Islamists have been banned from forming their own political parties, they have instead infiltrated every political and state institution, forming pressure groups within all of them. Secular party leaders have also been compelled to join forces with Islamists, because, alone, they are unable to garner the same level of popular support. As the government gives in to an increasingly reactionary and conservative religious establishment, the situation is much worse than if the Islamist parties had simply been allowed legal status in the first place.

The liberal parties suffer from internal rivalries and weaknesses. They do not have a message that appeals to the majority of the populace. On the other hand, Islamist parties have successfully incorporated elements of a liberal political platform, such as constitutional reform and a promised end to political repression, into their agendas.

Foreign partners such as the United States should focus on both political and economic reforms. Liberal organizations must be helped to mobilize large constituencies. Ruling and opposition parties should be encouraged to develop social agendas. Perhaps most significant, foreign donors must face the challenge and pave the way for Islamists to become supporters of democracy instead of theocracy. Including the Islamist parties into the political process is a necessary evil, and their incorporation must be accomplished with the help of foreign partners.



■ *Mona Makram-Ebeid, a professor of political science and sociology at the American University of Cairo, formerly served in the Egyptian parliament as a member of the foreign affairs, education, and budget committees.*

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In the Era of Hamas: Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab Relations

In the Era of Hamas: Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab Relations

David Makovsky, Mohammed Yaghi, Uzi Dayan, and Hassan Barari

SUMMARY

DAVID MAKOVSKY

A TWO-STATE SOLUTION for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be achieved in five main ways:

- *A bilateral agreement in which both sides reach a final-status solution by first addressing the tough issues of Jerusalem, refugees, and borders.* This approach is difficult to imagine given weakening leadership on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides.
- *A gradual, bilateral option—the Quartet Roadmap—with phases of behavior modification.* This would take years to implement, especially given the leadership problems on both sides.
- *A unilateral course, in which Israel does what is best for Israel.* Disengagement would presumably not involve maintaining an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) presence in the West Bank after settlement evacuation.
- *Changing the configuration of the region with the involvement of a third-party mediator, such as Jordan.* This may be the quickest solution to the conflict.
- *Internationalization of the West Bank and Gaza.* This may draw more support if the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is successful.

All of these alternatives depend on upcoming events in Gaza and the West Bank. Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas's efforts to bring about a unity government may change how the international community deals with the Palestinians. Moreover, if recent polls are correct in showing that Fatah's support doubles that of Hamas, additional options may open.

MOHAMMED YAGHI

ABBAS HAS NEVER BEEN ABLE to follow his goals of advancing the peace process with the Israelis. His plan to contain Hamas in the Palestinian legislative elections of January 2006 backfired when Hamas won



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■ *Mohammed Yaghi is a Lafer international fellow at The Washington Institute and a regular political columnist for the Palestinian newspaper al-Ayyam.*



■ *Uzi Dayan, a major general (res.) in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), has served as IDF deputy chief of staff and director of Israel's National Security Council.*

control of the Palestinian government. Abbas then had two options, both of which he viewed as suicidal: dissolve the Hamas government—knowing that this would lead to a dangerous civil war—or allow Hamas to rule for four years according to Palestinian basic law. The latter would not only weaken the Fatah Party permanently, but also prolong the international community’s boycott of the Palestinian government and worsen social and economic conditions.

Abbas’s preferred alternative was to create a unity government with Hamas, with the goal of distancing the group from the government. Hamas refused this option and has instead made a proposal that addresses the international community’s demands in very vague terms. In response to the Quartet’s demands that Hamas recognize Israel, Hamas has said that it will accept the Arab Peace Initiative without explicitly recognizing Israel. Hamas has also said it will only consider an end to violence after Israel stops its invasion and targeted killing. Finally, instead of recognizing past agreements with Israel, Hamas has stated that the group will respect—not accept—those agreements.

These concessions are the most Hamas can give to Abbas without jeopardizing the group’s unity. Until Palestinians come to a final solution regarding Jerusalem, refugees, and borders, Abbas will be forced to try to work within the limits imposed by Hamas. In the meantime, it is necessary for the international community to invest in Palestinian moderates, because if Abbas disappears, no one within Fatah can replace him.

UZI DAYAN

TWO WARS PLAGUE the Arab-Israeli conflict. The first is the Palestinian struggle for a state and an end to occupation. Israelis, who do not want to hurt other people, can identify with this—a struggle whose solution also serves Israel’s interest in maintaining a Jewish democratic state. The second war Israel faces is one in which its very existence is questioned. This war began before 1967 and will not stop with the end of the occupation. Hizballah and Hamas are committed to fighting this war with the goal of Israel’s destruction.

