

# Weinberg Founders Conference Keynote Address

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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## Brief Analysis

**O**n October 16, 2004, Wendy Sherman addressed the 2004 Weinberg Founders Conference. Ms. Sherman, former counselor to the secretary of state, is senior foreign policy advisor to the Kerry-Edwards campaign. The following is a selection of excerpts from her remarks. [Read a full transcript. \(templateC07.php?CID=152\)](#)

“One year ago today, Donald Rumsfeld wrote in a memorandum, which later appeared in USA Today, ‘Today, we lack metrics to know if we are winning or losing the global war on terror. Are we capturing, killing, or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrasses and the radical clerics are recruiting, training, and deploying against us?’ Sadly, painfully, crucially, these critical questions still stand. And the evidence of the last year, to my mind, is not encouraging. . . .

“John Kerry has a comprehensive plan to wage a relentless, single-minded war to capture or kill the terrorists, crush their movement, free the world from fear. He will destroy the terrorist networks, take strong action to prevent nuclear terrorism, cut off terrorism financing, protect the homeland, deny terror safe-havens and new recruits, support democracies in the Arab and Muslim world, and restore our alliances to combat terrorists across the globe. . . . Across the board, Kerry would take a more activist approach. . . .

“Rumsfeld’s memo made clear what we are not doing, where we are failing. The question is: How do we change course? What should be the shape of a long-term strategy to change the political equation in the Arab and Muslim world? How do we change perceptions of our country, which has lost an enormous amount of respect around the world? And how do we launch a serious effort to use our influence, our experience, and our strength as a pluralist nation to support reformers? . . .

“A new approach means standing up to repressive governments, and it means a strategy for reform backed by an effort to train a new generation of American scholars, diplomats, military officers, and democracy builders so we can reach out effectively to Arabs and Muslims.

“And a new approach means bringing allies on board. This cannot and should not be work that we do alone. To work together means serious high-level planning and coordination, working effectively to bring European allies to the effort and to coordinate activities with governments and nongovernmental entities in the Arab and Muslim world. . . .

“The challenge could not be clearer—the consequences of failure in Iraq would be devastating. We can still avoid a failure in Iraq. . . . We must succeed in Iraq and we must deal with the situation next door in Iran.

“Over the past four years, the situation in Iran has deteriorated. In January 2001, Iranian reformers had a strong majority in the parliament. Today, after the invasion of Iraq, which some in this administration thought would lead to democratic change in Iran, hardliners are firmly in control of the Majlis, having crushed the reform movement. Iran has steadily made progress on its nuclear program as well. . . . If it is left unchecked, Iran is poised to make important technological advances that will bring it even closer to the point where it can enrich enough uranium for several nuclear weapons. Iran’s support for terrorists also continues unabated. . . .

“While these developments have been underway, the Bush administration has had no Iran policy because of the deep divisions that exist between the State Department on the one hand and the Defense Department and the Vice President’s Office on the other. . . . We cannot afford this kind of a vacillation any longer. . . . We should sit down with our G-8 partners, beginning with our European allies, and forge a united front. If Iran does not accept the offer of a guaranteed supply of nuclear fuel, as long as spent fuel is removed in exchange for a verifiable end to Iran’s development of a full nuclear fuel cycle, we would lead our partners in seeking tough sanctions and penalties, including through action by the UN Security Council. . . .

“Finally, I want to turn to the Middle East and begin with a set of propositions so that it is crystal clear where we stand. First, the American commitment to Israel is unshakable. It is a bipartisan commitment, a moral commitment, and a strategic commitment. We do take sides in this conflict and we are not embarrassed to say so.

“Second, no one should be under the illusion that they can drive a wedge between us and Israel. Israel should be treated no differently than our closest allies, like Britain and Australia. There should be no visible daylight between us that Israel’s enemies can exploit.

“Third, Israel not only has the right but it has the duty to defend itself and its citizens in the face of terrorist onslaught and the unwillingness of the Palestinian Authority to end terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians. The fence has brought down the level of attacks. . . .

“Fourth, the burden of the current mess in the Middle East, the collapse of the last serious peacemaking effort under President Clinton, the wave of terror that has followed, and the failure to end terrorist violence today rest primarily with the Palestinian leadership and Yasir Arafat, in particular. Arafat has proven that he is incapable and unwilling to make the decisions and take the steps that could end this conflict.

“Fifth, the Palestinians deserve to have a viable state living in peace and security side-by-side with Israel. Their quality of life today is abysmal. And they are losing hope for the future. Tangible progress toward a state can rekindle hope and diminish support for extremism.

“Sixth, the Arabs must walk the walk, not just talk the talk. If they are really in favor of a two-state solution as they say they are, if they really do favor reconciliation and are prepared to accept Israel, then why not begin the process of normalization today? Why continue to teach hate to children? . . .

“The Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the key strategic problems our country faces. . . . Yet, we do not see a commensurate level of urgency, nor sustained and consistent involvement from the Bush administration. Our hopes were raised last year when the president traveled to the Middle East and put his personal prestige on the line. . . . But then, as we’ve seen in so many other instances, the interest level seemed to wane, and the Middle East, which presents a formidable challenge to even full-fledged peace efforts, overwhelmed what soon became a half-hearted effort. . . .

“Instead of American leadership creating new opportunities, events on the ground have driven a reactive policy. Dennis [Ross] put it best when he told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee this summer that since 2001, ‘There really has not been a peace process.’ . . .

“Some might say that the parties need to grow up and that some benign neglect is in order. They would have you believe that American engagement is a euphemism for pressuring Israel. But as events on the ground demonstrate, there is no such thing as benign neglect. And, indeed, the lack of involvement is what imperils Israel, not American engagement—as the current state of affairs with respect to Gaza disengagement demonstrates. Even if you think we shouldn’t be involved in all the details, does it really make sense for us to be out of the room completely? To be in a passive mode getting briefed after the parties meet? Does anyone here believe that Egypt, Israel, and the Palestinians have the trust and confidence among themselves to make the arrangements on their own for successful withdrawal from Gaza? . . .

“If we truly want to see Gaza withdrawal succeed, we . . . have to be more engaged in coordinating Gaza withdrawal. We have to rally the international community in a comprehensive effort to marginalize Arafat through a constitution that empowers Palestinian reformers and a younger generation that is sick and tired of cronyism, corruption, and stagnation of the current leadership. That is the only way that the Israelis trying so hard will have a partner for peace. . . .

“We can do better than we have done. We can give children around the world a future. We can ensure Israel’s security. We can make sure that Iran does not have nuclear weapons. We can finish the job in Iraq. We can win the war against terrorism. . . .” ❖

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