

The Obama Administration and the Middle East: Setting Priorities, Defining Policies

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In-Depth Reports

Featuring

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The Proceedings

President Obama came to office with the promise of bringing change to U.S. Middle East policy. Within weeks of his inauguration, substantive shifts in America's Iraq and Afghanistan strategies were evident, as were early signs that a new era of U.S. engagement was at hand. As the new administration passes its hundred-day mark, it will now clarify priorities and define policies on each of these core issues. Key questions remain: How will the administration integrate common Arab and Israeli concern about Iran's nuclear ambitions into the new U.S. policy of engagement with Tehran?

- What connection does the administration see between the Iran issue and the Arab-Israeli peace process?
- To what extent does an orderly withdrawal of troops from Iraq and a handover of authority to the Iraqi government shape U.S. policy toward other Middle Eastern states?
- How much will the Obama administration invest in protecting the regional successes achieved on its predecessor's watch, such as Lebanon's Cedar Revolution?
- And given the barriers to progress in Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking, will the administration pursue diplomacy without clarity on the question of who truly speaks for the Palestinians?

To address these critical questions, The Washington Institute's 2009 Soref Symposium convened an exceptional group of scholars, diplomats, officials, policy practitioners, and experts for intensive discussion and debate about the emerging shape of U.S. Middle East policy under the Obama administration. This publication captures the essence of that illuminating event and highlights the steep road ahead for America in its pursuit of security and peace in the volatile Middle East.

This year's conference featured the following keynote presentations and panel discussions:

- [The Middle East Security Agenda: An Israeli Assessment \(templateC07.php?CID=459\)](#)
- ['Mutual Interest and Mutual Respect': Ideas for U.S. Diplomacy toward the 'Muslim World' \(templateC07.php?CID=458\)](#)

- [Beyond the First 100 Days: Prospects for Obama Administration Middle East Strategy \(templateC07.php?CID=457\)](#)
- [Peace through Security: America's Role in the Development of the Palestinian Authority Security Forces \(templateC07.php?CID=456\)](#)

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