



Proceedings of the 2009 Soref Symposium

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

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THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY
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EDITOR'S NOTE

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PEACE THROUGH SECURITY: AMERICA'S ROLE
IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY
SECURITY FORCES

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RAPPORTEUR'S SUMMARY

Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton

U.S. Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority

Preface

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. With the swift appointment of senior envoys to the region's hot spots, high-profile public statements to Middle Eastern audiences, and the president's own visit to Turkey—a vital Western ally that straddles Europe and Asia—President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton have unquestionably energized American diplomacy.

The core challenges of the Middle East, however, remain unchanged. At the top of the list is Iran's continuing pursuit of nuclear weapons capability, the success of which would radically alter the regional balance of power. Already, Tehran is taking advantage of the international community's inability to compel change in Iranian nuclear policy. Through its own efforts and those of its allies and proxies, Iran is trying to exploit strategic vulnerabilities in the region wherever they can be found—from traditional weak zones such as Lebanon and Gaza to the more unlikely settings of Egypt and Morocco.

Through their shared assessment of the Iranian threat, many Arab states and Israel are closer in strategic vision today than at any time in history. Whether that common view will lead to common effort vis-à-vis Iran—or common progress in the more narrowly defined Arab-Israeli peace negotiations—remains to be seen. Although Iranian nuclear progress has been identified by the president as a critical foreign policy issue, structural impediments to progress on that front—such as Syria's reluctance to loosen its alliance with Iran and Hamas's ongoing control of Gaza (and growing influence in the West Bank)—are formidable.

As the new administration moves from an early focus on domestic economic matters to devoting attention to a broader set of issues, it will now clarify priorities and define policies on each of these core Middle Eastern challenges. Key questions remain: How will the administration integrate common Arab and Israeli concern about Iran's nuclear ambitions into the



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“Many Arab states and Israel are closer in strategic vision today than at any time in history.”

new U.S. policy of engagement with Tehran? What connection, if any, 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?

The Washington Institute convened its annual Soref Symposium in May 2009 to address these critical questions. An exceptional group of scholars, diplomats, officials, policy practitioners, and experts from around the world—along with members of The Washington Institute’s Board of Trustees—gathered for a day of 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.

Robert Satloff
Executive Director

The Speakers

Nicholas Blanford is a Beirut-based correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor* and *Time*. A former reporter for Beirut's *Daily Star*, he is the author of *Killing Mr. Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East* (2006). He also served as an Iraq correspondent for the *Monitor* in 2003–2004.

Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton assumed the position of U.S. security coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority in December 2005, heading a team of thirty-five U.S., Canadian, British, and Turkish military and civilian professionals assigned by their governments to work in the region. Previously, he served at the Defense Department as director of strategy, plans, and policy for the U.S. Army. An artilleryman by training, he has held command and leadership positions in the military for more than three decades. His tours of duty included commanding the Iraq Survey Group and serving as the U.S. defense attaché in Russia. In addition, he served as a senior military fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations in 1995–1996. A graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College and the National Security Fellowship Program at Harvard University, he holds master's degrees from both Cambridge University and the University of Southern California.

James Glassman, president of the World Growth Institute, served as undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs from 2008 until earlier this year. The former chairman of the U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors, he has also been as a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, president of the *Atlantic Monthly*, publisher of the *New Republic*, executive vice president of *U.S. News & World Report*, and editor and co-owner of *Roll Call*, the congressional newspaper.

John Hannah is a senior fellow at The Washington Institute, where he directs a new initiative on U.S. Middle East strategy. A senior foreign policy practitioner in both Democratic and Republican administrations over

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Michael Herzog, a brigadier general in the Israel Defense Forces, currently serves as chief of staff to the Israeli minister of defense. A former visiting fellow at The Washington Institute, he is the author of the Washington Institute Policy Focus *Iranian Public Opinion on the Nuclear Program: A Potential Asset for the International Community* (2006).

Marc Lynch is an associate professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University, where he serves as cochair of the Institute for Public Diplomacy and Global Communication. Next year, he will become director of the university's Institute for Middle East Studies. A former professor at Williams College, he is author of the influential *Abu Aardvark* weblog on Middle Eastern politics at ForeignPolicy.com..

David Makovsky is the Ziegler distinguished fellow and director of the Project on the Middle East Peace Process at The Washington Institute. An adjunct professor of Middle East studies at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, his latest book, *Myths, Illusions, and Peace: Finding a New Direction for America in the Middle East* (coauthored with Dennis Ross), was released in June 2009 by Viking/Penguin.