It must be the priority of the Palestinian president to advance toward the goals of the first war while undermining the second. But Abbas has disappointed many in Israel. Abbas, who does not like terrorism, also does not make it his main priority to fight it. Moreover, while Israel has accepted a two-state solution, few believe that Abbas will be more flexible than Arafat in compromising on borders, the status of Jerusalem, refugees, and security arrangements.

What Israelis received in return for their disengagement from Gaza defeated their most recent strategic effort toward a two-state solution. Circumstances force Israel to come up with a new strategy, one that could perhaps be titled “secure disengagement.” This strategy should differ from the disengagement from Gaza in its terms, process, and leadership.

With a “black dove” approach, a secure disengagement would consist of a territorial compromise that assures a Jewish democratic state. It would also require that Israeli security follow the withdrawal.

HASSAN BARARI

THE RISE OF HAMAS did not significantly alter Jordan and Israel’s bilateral relationship. In fact, their mutual interest in Hamas’s failure has been reinforced. Jordan sees the success of Hamas in the Palestinian elections as a dangerous encouragement to Islamists in Jordan to be more assertive in their demands on the government. If the public believes Islamists are less corrupt than those currently in power, Jordan will have to fight ambitious Islamist groups seeking to change the country’s status quo. Especially since the attacks in Amman last November, fear of radical Islam mounts high.

For these reasons, Jordan did not contest the Israeli reaction to Hamas’s ascendance to power. After Israel refused to recognize Hamas, froze relations with the Palestinian Authority, and cut off financial assistance to the new government, Jordan limited its contact with Palestinian officials and refused to deal with Hamas at any level. Yet Jordan strongly opposes Israeli unilateralism, which it views as a victory for extremists. Following Israel’s war with Lebanon, Jordan worked closely with Saudi Arabia and Egypt—moderates on the Arab scene—to create an alliance that shares Israel’s fear of empowered terrorist groups. While Jordan officially remains committed to a two-state solution, the government has expressed little hope that a Palestinian state can come to fruition considering the current strategies being pursued by brokers in the region. In a recent interview, King Abdullah II warned that if a Palestinian state is not established within two years, it will never be established.

Many Jordanians believe the only way out of the current predicament is to form a Jordan-Palestine confederation. This would only be possible if the Palestinians requested it themselves and if King Abdullah II were able to convince hesitant Jordanians that they would not become a minority in their own country. Israel would also have to make serious attempts to convince the Arab public that it is serious about creating peace in the region. With creative, out-of-the-box thinking, Jordan could play a major role in ending this conflict and paving the way for a two-state solution before it’s too late.



■ Hassan Barari, a visiting fellow at The Washington Institute, served previously as a lecturer at the University of Jordan, coordinating the Israeli Studies Unit at the university’s Center for Strategic Studies.

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Iraq: Civil War, the Maliki Government, and U.S. Strategy

Iraq: Civil War, the Maliki Government, and U.S. Strategy

Jeffrey White, Eric Davis, and Peter Galbraith

SUMMARY

JEFFREY WHITE

THE COMMON NOTION that there are only four or five provinces with serious security problems misrepresents the actual difficulties faced in Iraq. Baghdad is undoubtedly the most dangerous province. Growing security problems plague the mixed provinces of Diyala, Tamim, and Kirkuk, and the Shiite provinces of Basra and Maysan. In Shiite areas, security forces are controlled by organizations often unresponsive to the desires of the central Baghdad government. Kurdish areas enjoy relative security, attributable to factors such as a substantial measure of governance, economic capacity, and established security forces—all of which are noticeably lacking in Sunni areas. In addition, the latent potential for security breaches stands out as a real problem, especially in the Shiite south.

Coalition forces, generally speaking, are unable to dramatically affect the security environment. The oft-cited “cycle of violence” does not accurately describe the complexity of the situation; the coalition faces numerous interconnected and interacting agents and processes that are all driving violence forward. Rather than breaking a simple cycle of violence, the coalition must dismantle a well-entrenched, violent system whose components are embedded in multiple provinces.

The prospects for Iraq are not good. First, the issue of troops: the coalition never had enough, Iraqi forces are far from replacing coalition troops, and the troops that are present could be applied more effectively. Second, the idea of a decisive battle in Baghdad is problematic; its results would be messy at best. Third, it seems the coalition is not adapting to the changing circumstances faster than the insurgents and assorted militias. In other words, the coalition is losing the crucial battle of adaptation. Lastly, the Hobbesian nature of politics in Iraq means there is no national compact to support a government capable of governing the whole country. A great drama is unfolding; the question is whether it will turn out positively or like a Shakespearean tragedy, in which, despite the best efforts of the players, the outcome is inevitably bad.



