


*Proceedings of the 2009 Weinberg Founders Conference*

# Beyond a 'New Beginning'

## Obama Administration Middle East Policy

OCTOBER 16–18, 2009





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Obama Administration

Middle East Policy

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THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY  
1828 L Street NW, Suite 1050, Washington, DC 20036 (202) 452-0650

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Published in 2009 in the United States of America by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy,  
1828 L Street NW, Suite 1050, Washington, DC 20036.

Design by Daniel Kohan, Sensical Design and Communication  
Photography by Rick Reinhard

### EDITOR'S NOTE

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# Preface

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IN JUNE 2009, PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA traveled to Cairo to deliver a speech outlining what he hoped would mark a “new beginning” with the world’s Muslims. Since then, the Middle East has witnessed a series of major developments:

- Massive protests have shaken the foundations of the Islamic Republic of Iran, testing long-held assumptions about the stability of the revolutionary regime. This reexamination is occurring precisely as world powers consider plans to tighten sanctions on Iran for flouting international demands concerning its nuclear program.
- U.S. forces have withdrawn from all Iraqi cities. Despite continuing uncertainty about the strength of the Iraqi government and its ability to prevent a descent into violence after American troops ultimately leave the country, these initial withdrawals are a tangible sign that America’s military departure from Iraq may be imminent.
- Important political processes in the Levant remain at a standstill. Despite persistent effort from the Obama administration, the Palestinian Authority, Hamas, and Israel have settled into an uneasy status quo, with little movement toward intra-Palestinian reconciliation and no hopeful signs of rolling back Hamas control over Gaza. Israelis and Palestinians still lack common ground to restart peace talks, and, despite a strong election victory by the pro-Western March 14 alliance, Lebanon is still without a government.

All this is occurring as President Obama faces a reconsideration of U.S. strategy toward the war in Afghanistan, possibly one of the most fateful decisions of his presidency. Taken together, the choices that the Obama administration will make over the next six months—possibly by the end of 2009—may determine whether the “new beginning” the president spoke of in Cairo will usher in greater peace, stability, and engagement, or conflict, violence, and brinkmanship.



■ *Robert Satloff is executive director of The Washington Institute.*

The critical issues facing the president in fall 2009 created the backdrop for vigorous debate and discussion at The Washington Institute's 2009 Weinberg Founders Conference, which took place on October 16–18 in Leesburg, Virginia. This year, an unparalleled array of American and international leaders, diplomats, scholars, and analysts joined more than one hundred members of The Washington Institute's Board of Trustees to offer practical recommendations for the pressing problems on the U.S. Middle East policy agenda today.

We are grateful to the following Washington Institute trustees who assisted in sponsoring this year's Weinberg Founders Conference: Patricia Berman, Lois and Stephen Eisen, Susan and Moses Libitzky, and Betty Weiner.

Robert Satloff  
*Executive Director*  
*October 2009*

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# Speaker Biographies

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**HUSSAIN ABDUL-HUSSAIN** is a visiting fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) in London and a Washington-based correspondent for the Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Rai*. Previously, he worked as a news producer for al-Hurra satellite television network and as a reporter and editor for Beirut's *Daily Star*. His articles have also appeared in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *USA Today*.

**AMR AL-AZM**, a Syrian historian and archaeologist, is an assistant professor of Middle Eastern history and anthropology at Shawnee State University. Previously, he served as head of the Center for Archaeological Research at the University of Damascus and director of Scientific and Conservation Laboratories at the Syrian Department of Antiquities and Museums.

**HOSSEIN BASTANI** is director-general of Iran Gooya Media Group and is an editorial board member of the influential Iranian news outlet Rooz-Online.com. Before leaving Iran for France in 2004, he served as secretary-general of the Association of Iranian Journalists. He was arrested in 2003 for his activities in the reformist press.