Robert Satloff is executive director of The Washington Institute and host of *Dakhil Washington* (Inside Washington), a weekly public affairs program on the al-Hurra Arabic satellite television network. The author of *Among the Righteous: Lost Stories from the Holocaust's Long Reach into Arab Lands* (2006) and the 2004 Washington Institute monograph *The Battle of Ideas in the War on Terror: Essays on U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Middle East*, he has written and spoken widely on the Arab-Israeli peace process and on regional Islamist politics.

2009 SOREF SYMPOSIUM



The Middle East Security Agenda: An Israeli Assessment

The Middle East Security Agenda: An Israeli Assessment

Michael Herzog

SUMMARY

THE MIDDLE EAST is in a transitional period. There are new governments in Israel and the United States. Lebanon is about to hold elections, and the Palestinians may do the same by 2010. More broadly, the region has felt the effects of the global economic situation. And many are concerned about both the Iranian nuclear threat and the potential consequences of the Taliban gaining control over Pakistani nuclear facilities. The sand dunes are shifting, and it is important to determine sooner rather than later where the Middle East is headed.

The primary concern for Arab countries is Iran. Many are skeptical of the notion that Tehran's nuclear program can be stopped—they worry that the United States will not be assertive enough, and that the Arab states will be sold out. As a result, the divide between radicals and moderates is growing, with regional actors judging both the Iranian issue and other events along these axes. This could be seen in the reactions to the 2006 Lebanon war and, even more clearly, the war in Gaza. Today, fault lines are deepening between Palestinian and Lebanese factions. Saudi Arabia is pouring huge sums into the Lebanese elections. Morocco has cut off official ties with Iran. Bahrain is becoming increasingly concerned about Tehran's claims of sovereignty over the island nation, while Qatar has decided to align with Iran due to their close proximity. And Syria is keeping its options open by engaging in peace efforts, and by building ties with Iraq and Turkey rather than with Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

To address the region's growing divisions, we must clearly identify their source. The radical contingent has its head in Tehran, its body in Damascus, and its arms in Lebanon and Gaza. Although each of these players presents different challenges, the main problem is Iran and its pursuit of nuclear weapons. Some argue that Iran wants civilian nuclear power, not weapons, but there is clear evidence to the contrary.

In order to fulfill its nuclear ambitions, Tehran needs three elements: fissile material, delivery systems, and weaponization. Israel and the United States disagree on whether or not Iran truly halted its weaponization program in 2003. Yet, regardless of who is correct, weaponization is



■ *Michael Herzog, a brigadier general in the Israel Defense Forces, currently serves as chief of staff to the Israeli minister of defense.*

“What is the goal of engagement; how do you define and measure it in clear, concrete terms?”

not a significant obstacle—the nuclear program’s success is much more dependent on acquiring delivery systems and enriching uranium

Iran already has the required delivery systems—missiles—and is working to extend their range to two thousand kilometers by purchasing and developing new systems. Uranium enrichment is therefore the key issue. According to the latest intelligence and International Atomic Energy Agency reports, Iran already has more than a ton of low-enriched uranium. At this pace, it will have enough to produce a bomb as soon as the end of 2010 or early 2011.

Tehran will have four main options once it reaches breakout capacity. First, it could announce to the world that it is a nuclear power. This is probably not Iran’s first choice, since it would draw international condemnation. Based on North Korea’s experience, however, Iranian leaders may decide that announcing they have gone nuclear will shield them from repercussions. Therefore, this possibility cannot be ruled out.

Second, the Iranians could continue stockpiling low-enriched uranium without refining it into the high-enriched material needed for a bomb. In that case, they could bide their time, waiting until they feel that international resolve is weakened or pressure on them has lessened before moving forward with the program. A third possibility would be to halt enrichment while still increasing their stockpile by stealing or diverting additional low-enriched uranium. And a fourth option is to establish an entirely clandestine program parallel to their known, inspected program—in fact, we cannot rule out the possibility that they have already done so.

Regardless of which scenario comes to pass, we will be in a danger zone once Iran reaches the breakout point. There is time for engagement, but not much. Although engagement is a sensible option, Israel has several questions for the United States about what such a strategy means.

First, what is the goal of engagement? How do you define it and measure it in clear, concrete terms? Second, what is your timeframe for this approach? Third, what benchmarks will you set in determining whether engagement is working? This is important because the Iranians will continue to enrich uranium as Washington and Europe attempt to engage them. Fourth, what will you do if engagement does not achieve its desired goal?

If engagement fails, the international community may choose to exploit Iran’s acute vulnerability to sanctions. For example, the country’s oil infrastructure has deteriorated to the point where Iranians have to import 40 percent of their refined petroleum. In light of this dependency, Europe could deny credit to companies that do business with Iran. These and other sanctions would place a great deal of pressure on the regime given the low price of oil and the global economic situation.

As far as Israel’s stance on Iranian nuclearization is concerned, I would just make the following points: when we say that a nuclear Iran is unacceptable, we mean it. And when we say that all options are still on the table, we mean it.