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■ *Eric Davis is a professor of political science at Rutgers University and author of *Memories of State: Politics, Historical Memory, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq* (2005).*



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ERIC DAVIS

THE IRAQ POLICY DEBATE has centered on three options: immediate or phased withdrawal, partition, or continuation of the current policy. The first option can be discarded, because any withdrawal, precipitous or phased, will lead to the takeover of Iraq by various neoauthoritarian forces. A failed state in Iraq would have a domino effect in the entire region. The second option is deeply flawed. Partition, not particularly popular according to recent polls, is logistically impossible given Iraq's intermixed ethnic groups. It would endanger the educated middle class, place new strictures on investment, and undermine Iraqi democrats and the government's already shaky provision of services. Feeding into Islamist fears that American and Zionist forces want to carve up and dominate Iraq, partition would only encourage radical elements to further infiltrate Iraq, allow more Iranian involvement in the south, and fuel intermilitia fighting between the Badr and Mahdi organizations.

The best option is an augmented version of the third, because it rests on the fundamentally sound principle of bolstering the Iraqi government. However, steps must be taken beyond the parameters of current policy to deal with the weak Iraqi economy. Since the conflict largely finds its native strength in poor areas, an Iraqi Reconstruction Fund (IRF) that draws on the donations of oil-rich Gulf states would go a long way toward alleviating security problems. The incentive for donors lies in the fact that a failed state in Iraq is not in the interest of Arab neighbors, who fear growing Iranian influence and the spread of violence into their lands. The IRF would work in two phases. The first would focus on speeding the construction of infrastructure such as schools, sewer systems, and clinics. The Commanders' Emergency Response Fund (CERF), which many U.S. military officers agree has positively affected violence-prone areas, could be a useful model here, as could the Depression-era Works Project Administration (WPA). The second phase of the IRF would concentrate on urging local leaders, perhaps through incentive structures, to move beyond a temporary, WPA-style program to the creation of permanent, sustainable industries. These processes of economic recovery would reduce violence and build necessary confidence in the central Iraqi government.

PETER GALBRAITH

WHEN ASSESSING U.S. POLICY in Iraq, it helps to keep in mind that hope is not a strategy. President Bush has emphasized coalition success on both the political and security fronts. Yet, today, months after the establishment of a national unity government, the reality is dire. The Iraqi government does not govern anything. Shiite religious parties run the south as theocratic fiefdoms under severe Islamic law and strong Iranian influence. The Sunni center is a battleground and Baghdad the front line of a brutal civil war. Kurdistan is, for all practical purposes, an independent nation with its own democratically elected government, *peshmerga*

security force, and exclusive taxation rights. An informal January 2005 referendum saw 98 percent of voting Kurds call for full independence, their desire to be separate from Iraq fueled by hatred of the country that brutally repressed them for seventy years. Iraqi constitutional design—with its powerless central government and largely independent regional administration—more closely resembles a peace treaty among sovereign states than a blueprint for a common nation. Iraq’s dissipated army and police reflect their deeply divided country and, in many instances, are party to sectarian violence.

In practice, Iraq has already broken up. A U.S. strategy based on building national institutions where there is no nation is useless. The coalition should not try to put Iraq back together at the continued expense of lives. To realize the goal of a unified nation, the coalition would have to undertake new military missions such as disarming the Shiite militias, dismantling the southern theocracy, and ending the Sunni-Shiite civil war. What purpose is served by remaining in Baghdad and southern areas where no progress is being made? The possible consequences of departure—Iranian dominance and an explosion of sectarian violence—have already occurred. We must refocus on the overriding U.S. interest of preventing al-Qaeda from establishing a base in Iraq. To do this, an over-the-horizon force in Kurdistan, not Kuwait, should be maintained to strike at al-Qaeda elements in Iraq. The coalition can try to win—but it would need more resources than the U.S. administration is willing to provide—or it can reshape its mission to fit the resources available. It is time to withdraw from the Iraqi areas where nothing will be accomplished, and focus on the threat posed by al-Qaeda.

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The Rise of Shiite Politics in the Middle East

The Rise of Shiite Politics in the Middle East

Kassem Jaafar, Mehdi Khalaji, and Martin Kramer

SUMMARY

KASSEM JAAFAR

A DISCUSSION OF SHIITE POLITICS cannot take place out of the context of Shiite history. History is deeply integrated into the Shiite psyche and is a defining feature of its identity. In the beginning, the Sunni-Shiite divide was strictly a political one over who should be successor to the Prophet Muhammad. Although the political schism grew wider and deeper for many reasons, to this day, the killing of early Shiite leader Ali and his son Hussein remains a defining point of Shiite focus and identity. Shiites look back with grievance and view the martyrdom of these early leaders as something to be emulated.