**MYRIAM BENRAAD** is a Keston family scholar with The Washington Institute's Project Fikra, focusing on radicalization in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, and the United States. She is also a research associate at the Center for International Studies and Research in Paris. Previously, she worked as a policy analyst at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Middle East and North Africa Initiative on Governance and Investment for Development, in addition to serving as a consultant on Iraqi affairs at the French Foreign Ministry's analysis center.

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**MORTIMER ZUCKERMAN**, a member of The Washington Institute's Board of Advisors, is editor in chief of *U.S. News & World Report* and publisher of the *New York Daily News*. He is also a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the International Institute for Strategic Studies.





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# Obama and the Middle East: An Early Assessment



# Obama and the Middle East: An Early Assessment

*Jackson Diehl, Mortimer Zuckerman, and Michael Mandelbaum*

SUMMARY

## JACKSON DIEHL

The expectations that President Obama set during his campaign have already been challenged within the first nine months of his presidency. The issue that most people overlook is Iraq. The United States has seen some success there, but the possibility that the Obama administration will neglect the issue is dangerous. If Iraq were to turn out badly, the repercussions would reverberate throughout the region.

Regarding Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, the Obama administration seems to be of the opinion that effort is sufficient for success. The administration also seems to believe that a total Israeli settlement freeze is the key to a diplomatic breakthrough. The reality, however, is that governments in the Middle East are more interested in the challenges emanating from Iran than they are in advancing the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Washington's interest in the peace process is not unlimited; if Israelis and Palestinians do not take advantage of the help being offered by the United States, the administration could easily divert its attention elsewhere. Moreover, Washington must work to change the attitude among many Middle Eastern nations that the United States will do the heavy lifting necessary for progress. The administration was not able to elicit from Saudi Arabia a major gesture on normalization, which would have been a substantial contribution to the peace process. In the current environment, President Obama's best bet is to use an incremental approach to negotiations and not look for a comprehensive resolution of the peace impasse.

The prospect of a nuclear Iran poses significant challenges to the Obama administration as well. The best chance to stop the nuclear program is through domestic political change, not diplomacy or military action. Unfortunately, the Obama administration has not adequately factored into its calculus the emergence of a serious opposition to the Tehran regime, largely because we know so little about it. This fear of the unknown is a handicap for President Obama. The administration likely fears war with Iran more than it fears an Iran with a nuclear weapon; any



■ Jackson Diehl is deputy editorial page editor at the Washington Post.

policy the United States pursues in response to Iranian nuclear capabilities is more likely to resemble containment than prevention.

In Afghanistan, a failure in decisionmaking with regard to the U.S. role would ruin any credibility or respect the United States possesses in the wider region. Although Gen. Stanley McChrystal requested an increase of 40,000 troops, President Obama will likely choose to add a much smaller number—5,000 to 10,000—which will ultimately undermine U.S. momentum in the country.

Despite this critique, it is much too early to say that the Obama administration's Middle East policy needs an emergency rescue plan. Nine months is still within the learning period necessary for a new administration to gain its footing. If President Obama prioritizes correctly and does not prematurely neglect certain issues (such as Iraq), his administration may be able to meet its expectations in the coming years.

### MORTIMER ZUCKERMAN

The Obama administration doesn't seem to know how to "play the game" in the Middle East—how to strike the right balance between public statements, private dialogue, shows of force and determination, and exercises of influence and pressure. The administration's orientation toward campaignlike concerns rather than policy, along with its weaknesses in public diplomacy, is causing serious setbacks. Washington's respect and credibility are waning, and it will take a revision of U.S. "game" strategy to restore them.

One of the biggest challenges for the Obama administration is gaining respect. Arabs and Israelis may like Obama, but they do not fear him. As the administration extends its policies with a handshake, it must realize that a clenched fist is also an option. In light of Iran's efforts to develop nuclear capabilities, it is regrettably likely that Obama will push forward with a policy of containment rather than prevention.

U.S. progress on Israeli-Palestinian negotiations is not where President Obama expected it to be. The president's approval rating in Israel is extremely low, and Israelis do not have much faith that the administration will act entirely in their interests. Washington is doing too much in public (through statements by the president and secretary of state) and not enough in private.