Regarding the other key players in the region's growing radical contingent, Hamas remains a major Israeli concern. Israeli leaders are often asked—even by many Arabs—why they did not crush Hamas during the recent fighting in Gaza. The reason is primarily tactical. To borrow from Tom Friedman, the choice was whether to eradicate Hamas or educate it. Eradicating the group would have required a massive military deployment and a return to Israeli control over Gaza, with no exit in sight. The Palestinian Authority would not want to resume control amid Israeli bayonets, and no international actor would be willing to take Israel's place following such a campaign. Although Hamas is a concern, it is not Israel's top priority at the moment, and so the choice was made to “educate” the group instead.

Another common question is why, if the goal was to halt rocket attacks from Gaza, did Israel not reoccupy the Philadelphia Corridor on the Egyptian border? First, this would not have been sufficient to stop the smuggling of rockets—Israel would also have had to control Rafah, where the smuggling tunnels end. Second, Egypt has recently become much more effective at preventing smuggling. We know this because the price of weapons in Gaza has increased dramatically. In retrospect, Hamas was badly beaten, and today it is trying to maintain quiet by forcing other groups to respect the ceasefire. Israel hopes that this ceasefire will last long enough for it to finish developing antirocket systems, whose necessity became clear after the 2006 war in Lebanon.

Hamas control of Gaza will continue to complicate the peace process with the Palestinians, of course. It is unclear how Israel can negotiate with Abu Mazen when some 40 percent of the Palestinian population is not under his control. Furthermore, if Hamas does not allow elections to be carried out in Gaza, even the Palestinians are unsure of what the potential consequences might be. In any case, the new Israeli government is still conducting its policy review on the peace process, so it is premature to say what Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu will do.

In the meantime, both top-down and bottom-up state-building efforts should continue in order to lay the foundation of a Palestinian state. In particular, Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton should be permitted to continue his mission. Israel is very impressed with the professionalism and commitment he has shown in training Palestinian security officials and ensuring their cooperation with Israel. Although it is not yet possible to turn over complete security control to the Palestinians, the level of professional pride among the battalions trained in Jordan is unprecedented. In addition, we should continue with economic and infrastructure projects; such initiatives led to Palestinian economic growth rates of up to 4 percent in 2008 alone.

To the north, the Lebanese situation remains a concern as well. Although Israel has been successful during the past decade in preventing conflicts on that front from spreading elsewhere, Lebanon is still a

“Regarding the other key players in the region's growing radical contingent, Hamas remains a major Israeli concern.”

sticking point in Israeli-Syrian negotiations. In the past, it was assumed that Lebanon would follow Syria's lead. Yet recent political developments—particularly the growing strength of Hizballah—have changed the situation. Hizballah could conceivably win the upcoming Lebanese elections. A further difficulty is that Syria refuses to even negotiate until it knows what territory it will gain from Israel. For its part, Israel refuses to cede the Golan Heights until it knows that Syria will stop aiding Hizballah and Hamas.

Despite these bleak pictures, there are many opportunities for constructive action in the region. Such action will require cooperative effort, and Israel's neighbors are willing to take part as long as they believe that they will not be left stranded, and that events are moving in the right direction.



‘Mutual Interest and Mutual Respect’: Ideas for U.S. Diplomacy toward the ‘Muslim World’

‘Mutual Interest and Mutual Respect’: Ideas for U.S. Diplomacy toward the ‘Muslim World’

James Glassman, Marc Lynch, and Robert Satloff

SUMMARY

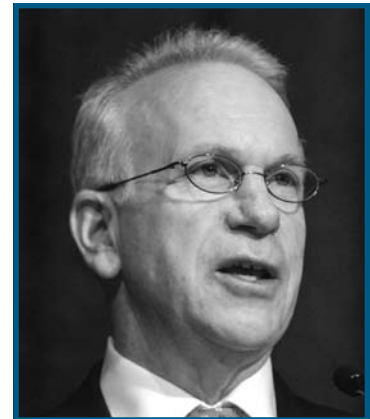
JAMES GLASSMAN

SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC DIPLOMACY requires three elements: defined interests, assigned structure and roles, and effective means of communication. These elements aligned at the end of the Bush administration, and the Obama administration should draw on that experience and take advantage of the positive momentum. Time is of the essence.

As the new administration pursues “mutual interests,” the first step will be to define them clearly. Engaging and influencing foreign publics is a means, not an end—it must be employed for a strategic purpose. During the Bush administration, the national security strategy established the dual goals of reducing the threat posed by violent extremism and promoting freedom around the world. Those interests focused the machinery of public diplomacy on undermining extremist ideology and diverting youths from the path of violence. Other nations shared, and continue to support, these aims.