For many centuries, Shiites were politically marginalized. The Safavid dynasty in Persia, which came to power in the sixteenth century, was arguably the first true Shiite Islamic state. According to his aide, at the time of the Islamic revolution in Iran, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini said, “I have come to change the course of history,” meaning that he intended to change the dynamics of Sunni dominance in the Islamic world. Today, Shiites and Sunnis are pitted against each other in a game of one-upsmanship as they seek to counter Western interests in the Middle East. Acting on their grievances, the Shiites have, by their political activism, opened doors to the reaction of extremist Sunnis—Wahhabi or Salafi—enraged by Shiite political power. As of late, both Sunni and Shiite radicals have engaged in violence in order to present themselves as the guarantor of Islamic strength over Western intrusion and aggression.

MEHDI KHALAJI

WHILE POLITICS IN THE WEST can be understood through an analysis of economic, cultural, historical, and social elements, the terms “political Islam” and “Shiite politics,” used within an Orientalist framework, assume that the nature of politics in Islamic countries differs from politics in Western ones. These terms fail to recognize the interaction and interrelation of faith as an abstract factor, separate



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■ Mehdi Khalaji, a *Next Generation* fellow with *The Washington Institute*, is a Shiite theologian by training who has worked for the Persian news services of both the BBC and the U.S. government.



■ Martin Kramer is *The Washington Institute's* Wexler-Fromer fellow and author of the highly acclaimed *Institute* monograph *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America* (2001).

from material factors such as living conditions, economics, and culture. An essentialist perception of Islam as a stable and unchangeable metaphysical belief that can affect Muslim lives and orient their behavior cannot provide us with a historical explanation of what is happening in Islamic countries.

To understand Shiite politics in the region, one must examine the often misleading and inadequate abstract theological concepts of the Shiite landscape. The tendency to reduce complex Islamic politics to theological beliefs, supposedly acting as major motivations of fundamentalists' behavior, risks undermining other factors behind Islamist ideology. For example, the role of oil money is of far more importance and influence in "Shiite politics" than the Shiite belief in the return of the Hidden Imam. Overall, Shia Islam is no longer the most important conjunctive of the Shiite community.

Indeed, it is not at all clear that there is any such thing as a Shiite community, because the term "community" is unable to explain the various configurations formed within Shiite society. The unities and divisions in the Shiite world are not based on belief, but rather on material factors, needs, and agendas. This can explain the financial and political relations that Sunni Arab countries such as Kuwait have with both the Iranian regime and the Lebanese Hizballah. Anti-Israeli or anti-American ideology can unify some Shiite and Sunni groups more than any theological dogma. Cooperation between the Iranian government and insurgent groups in Iraq or other parts of the world cannot be justified by theological arguments and concepts.

The emergence of current Islamic ideologies is the result of a post-theology period in Islam. It is not accidental, or coincidental, that twentieth-century proponents and producers of Islamic ideological discourse are not theologians, but rather doctors and engineers. From bin Laden to Ahmadinezhad, the current representatives of Islamic ideological discourse are mostly nonclerical. Even the Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, is not recognized by the traditional seminary as a theologian. He has not written a single book on traditional theology, and his knowledge of the topic is the subject of great suspicion.

MARTIN KRAMER

WHEN OBSERVING A POLITICAL MAP, one may immediately notice geopolitical divisions. However, the Sunni-Shiite conflict is certainly not evident on a map. Rather, it is rooted in history. In the Ottoman Empire, such divisions took the form of preferences, not separate sects. From that empire, there developed a "Sunni presumption," or the insistence on Sunni power. Sunnis were seen as normative Muslims—the natural leaders and representatives of the Islamic entity—even in places with large non-Sunni populations such as Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria.

Yet, the Sunni presumption has failed in the eyes of Arabs and Muslims alike. After losing to Israel time and time again, enduring decades of economic stagnation, and failing to bring Arabs together, the Shiites have attempted to displace this lost leadership. The Alawis in Syria, Hizballah in Lebanon, and a rising Shiite political landscape in Iraq are perfect examples of a new, emerging “Shiite presumption.” Shiites believe that Sunnis have failed, and that it is time for the emergence of Shiite leadership in the Arab and Muslim worlds.

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Israel: War and Consequences

Israel: War and Consequences

Uzi Arad, Uzi Dayan, and Ephraim Sneh

SUMMARY

UZI ARAD

AS ITS STATED OBJECTIVE in Lebanon, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) received a directive that emphasized two words: restore deterrence. Over the past five years, Israel has accumulated a deterrence deficit, and this has come to weigh heavily on its situation with regard to those who would do it harm.

