

## Assessing U.S. Policy across the Middle East

by [Elliott Abrams \(/experts/elliott-abrams\)](#), [Tim Kaine \(/experts/tim-kaine\)](#), [Jean-David Levitte \(/experts/jean-david-levitte\)](#), [James Steinberg \(/experts/james-steinberg\)](#)

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### ABOUT THE AUTHORS



#### [Elliott Abrams \(/experts/elliott-abrams\)](#)

Elliott Abrams was a deputy national security advisor in the second George W. Bush administration.

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#### [Tim Kaine \(/experts/tim-kaine\)](#)

Tim Kaine (D-VA) is a member of the United States Senate and former governor of Virginia.

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#### [Jean-David Levitte \(/experts/jean-david-levitte\)](#)

Jean-David Levitte is a former French ambassador to the United States.

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#### [James Steinberg \(/experts/james-steinberg\)](#)

James Steinberg was deputy secretary of state in the first Barack Obama administration.

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**A panel of senior U.S. and foreign policy practitioners shared insights into the status and course of American policy in the Middle East.**

American strength in the world extends across four spectrums, U.S. Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) told an audience of policymakers, scholars, and journalists at The Washington Institute's [2014 Weinberg Founders Conference \(/policy-analysis/view/2014-weinberg-founders-conference\)](#) on May 8. "Military strength, diplomatic strength, the strength of our moral example, and economic strength. You have to balance all four."

"A major change in our policy in the last few years is less willingness to use military strength unilaterally," Kaine said. After thirteen years of war, he explained, both the American public and its representatives in Congress have grown wary of any foreign military involvement.

Looking to the crisis in Syria, Kaine called for the United States to lead an international effort to bring humanitarian aid into Syria under UN Security Council Resolution 2139. "We have a UN Security Council resolution that says there should be aggressive delivery of aid, including cross-border aid," Kaine said. "Without going back to the UN, we should be part of an international coalition - the U.S. should lead it, but with others - to aggressively insert humanitarian aid into that country, into populations that need it. If Assad or anybody else - ISIS - mess with us in trying to deliver humanitarian aid, then they should pay a cost."

Senator Kaine was joined by policymakers from both Democratic and Republican administrations, as well as France's former ambassador to the United States, in a wide-ranging assessment of the course and current state of American policy in the Middle East.

"It is wrong to argue that the choice is between war and doing nothing," said former deputy national security advisor Elliott Abrams. "That's a false argument ... that feeds isolationism."

A recent former deputy secretary of state, James Steinberg, stressed the difficulty of the challenges America faces in the region. "We need to understand that there's a demand for instant gratification in dealing with some very complex and long-term trends that we're dealing with here," Steinberg said. These huge political, social, and economic challenges, he said, require long-term commitment and sustained effort from Washington and its partners.

Jean-David Levitte, former French ambassador to the United States, stressed the world's need for American leadership on difficult issues. "We live in a global world, but we need a pilot for globalization," he said. "This pilot can only be America."

***Elliott Abrams** was a deputy national security advisor in the second George W. Bush administration.*

***Tim Kaine** is the junior senator from Virginia. A Democrat, he is chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's subcommittee on the Near East.*

***Jean-David Levitte** is a former French ambassador to the United States.*

***James Steinberg** was deputy secretary of state in the first Barack Obama administration.*

***Robert Satloff**, who moderated this event, is executive director of The Washington Institute. ❖*

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