Second, public diplomacy is a government-wide effort that requires delineated roles for the major stakeholders. With strong leadership operating effectively through a streamlined interagency process in late 2008, the State and Defense departments were ultimately able to coordinate their work despite the vast resource imbalance between them. This structure has been undermined by transitional gaps in two key positions: the lengthy vacancy of the undersecretary of state for public diplomacy, and the elimination of the deputy assistant secretary of defense for supporting public diplomacy. To make the most of public diplomacy, the Obama administration will have to reinstitute a clear structure and take action on the unbalanced allocation of resources.

Third, the means of communication must change. The “big megaphone” strategy of public diplomacy—explaining U.S. policies and extolling American virtues through speeches and press releases—consumes too much of our time and resources. Perhaps more important, it is an inefficient and even condescending approach; after long bombardment by government-funded images and stories, audiences have become skeptical of such messages. In



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other words, they are tired of hearing about us from us. Engagement with foreign publics should be about their concerns and issues, not our image.

Instead of the big megaphone, public diplomacy should turn toward the “grand conversation” model, with the U.S. government generating engagement through social-networking technology and public-private partnerships. Last year, for example, the Office of the Undersecretary of State launched a number of programs expressing U.S. interests indirectly, including a “Democracy Is...” competition on YouTube and a social-networking website for educational exchanges in the “.gov” domain. Keeping its government fingerprint light, the office served as the catalyst for other efforts as well, including a “Problems of Extremism” publication directed by European scholars and a global antiviolence nonprofit called the Alliance of Youth Movements. Allowing others to take control of the message is risky, but it shows confidence that our values and policies will ultimately win in the marketplace of ideas.

Overall, this model projects an attitude of mutual respect toward its audience, making it ideal for the Obama administration’s public diplomacy orientation. In order to win this battle of ideas, however, we have to get in the game. Each day of inactivity concedes space to the competing message of extremism, reversing the valuable advances made at the end of President Bush’s term.



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MARC LYNCH

THE “WAR OF IDEAS” MODEL of public diplomacy was appropriate for tackling al-Qaeda’s ideology in the post–September 11 era, but it is inadequate in the face of America’s new challenge: a heterogeneous, popular, political resistance camp. Lumping our adversaries together—whether under the banner of al-Qaeda or “violent extremism”—simply plays into their hands, making them larger and more powerful than they really are. Instead, the United States should disaggregate the elements of this resistance, address their particular grievances, and try, where possible, to marginalize the truly irreconcilable violent elements.

At its post–September 11 height, al-Qaeda co-opted the anger and frustrations of a broad resistance, successfully claiming the mantle of opposition to the West. Yet, information campaigns and the gradual exposure of the organization’s tactics have since demonstrated al-Qaeda’s marginality and untenable position. Internal adversaries capitalized on this shift, isolating the group within its supportive communities.

Although al-Qaeda remains capable of doing serious harm, it is a shadow of its former self that produces more and more propaganda for a dwindling audience. Accordingly, it should no longer be used to define America’s official or public diplomacy efforts. President Obama aptly expressed this sentiment in his April speech to the Turkish parliament, stating that America’s relationship with the Muslim world “cannot and will not” be based on opposition to terrorism alone.

Of course, this shift in focus by no means signals the end of hostility and opposition to American foreign policy. Following al-Qaeda's marginalization, the resistance mantle passed to a more broadly constituted rejectionist camp. Despite the conceptual popularity of placing Iran at its head, this camp is actually grounded in mass attitudes—specifically, mainstream public opposition to American hegemony, Israel, and U.S. foreign policy. Its composition and political motivation differentiate it from violent extremism; unlike religious zealots, this public base cannot be marginalized.

Responding to this challenge will require new tools and a new orientation for public diplomacy. Speaking in terms of a monolithic Islamist enemy only legitimizes the “West versus resistance” dichotomy, enhances the opposition's appeal, and disguises the variety of political motives masquerading under one conceptual banner. Instead, the Obama administration should separate the reconcilable elements from the truly radical margin, then address the former's interests at the local level. This strategy was successful in Iraq and can serve as a model for the wider encounter with extremism.

The new administration has already adopted this mindset to a great extent. Its outreach to Syria and Iran and its rhetorical gestures toward the Muslim world are pointed efforts to reframe the problem, search for new alliances, and undermine the rejectionist appeal. But these signals are not enough. The administration must reach out and engage in political arguments with mass publics, embracing the new media environment of competing and cacophonous messages using more than just the president and secretary of state's voices.

ROBERT SATLOFF

IN TODAY'S WORLD, public diplomacy is more than straightforward engagement with foreign publics and advocacy for U.S. interests. It is an ideological contest against Islamist extremists, who seek the imposition of *sharia*-based government on their societies and, eventually, on the rest of the world. Defeating these elements is as consequential for national security as the more kinetic wars we face in Iraq and Afghanistan, and it will require all of the noncoercive instruments of national power.