When Israel decided to withdraw from Lebanon in 2000, Prime Minister Ehud Barak made a classic threat with the objective of deterrence. He warned Hizballah and Syria to refrain from exploiting Israel's withdrawal, or Israel's retaliatory response would be severe. Within months his declaration was put to the test, and Israel did not live up to its promise. There was a kidnapping soon after the withdrawal, then other provocations in the years that followed, but at no point was Israel's reaction of the magnitude it promised. This quickly eroded Israel's credibility. It is no surprise that Hizballah leader Hassan Nasrallah miscalculated Israel's response in July 2006. He watched Israel's behavior in 2000–2006 and reasonably assumed it would be an accurate guide to future actions.

Israel's repeated failure to live up to Barak's threat allowed for the growing boldness of Hizballah's provocations. By 2006 the problem had become intolerable. A disproportionate reaction was the natural outcome of Israel's failures to properly deter challenges from Lebanon. In this context, Israel acted in July 2006 as it should have, and one could say that the purpose of the war—to restore deterrence—was accomplished.

The real problem with Israel's weakened deterrence is Iran, which poses a threat that far exceeds those of Hizballah and Syria. In the case of Iran, Israel's deficiency has primarily been on the declaratory level. Faced with Iranian leaders' claimed intentions to destroy it, Israel has not responded either with declarations or legal action. Israel must readjust its national security posture, both on the declaratory and substantive levels. The Lebanon war will inspire a reexamination of Israel's policy of deterrence, in the context of both Syria-Lebanon and Iran.



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■ *Uzi Dayan, a major general (res.) in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), has served as IDF deputy chief of staff and director of Israel's National Security Council.*



■ *Ephraim Sneh is head of the Labor Party faction in the Israeli parliament and former military commander of the security zone in southern Lebanon.*

UZI DAYAN

THERE WAS A STRONG CONSENSUS in Israel to fight this war, in addition to strong international support. The goal of the war should have been to eliminate Hizballah as a strategic player, permanently ending the threats to Israel posed by its long- to short-range rockets. This mission was not achieved. On the last day of the war, Hizballah launched more than 200 rockets at Israel. Israel did not accomplish what it could have in this war, and poor decisionmaking on the national security level was responsible for this.

Going to war, by definition, means that one has failed to deter one's enemies. Israel has to examine how to regain a position of strength. One way to restore a deterrence shield is to make sure that the IDF can clearly win any regional war. While Israel must try to prevent another war, it must also make sure that if one occurs, Israel would win it without question.

Deterrence alone will not stop Iran from achieving nuclear capability. Attempts at deterrence must be used in conjunction with other strategies, including diplomacy, sanctions, and oil embargoes. The military option must remain a last resort.

In addition, Israel must isolate Syria in order to halt the flow of weapons from Iran to Hizballah through Syrian territory. It must also isolate Hizballah and portray it as a pariah equivalent to al-Qaeda. In this context, the ceasefire is limiting. While it is a good means of promoting positive actors in Lebanon such as the Siniora government, it does not deter the resupply of Hizballah's arsenal.

Israel must continue to fight terrorism effectively. In order to deter its neighbors from aggressive action, Israel should have reacted in a much tougher manner in 2000, and when the three Israeli soldiers were kidnapped on Mt. Hermon, and when the first Qassam rocket was launched from the Gaza Strip. If Israel does not fight terrorism effectively, it will end up losing its position of strength, leaving terrorists undeterred and capable of setting any agenda they want, any time.

EPHRAIM SNEH

THERE ARE THOSE WHO tell Israel to live with a nuclear Iran just as the United States lived with a nuclear Soviet Union. Yet there was symmetry between the United States and Soviet Union in terms of territory, population, and responsible government. This is not the case between Israel and Iran. Iran's territory is seventy times larger than that of Israel; its population is ten times as great. The vulnerability of Israel has no comparison in the world, except perhaps in Singapore. Most of Israel's intellectual and economic assets are concentrated between Ashdod and the Bay of Haifa.

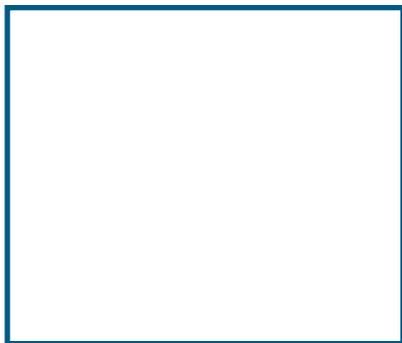
However, the main difference between Israel and Iran is the character of their governments. Deterrence is built on reasonable logic and responsible consideration, which the Iranian regime lacks. Soviet chairmen

Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev did not swear to wipe out the United States. Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinezhad says time and again that his messianic mission is to wipe out the Jewish state. There can be no deterrence of such an unreasonable opponent. The fact that there is no room for diplomacy means that preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon is crucial.