President Obama's lengthy review of U.S. policy in Afghanistan is another factor diminishing U.S. credibility in the region. A few thousand extra troops are not enough to ensure success, but the chance that the White House will agree to the larger number requested by the military is not high.

Given the many hits that the new administration has suffered in its first nine months, the only way to ensure that U.S. efforts in the Middle East succeed is to discuss critical issues off-the-record. President Obama must also surround himself with a team of individuals who are better able to



■ *Mortimer Zuckerman is editor in chief of U.S. News & World Report.*

understand the region’s nuances and the most effective means of operating in the Middle Eastern political environment.

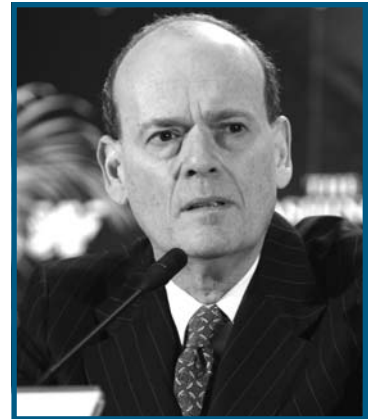
## MICHAEL MANDELBAUM

Nine months is a short time in which to judge the performance of a presidency, but it is also an appropriate time to decide how to move forward. Faced with a large number of policy challenges in the Middle East, President Obama seems to have decided that he prefers to be liked rather than respected. In the Middle East, as elsewhere, this is a mistake.

The U.S. response to political developments in Iran is indicative of the new administration’s approach to Iran generally. Of course, the administration was surprised by both the protests that occurred after June 12 and the Iranian government’s response. Many criticize Washington’s lack of action following June 12, but it is clear that the administration was persuaded by the popular conviction that anti-U.S. sentiment is pervasive in Iran. Moreover, Washington believed that any U.S. action in support of the opposition would likely have interrupted nuclear negotiations. At the same time, no resolution to the nuclear issue is likely without regime change. The U.S. administration needs to exert more leverage—currently, it either lacks such leverage or is unwilling to use it. For this reason, it makes sense for the administration to do much more to support the Green Movement in Iran.

Regarding Afghanistan, the biggest mistake made thus far was to immediately make it “Obama’s war.” Afghanistan was a domestic and political crusade during the presidential campaign, but we must now look at the issue from a policymaking perspective. An escalation in Afghanistan is unpromising; counterinsurgency tactics will prove difficult given the country’s open and largely unguarded border with Pakistan. Moreover, General McChrystal’s anticorruption goals are unrealistic, and the overall U.S. effort is weak. President Obama is not a war president, the Democratic Party is not a war party, and the American people, in general, are not in a mood to wage war interminably. To persist in Afghanistan and subsequently fail would harm the United States more than cutting its losses and disengaging.

To be successful in the Middle East, the administration must remedy its respect deficit. The most effective way to do so is through the use of force. Still, it is early going, and with the injection of more realism and sound analysis into policymaking, the administration should be able to reprioritize its policies and effectively implement them.



■ *Michael Mandelbaum is the Christian A. Herter professor of American foreign policy at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies.*





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The Peace Process, circa 2009



# The Peace Process, circa 2009

*David Makovsky, Khalil Shikaki, and Ehud Yaari*

SUMMARY

## DAVID MAKOVSKY

Current analyses of the peace process tend to take either a bottom-up or a top-down approach. The bottom-up approach is grounded in the good news emanating from the West Bank, where significant economic and security progress are transforming the territory into the model for future Palestinian statehood that many thought it could never be.