Combating al-Qaeda is only part of this struggle, which takes place in villages and cities around the world—anywhere mainstream voices confront the ideology of violence and extremism. In Morocco, for example, parents fight the spread of radical schools that employ the most modern equipment and facilities in teaching a toxic ideology. These parents are our allies in the battle of ideas, and their voices need support. The United States must bolster their competing narratives and ensure that Muslims have choices. If extremism becomes the only option, then we will have lost.

Unfortunately, our public diplomacy machinery remains largely fixated on improving foreign perceptions of U.S. policy, still pursuing the



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“The United States must design country-specific plans that engage and empower those who oppose extremism.”

question “Why do they hate us?” This focus on attitudes rather than behavior is deeply flawed, relying on suspect public polling that divorces opinions from their political meaning. It also abandons the nation-state as the unit of analysis, playing into our adversaries’ framing of a unified “Muslim world.” The Obama administration should jettison this counterproductive phrase and move away from its attitude-focused, poll-dependent approach to foreign policy.

To reorient public diplomacy toward the battle of ideas, the United States must design country-specific plans that engage and empower those who oppose extremism. These plans should be tailored to meet five categories: war zones (Iraq and Afghanistan), fragile countries (e.g., Yemen, Nigeria, Pakistan), critical countries (e.g., Turkey, Egypt, Indonesia), a systemic region (Europe), and, in its own category, Iran. Washington will need to be nimble and discerning in addressing the challenges unique to these categories. In each case, the United States will have to identify the broad range of Muslims, pious and secular, who oppose extremism and Islamist governance. We must define anti-Islamist partners in a broad sense, applying the same principle that the British government recently adopted—namely, that it is a mistake to rely on nonviolent extremists to drown out the voices of violent extremists. Instead, we must work against extremists of all stripes. Similarly, we need to differentiate between governments that will work with us and governments that believe working with the Islamists better serves their interests.

Successful public diplomacy requires ingenuity, boldness, and an entrepreneurial spirit. President Obama’s personal engagement in this effort is a positive step, as is his outreach to Muslim and Arab audiences on the basis of “mutual interest and mutual respect.” Yet the administration’s persistent rhetoric about “the Muslim world” and inaction on empowering bureaucratic champions for the battle of ideas sends a conflicting signal. Moving forward, the administration must ensure that all U.S. government institutions have the leadership and vision they need to win this most important contest.



Beyond the First 100 Days: Prospects for Obama Administration Middle East Strategy

Beyond the First 100 Days: Prospects for Obama Administration Middle East Strategy

John Hannah, Nicholas Blanford, and David Makovsky

SUMMARY

JOHN HANNAH

ANY ADMINISTRATION approaching the Middle East today must understand the central dynamic at play in the region—namely, the battle for power and influence between the United States and its regional friends on the one hand, and Iran and its allies/proxies on the other. This is the main prism through which key actors in the region—and certainly the Iranians—are judging events, weighing the balance of power, and making decisions on crucial policy matters.

Although it is too early to pass any definitive judgments on President Obama's foreign policy, there are some reasons for concern. The administration's current strategy—which is heavily premised on engaging traditional enemies, apologizing for America's past misdeeds, and downplaying the fears of regional friends—holds little promise of becoming a successful formula for advancing U.S. interests in the Middle East, regardless of its reception among allies in Europe. This is especially true when adversaries like Iran are quite successfully constructing a narrative that has tremendous resonance in the region. According to this narrative, Iran and its cohorts are winning the struggle for power and influence across the Middle East—they are the ones who are ascendant, and America is in retreat. Even Obama's election and the end of the Bush era are claimed as fruits of Iran's confrontational policies and confirmation of its growing strength. From this perspective, President Obama's early efforts to engage Iran serve as affirmation of U.S. weakness. For evidence, one need only look at President Ahmadinezhad's May 6 press conference in Damascus, where he triumphantly declared that the United States had abandoned its past efforts to pressure Iran and Syria because it now needed them. "Circumstances are changing rapidly in our favor," he claimed. "We are on the road to victory."

Such statements, and the extent to which they have real currency in the region, offer little basis for effective negotiations that will advance vital U.S. interests. Accordingly, the new administration should be far more sensitive to how its statements and actions affect the prevailing regional



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narrative on the most pressing issues of the day, including the ongoing reorientation of America's strategic relationship with Iraq, the upcoming elections in Lebanon, the cold war being waged against Iran by Egypt and several other friendly Arab states (during which the Obama administration has largely sat on the sidelines), and the looming possibility of an Israeli military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities. In other words, the administration needs to do a better job of positioning its desire for engagement within the broader regional context and balance of power.