In a region where the only constant is instability, it is imperative that Israel maintain its position of strength—to the point that no Arab country would even entertain the notion of attacking Israel or have any strategic goal other than to live in peace with it. This requires that Israel maintain a consistent military superiority, regardless of the regional situation. There is a mistaken tendency in Israel to think that when the situation looks good, Israel need not retain its military superiority; this was the case in 2000–2006. Israel's military superiority is an absolute prerequisite for any sort of Middle Eastern peace process or national stability.

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Jihadist Threats to the West, In the West

Jihadist Threats to the West, In the West

Frank Cilluffo and Ronald Sandee

SUMMARY

FRANK CILLUFFO

A LARGE PORTION of “al-Qaeda classic” has been degraded. Most of the Afghan and Arab mujahedin who composed Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda are on the run, dead, or incarcerated. Al-Qaeda did, however, fulfill one of its objectives. It spawned groups that think globally but act locally all throughout the world. These offshoots have their own indigenous objectives and aims, but tap into a larger reservoir of Islamist networks. Now we also see a growing number of individuals seeking out other individuals who can help them engage in jihad. These al-Qaeda franchises and individual jihadists pose the biggest threat, even though “al-Qaeda classic” still gets most of the attention.

Jihadist terrorists are not static adversaries. As the West defends against one attack mode, the jihadists select new targets and new means of attack. One of the main threats now facing the United States consists of home-grown radicals, and a major source of such radicals is Islamist radicalization in U.S. prisons. Prisons have played an important historical role in radical movements. Jailhouse Islam provides individuals already prone to violence with puritanical perspectives of Islam. A handful of cases stick out. While incarcerated in Egypt, Sayed Qutub wrote *Milestones along the Road*, which became a manifesto of the radical Islamist movement. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was a two-bit thug in Jordan until he was incarcerated. His prison skills helped him become a terrorist leader after his release. Richard Reid was radicalized by a Muslim cleric in a juvenile prison overseas.

In the case of the al-Rukn gang, the Chicago leader morphed the focus of his group toward a radical Islamist mission while in prison. In 1985 he attempted to broker a deal with Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi for surface-to-air missiles. In the Folsom Prison case in California last year, Kevin Lamar James recruited one individual while in prison. That individual recruited two others at a local mosque. They engaged in a series of bank robberies to raise funds to target U.S. military recruiting centers and Jewish cultural centers. Through luck and good law enforcement, the U.S. government was able to unravel their plot.



■ Frank Cilluffo is associate vice president for homeland security at George Washington University and former special assistant to the president for homeland security.

The idea that “the enemy of thy enemy is a friend” has gained momentum since the war in Lebanon, and individual attackers of varying ideologies have targeted Jewish centers across the United States. In July 2006 a lone gunman killed one person and wounded five others at the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle. The terrorists do not need all two million people in the U.S. prison system; they only need to recruit a few individuals. These radicals are not as sophisticated as “al-Qaeda classic,” but they still pose a serious threat.

This war will not be won through law enforcement alone. Intelligence, information, and data collection can only go so far. There is a need for action on a religious and ideological plane. Generally, religious conversions are a good thing. But in the case of jailhouse Islam, one sees individuals with zero knowledge of the religion, who are very susceptible to extremist views, being converted to a corrupted and radicalized version of Islam. Moderate Muslim religious leaders need to work in prisons so that they can have an influence on inmate populations. There is a huge shortage of Muslim clerics in the prison system. In many cases, extremist prisoners themselves assume the role of cleric. Such extremists are frequently model prisoners who draw little attention to themselves and are overlooked by guards dealing with gang problems, safety, security, and troublesome inmates. Wardens all too often think their only job is to prevent people from breaking out of prison.



■ Ronald Sandee is executive director of the *Nine Eleven Finding Answers (NEFA) Foundation* and a former senior counterterrorism expert with the *Dutch Ministry of Defense*.

RONALD SANDEE

MUSLIM COMMUNITIES in Europe are poorly integrated into society, furthering their isolation and the likelihood of their radicalization. Certain groups are capitalizing on this alienation to raise a new generation of young Muslims who are anti-European and potentially dangerous as Islamists. European governments think they are successfully integrating immigrants, but in fact they are failing. To ensure the continent’s sociopolitical stability, Europe must find ways to reach out both politically and culturally to Muslim minority groups.