NICHOLAS BLANFORD

FROM BEIRUT, the Obama administration appears to be proceeding with extreme caution at present. A clearer idea of U.S. Middle East policy may form after key elections in the region, particularly in Lebanon and Iran. The great interest in the outcome of the upcoming Lebanese elections stems from the growing possibility that the pro-Syrian, Hizballah-led, Iran-backed "March 8 Alliance" will triumph over the current Western-backed parliamentary majority known as "March 14." In all probability, however, little will change in Lebanon regardless of which side wins. Chances are that another dysfunctional national unity government will emerge and grant veto power to the losing party, much like in the current system.

The main impact of an opposition victory at the polls would be one of perception, both regionally and internationally. Over the past five years, Lebanon has been the battlefield for Iran and its allies and the so-called moderate states like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan. Lebanon's return to the axis of resistance—from which it broke in 2005 following the assassination of Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri—would be a blow to the morale of the Saudis and their allies, and a boost for Iran and Syria. Egyptians and Saudis would voice further objections to Iranian penetration of the Arab Middle East, and the cold war between the Iranian contingent and the Arab-Israeli-U.S. alliance would likely deepen.

Despite these scenarios, the United States should continue to engage with Lebanon and refrain from overreacting to the prospect of a Hizballah electoral victory. The Obama administration should also maintain the ongoing U.S. military assistance program in order to boost the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and internal security services. A March 8 government would most likely not attempt to sever this relationship. Nor is there a real danger that weapons or military equipment sent to the LAF would fall into the hands of Hizballah. The group uses weapons that suit its own needs, which are not necessarily the same as those of the LAF. Furthermore, Hizballah officials have indicated since 2006 that the group is already well armed.

Although Hizballah has embarked on a vast military buildup since the 2006 war with Israel—including weapons acquisition, training, and recruitment—it has remained relatively quiet along the Blue Line, the



■ *Nicholas Blanford is a Beirut-based correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor and Time, as well as a former reporter for Beirut's Daily Star.*

boundary with Israel and the occupied Shebaa Farms. The situation that existed between the May 2000 Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon and the 2006 war has been restored to a certain extent—a mild balance of terror, so to speak. Although both parties are necessarily gearing up for another war, it is a conflict that neither side wishes to see anytime soon.

At this juncture, the United States can take a number of steps to help maintain stability in the Israeli-Lebanese arena. First, it should finalize the Israeli troop withdrawal from Ghajar, a divided village on the border between Lebanon and the Golan Heights. Attempts should be made to resolve the Shebaa Farms issue as well; although the Obama administration seems to have some reasonable ideas about how to proceed on this front, it remains to be seen how these ideas would play out on the ground. Washington should also work to curb Israeli overflights in Lebanese airspace. Although I appreciate Israel's argument that these are necessary reconnaissance missions, they have also helped to reinforce Hizballah's claim of defending Lebanon from Israeli aggression. Finally, the United States should keep a close eye on the economic situation in Lebanon because it may influence security developments in the near future. Although Lebanon has been largely unscathed by the global financial crisis, it could yet suffer a trickle-down effect in the form of dwindling remittances from expatriates.

Ultimately, the United States should provide continued support to whatever government takes shape in Lebanon, regardless of the electoral outcome. Along the Blue Line, the goal should be containment—a holding action to prevent another outbreak of hostilities between Hizballah and Israel, rather than an unrealistic effort to definitively resolve the conflict between the two parties.

DAVID MAKOVSKY

THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION is currently laying the groundwork for U.S. policy on two issues—Iran and the Arab-Israeli arena. Regarding the former, there is a certain logic to engagement given that nearly a decade of isolating Iran has failed to halt the regime's march toward nuclear weapons. It must be engagement without illusions, however. Dialogue may not work unless the United States exerts strong leverage, such as making clear to Iran the profound consequences of failure. Therefore, Washington will need to obtain broad international support beforehand, in order to articulate and galvanize leverage ahead of any substantive dialogue. The administration seems committed to aligning Europe, Russia, China, and countries throughout the Middle East behind this approach.

Is engagement a workable strategy or simply a short-term tactic? Regardless of Washington's intent, Iran's response will effectively determine the answer to this question. U.S. efforts may well fail—the Iranian regime could decide that its self-definition is so rooted in hostility toward



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“Is engagement a workable strategy or simply a short-term tactic?”

America that maintaining this stance is central to its survival. Yet if Washington offers to open a dialogue, establishes a well-defined timeframe for an Iranian response, and is then spurned by Tehran, all remaining U.S. policy options would gain some degree of international and regional credibility. Tehran would have a harder time demonizing Obama compared to his predecessor, and his willingness to make certain offers would help make other moves more palatable if engagement falters.

The importance of public perceptions in this situation cannot be underestimated. Ironically, the potential fallout of failure can be used to help improve the prospects of successful engagement, convincing Iran that rejecting Obama’s outreach would be too costly. In light of this possibility, it is unfortunate that senior U.S. officials have chosen to publicly—as opposed to privately—warn Israel against unilateral strikes in the short term. Whatever one’s views on the advisability of such strikes, it may yet be useful to make Iran believe that Washington could support their use in the event of failed engagement.

On the Arab-Israeli front, a combination of approaches is necessary in order to move forward. From the bottom-up perspective, there are some signs of improvement. Law and order have emerged in the West Bank where there was chaos not long ago. We are seeing the best security cooperation in a decade between Israel and the Palestinians. The economy, though not ideal, has improved, and tourism in Bethlehem has increased.

Taking a top-down perspective, however, it is clear that institutions cannot be sustained without the proper political framework. Lasting stability will require clear, definable goals to work toward. It is unreasonable to tell the Palestinian Authority to focus on building institutions and postpone statehood at a time when Israel does not face comparable constraints on settlement expansion. Although the parties’ differences on Jerusalem, refugees, and security do not seem bridgeable at present, the gaps between them on larger territorial issues remain rather narrow. An agreement demarcating the main contours of an Israeli-Palestinian border therefore seems reasonable. Without such an agreement, the parties will lose focus, and the government of Palestinian prime minister Salam Fayad will lose support. The Obama administration has an interest in ensuring that the Palestinian Authority’s focus on negotiations is vindicated instead of Hamas terrorism. In the days ahead, Washington must give the parties incentives to cooperate, helping them focus on what can be done rather than on what cannot.



Peace through Security: America's Role in the Development of the Palestinian Authority Security Forces

Peace through Security: America's Role in the Development of the Palestinian Authority Security Forces

Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton

SUMMARY

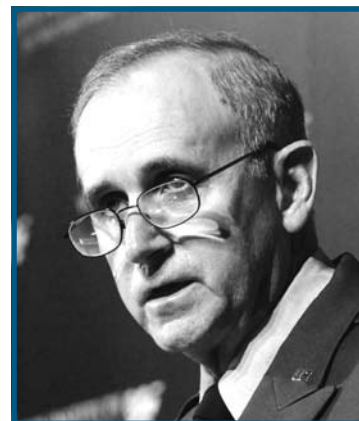
THE U.S. SECURITY COORDINATOR'S (USSC's) team is truly an international effort. Its ongoing work in the Israeli-Palestinian arena has been shaped by significant contributions from Canada, the United Kingdom, and Turkey. More important still, the team believes that the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in the best interests of all nations and is working toward that goal through security measures. The USSC has become steeped in the context and dynamics of the conflict through daily interaction on the ground, which has helped the team to understand the situation from all perspectives and adjust the mission accordingly.

The USSC was created in March 2005 as a way of helping the Palestinians reform their security services. It was tasked with establishing a body that could coordinate various international donors under one plan of action and mobilize resources, while at the same time allaying Israeli fears about the nature and capabilities of the Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PASF). Its mission also includes advising the PA on right-sizing its forces, restructuring and training these forces so that they can enforce the rule of law, and making them accountable to the government and the people.

Given the nature of these missions, USSC team members operate on the ground. Currently, most of the British members are based in Ramallah, while the Canadian contingent—which includes highly proficient Arabic linguists—travels about the West Bank freely. In other words, the entire team lives in the region and is thus able to gain a unique understanding of the conflict while building relationships.

The USSC was given permission to engage all parties except terrorists. Therefore, the team works with Palestinians and Israelis daily, makes frequent visits to Jordan and Egypt, and has reached out to the Gulf states as well. It also coordinates its efforts with other regional missions that focus on the Arab-Israeli conflict, such as the Quartet special representative, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, and various United Nations initiatives.

When Hamas won the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in



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January 2006, the USSC’s mission shifted overnight. It had to refocus on coordinating international activity to boost Gaza’s economy, with efforts centered at the border crossings. Meanwhile, the PASF suffered from neglect under Hamas, which developed its own security forces with help from Syria and Iran. In June 2007, the USSC’s mission changed again when Hamas launched a successful coup against the legitimate Palestinian authorities in Gaza. It changed a third time with the appointment of Prime Minister Salam Fayad, after which the team began to concentrate on the West Bank.

The USSC has made progress in four key areas. The first is the “train and equip” effort, which has focused on transforming the Palestinian National Security Forces into a gendarmerie. The training includes a four-month program at the Jordanian International Police Training Center, staffed by U.S. and Jordanian personnel. The U.S.-developed curriculum focuses on human rights, proper use of force, riot control, civil disturbances, unit cohesion, and leadership. Having Jordan host this program was a strategic decision, taking advantage of Israeli-Jordanian trust and enabling the PASF to train in an atmosphere free from domestic influences. As for equipment, all items given to the Palestinian forces are nonlethal, and their disbursement is fully coordinated with both the PA and Israel.