There are Muslim religious leaders lauded for making public statements expressing support for peace and tolerance, who then voice extremist views among their congregations. Some instruct their congregants to participate in the jihad. Consider members of the Muslim Brotherhood, who are educated, media friendly, and seemingly moderate, but seem to have a goal of Muslim domination of Europe through population growth over the next century. In the past, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), and the Muslim Brotherhood convened in Brussels and made contacts with radicalized Europeans on a trip supported by the U.S. government.

Europe and the United States have both made poor judgments in their attempts to reach out to Muslims. Politicians do not necessarily recognize this problem. Knowledge of the Quran is a necessary step to engaging

Muslims in dialogue, and Westerners are sorely lacking in this respect. On the other hand, policies of integration should be enforced. Islamic clerics need to commit to integrating into the communities they live in, and mosques must be monitored. One possible course of action would be to require that sermons be in the language of the country. This would ensure that all minority groups know their local language. Instead of watching al-Jazeera or al-Arabiya, European Muslims would be able to understand local newspapers and television. Such a language learning program would take time to implement, but it is a necessary element of a healthy relationship with immigrant Muslims.

Muslim communities are not united. Europeans need to reach out to different communities, including those of immigrants. Each separate Muslim community should be invited to send an official representative to the government. Much could be gained by signaling that the government honors and respects these communities. Domestic officials should be in charge of outreach to domestic Muslim communities; in the past, this has too often been left to diplomats.

Some extremist messages could be used toward positive ends—for example, the idea that Muslims born in Europe have their roots there, and should become politically active in Europe and integrate while remaining Muslim. European governments need to encourage that message. They need to find strands within Muslim society that will strengthen moderation and integration from within.

The attacks of September 11 could happen again at any time. The main challenge facing the West is to combat the ideological underpinnings of those attacks. Reaching out to Muslim communities in Western countries and encouraging their integration is an important step toward meeting this challenge.

Europe and the United States have both made poor judgments in their attempts to reach out to Muslims.

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Dealing with Iran's Nuclear Ambitions, Post-Lebanon

Dealing with Iran's Nuclear Ambitions, Post-Lebanon

Shahram Chubin and Gary Samore

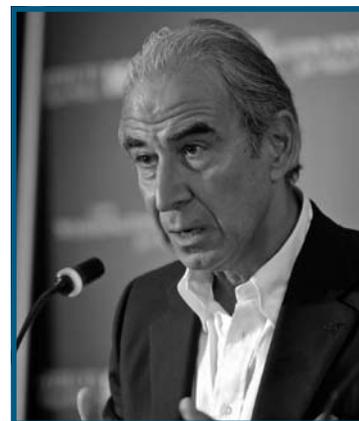
SUMMARY

SHAHRAM CHUBIN

ACCORDING TO THE IRANIAN regime's standard narrative of victimization, the United States has sought to hold back the Islamic Republic's progress for generations through deliberate interference and discrimination. Indeed, Tehran is driven by a profound desire for recognition on the international stage. The hardliners who have consolidated power in recent years view nuclear development in particular as an issue of respect, equality, and pride. They believe that the region is in strategic flux, and that the United States and Israel—together with secular Middle Eastern states—seek to challenge them by imposing regional hegemony and controlling resources. In response, they have cast the Palestinian territories as the front line in Iran's defense and employed asymmetric strategies—namely, supporting and training terrorists worldwide—to counter their enemies.

Yet, despite the hardliners' firm grip on power, the regime is not monolithic. A dialogue exists among the elites, with hardliners and reformers each presenting alternative strategies for the country's future. The divisions between these constituencies pose far-reaching consequences for Iran's nuclear efforts. Although the nuclear issue is not open to public debate, it is firmly grounded in the domestic political dialogue, which has witnessed a shift in strategic rationale over the past several years. Hardliners see Iran as the vanguard for advancing the Islamic revolution and as the eventual dominant power in the region, while reformers deemphasize their country's role in extending the revolution beyond its borders. More specifically, hardliners tend to advocate confrontation with the West and adherence to the fundamentals of the revolution—namely, the use of military and security forces to carry out policies domestically and internationally. Reformers see Iran more as a “normal” state engaged in relations with the rest of the world; consequently, they would be more likely to make a “grand bargain” with the West.

Nuclear goals? Iran's nuclear activities are a persistent venture, not a crash program. The regime has only accelerated these activities since the interna-



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■ Gary Samore is director of studies for the Council on Foreign Relations and former senior director for nonproliferation and export controls at the National Security Council.

tional community discovered its clandestine uranium enrichment program in 2002. The hardliners believe that the region has become a particularly dangerous neighborhood in light of recent developments. Accordingly, Tehran seems to view the nuclear program as necessary for deterring U.S. efforts in the Middle East and casting itself as the defender of the Muslim world.

Although the Iranians have adopted an opportunistic approach on the nuclear issue, they have not fully formulated their goals. If possible, they would like to remain compliant with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and avoid actually breaking out with nuclear weapons, largely because they have no idea what they would do following such a breakout. In general, they want what many other nations want: the benefits of nuclear capabilities without the problems. Their only discernible strategy seems to involve pushing hard until they hit a brick wall. Unfortunately, such an approach carries a high risk of miscalculation.

To complicate matters further, the regime has an unhealthy self-absorption and a general obliviousness to others' perceptions, both of which serve to disconnect it from the world. Iran's leaders are tactically astute but strategically incompetent, often exhibiting a fascination with complexity for its own sake. These factors combine to make Iran a formidable diplomatic opponent, as witnessed in recent months.

Despite these obstacles, sanctions can have an impact on Iran. For example, robust penalties that measurably affect energy prices could reinforce moderate elements in Iranian society and empower the public to alter the regime's calculus. The regime could go so far as to halt the nuclear program entirely for fear of its own marginalization or demise.

GARY SAMORE

ALTHOUGH CURRENT DIPLOMATIC efforts are unlikely to halt Iran's nuclear activities completely, they could buy the United States and its allies some time. The various inducements and threats on display are not powerful enough to convince Iranian elites to end the enrichment program they value so highly. Instead, they see a window of opportunity to advance the program while the major powers are divided and U.S. energy prices are high. For purely tactical reasons, however, they may accept delays if such an approach would more effectively divide the international community and forestall punitive action.

Currently, technical difficulties are the primary obstacle preventing Iran from accelerating its nuclear program. The regime is unable to produce reliable centrifuges, a necessary component for enriching uranium. The International Atomic Energy Agency has confirmed a high rate of centrifuge failure in Iran, so the regime may still be several years away from constructing a large facility capable of producing enough enriched uranium for multiple nuclear weapons.

Eventually, though, Tehran will overcome its technical problems. At that point, diplomatic efforts would stall, and the United States and its allies would be left with a difficult choice between two extremely unattractive options: containment through alliances and threats of retaliation or confrontation through attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities.

The international community may yet be able to strike a deal with Iran to suspend enrichment, but new talks are unlikely to reach a final agreement. Despite accepting narrow inspections designed to promote confidence that its nuclear facilities will not be used for military purposes, Iran has consistently rejected more far-reaching Western demands. The Europeans have offered civilian nuclear assistance as their main incentive to Tehran, including a guarantee to supply nuclear fuel. This would indeed be an attractive option for the regime if the program's true purpose were civilian in nature. Since Iran's objective is to develop nuclear weapons, however, the offer is not appealing.

Several different compromises have been proposed in the past. Yet, even if one could trust Iran to keep its promises, the time for compromise has passed. The best moment for such an approach would have been immediately after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, when Tehran likely perceived itself as the next target. Today, however, Iran would view a suspension of enrichment as merely a chance to buy time under the guise of international negotiations, until it again judged that the political conditions were ripe for resuming the program. Moreover, the technical significance of a suspension has probably been undercut because certain facilities have not been subject to inspection since January 2006, giving Tehran time to establish a small-scale, clandestine research program if it so desired. Such a program would be difficult to detect and could continue operating even as negotiations progress.

Sanctions and military intervention. If diplomacy fails, the remaining options are unattractive. Although the threat of sanctions has been a useful diplomatic tool, both Russia and China would resist actual enforcement of punitive measures, thereby rendering them ineffective. In fact, simply formulating and reaching consensus on tough sanctions—the kind of significant economic restrictions necessary to make Iran think twice about resuming its nuclear activities—would be difficult. Even if such sanctions were somehow enacted and enforced, however, their impact would not be felt in time to forestall Iran from pursuing nuclear weapons.

If all else fails, the United States and Israel could risk military intervention. In order to be effective, however, such action would require far more intelligence data than either party currently seems to hold on Iranian nuclear facilities. Moreover, a military campaign would incur the risk of indirect Iranian retaliation against both American and Israeli interests (e.g., through Hizballah attacks or violent interference in Iraq).

Even if one could trust Iran to keep its promises, the time for compromise has passed.

Iran has demonstrated that its nuclear activities are more than just a crash program.

In the long term, a combination of diplomacy and international action will buy some time, and Iran is still several years away from achieving nuclear weapons capability. The Iranians play a shrewd diplomatic game, however. They have demonstrated that their nuclear activities are more than just a crash program, and they are willing to wait for the optimal time to actually produce nuclear weapons—making it difficult for the United States and its partners to perceive when the “red line” has been crossed. And when Iran does develop nuclear weapons in a few years, the West will face a stark choice between containment and preemption.

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