Approximately three battalions of five hundred men each have graduated from the program, with a fourth currently in training. These young men (average age twenty to twenty-two years) have been vetted by U.S., Israeli, and Jordanian security services. In addition, the Jordanians have educated them extensively on loyalty to the Palestinian flag—when they graduate from the training program, they are in a sense new men. These men believe that their mission is to build a Palestinian state, and upon returning to the West Bank, they have demonstrated motivation, discipline, and professionalism. Accordingly, they are seen not as collaborators with Israel, but rather as the men who will help bring about a new state. Their actions have made a positive impression on senior Israel Defense Forces (IDF) commanders as well.

A second area of visible USSC progress is capacity building within the PA Ministry of Interior, which is vital to the formation of a stable government. In Palestinian governance, the interior minister is responsible for all of the president’s and prime minister’s security forces. When Gaza fell, the ministry fell with it—actually a favorable development given its dominance by Hamas at the time. Over the past eighteen months, the USSC has invested funds and personnel into reviving the ministry and making it a leading arm of the Palestinian government, with the ability to establish budgets, develop strategies, and engage in operational planning. Such efforts are warranted because the Interior Ministry is the key to normalcy for Palestine.

Infrastructure is a third area of progress. For example, the USSC has worked with Palestinian contractors to build a training college for the

“These men believe that their mission is to build a Palestinian state.”

Presidential Guard in Jericho, in addition to an operational base that houses personnel who have recently returned from training in Jordan. The USSC has plans to build another operational base in Jenin with the full support of the IDF, as well as to rebuild a police training center in Jericho. These infrastructure improvements have bolstered the pride and confidence of the Palestinian security forces.

A fourth area of progress is senior leader training, which has become the USSC's most popular program. Two classes have already graduated, composed of PASF majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels. The eight-week course focuses on current problems and how to operate in accordance with international standards. The latter factor enables senior PASF leaders to feel as though they are entering the community of nations.

The results of the USSC security partnership with the PA, Jordan, and Israel have exceeded the most optimistic expectations. Over the past year-and-a-half, the Palestinians have engaged in a series of security offensives throughout the West Bank. In coordination with the IDF, the battalions have sustained the rule of law and have begun to reestablish the PA's authority. More specifically, these campaigns have clamped down on armed gangs, dismantled illegal militias, countered Hamas activity, and reinforced safety and security for Palestinian citizens.

Of course, no security challenge in the West Bank has come close to that of maintaining law and order during Israel's recent Operation Cast Lead in Gaza. Some predicted the operation would spark a third intifada in the West Bank, but the "days of rage" called for by Hamas failed to materialize. The professionalism and competence of the new security forces guaranteed a measured and disciplined approach. They allowed demonstrations but prevented them from becoming violent, keeping the protesters away from Israelis. For their part, Israeli forces trusted the PASF and deliberately kept a low profile, staying away from demonstrators and coordinating their activities with their Palestinian counterparts. The IDF even felt comfortable enough to deploy major units away from the West Bank in order to help in Gaza. Throughout this period, the lack of support for Hamas was clear, as most Palestinians seemed to blame the group for bringing chaos to Gaza. As such, the demonstrations against the Gaza operation, while widespread, remained under control and peaceful.

Moving forward, the USSC will continue working with the PA Interior Ministry to transform, professionalize, and restructure the security forces in the West Bank. This will entail more training and equipment, increased capacity building, intensified work with the European Union, and additional infrastructure projects. The USSC will also carry on with a number of other key plans, such as training and equipping three more battalions in Jordan; building two more operational base camps in the West Bank; expanding the senior leadership training program to include midlevel officers; working with the Israelis to explore ways of reducing the IDF footprint in the West Bank as Palestinian capabilities grow; improving

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“The situation is not hopeless.”

the capacity of the Palestinian Civil Defense, which includes emergency medical technicians, firemen, and other first responders; and continuing a series of courses on logistics, leadership, first aid, English language, and driver education. In addition, the USSC is aware that there is a need for a functional administrative and logistical structure unique to the PA, and it hopes to design one in tandem with the Interior Ministry.

It is difficult to say whether peace can truly be achieved through security measures, and all parties involved have a long way to go and many formidable challenges to overcome. Serious work needs to be done with regard to terrorism, and the USSC is actively exploring options on this issue with the Palestinians, Israelis, and Jordanians. There is also critical work ahead on managing borders and crossings. Moreover, Gaza and the armed Hamas cadres therein present major challenges to future Palestinian statehood. The situation is not hopeless, however. The USSC’s continuous presence is beginning to pay off, building new facts on the ground and developing genuine partnerships. The road to peace is a very difficult one, but compared to past years, the USSC is on that road and moving forward.

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