From Israel's perspective, the number of Israeli deaths at the hands of Palestinians in the territory has dropped to nearly zero, while cooperation and trust between their respective security forces have improved dramatically. From the Palestinian perspective, the public's sense of personal security has increased sharply, while concerns about government corruption are down. Moreover, the West Bank has seen strong economic growth over the past year—7 percent according to recent International Monetary Fund estimates. These changes have much to do with the approach being taken by Prime Minister Salam Fayad, whose goal is to depart from the past style of Yasser Arafat and vigorously engage in state building even before a final-status agreement is reached. The Obama administration must get behind such efforts. Specifically, it should make economic development and institution building a central focus of its policy, both by providing direct U.S. support and by pressuring Arab states to offer more vigorous assistance.

At the same time, all parties must continue to make progress along the “top-down” path—that is, negotiations toward peace. Such progress could create key political space for Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas and Fayad, enabling them to fend off internal critics who assert that institution building will not enhance the prospects of true statehood if there is no political track. Although Obama's early focus on fostering such negotiations was correct, the administration needs to step back from its push toward comprehensive negotiations. Instead, it should focus on the issue that Israelis and Palestinians are already closest to agreeing on: borders.

If a border agreement could be reached, all parties would benefit. Palestinian moderates would be bolstered, and the firm outlines of a Palestin-



■ *David Makovsky is  
The Washington Institute's  
Ziegler distinguished fellow.*

ian state would materialize, reinforcing the improvements occurring on the ground. For their part, Israel and the United States would finally be able to move past the settlements issue, which would strengthen their relations. A land-swap agreement would also resolve the settlers' uncertain legal status, since most of them would be included within the final borders of Israel. If progress can be made on the borders issue, it would keep open the long-term possibility of an actual, final resolution—one that draws in neighboring Arab states step by step and, ultimately, creates a Jewish state of Israel and a Palestinian state living next to one another in peace.

### KHALIL SHIKAKI

A number of emerging signs in the West Bank suggest that peace may be more attainable today than it ever has been in the past. The first of these encouraging signs is the recent transformation in how the Palestinian Authority manages both itself and the West Bank. In August 2009, for example, Fatah significantly altered its internal composition during its sixth party congress. In the past, the majority of Fatah delegates represented Palestinian refugees who lived outside the territories, thus crippling the party's ability and desire to deal with internal issues in the West Bank. The old guard has slowly been replaced, however, and in the wake of the recent congress, only a quarter of the delegates represent the diaspora population.

This change means that Palestinian leaders can focus primarily on issues like state building and ending the occupation. They have already made major progress on the former issue. The institutions of government in Palestine have gained an unprecedented level of credibility and sophistication, to the point where even Abbas has been forced to stand accountable to them—something Yasser Arafat never had to do. Additionally, the West Bank security forces have dramatically improved their training, structure, and ability to keep the Palestinian people safe.

The Palestinian Authority's current strength puts it in a position to deal with the issue of Hamas and make progress toward peace with Israel. Although an actual reconciliation agreement with Hamas is highly unlikely, the Egyptian mediation is still valuable in that it can spur a forced reconciliation through elections in June 2010. Fatah's recent successes would give it a strong advantage over Hamas in those elections. Yet the party still needs to improve on certain fronts in order to fully bolster its electoral prospects. For example, it should release prisoners currently being held without charge or access to lawyers and courts. It will also need to make some headway on the peace process.

Given this optimistic outlook, the best approach for the United States would be to push for a quick border agreement defining the final boundaries of the West Bank. This would resolve the settlements issue and restore the credibility of President Obama and Palestinian moderates in the eyes of the Palestinian people. At the same time, the United States should sup-



■ *Khalil Shikaki is director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research.*

port the continued growth of institutions and economic development in the West Bank. Such a policy would allow conditions to progress to a point where even the most complex issues—refugees and the holy places of Jerusalem—could eventually be solved by two states working side by side, with the participation of the United States and the major Arab players in the region.

## EHUD YAARI

Currently, a number of major obstacles stand in the way of successfully concluding final-status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian people. These obstacles make the Obama administration's goal of resuming talks on the main issues—borders, Jerusalem, and refugees—unrealistic. In fact, if the administration continues to pursue a comprehensive, final peace agreement, it will likely cause stagnation in the actual process and lead to a deadlock in negotiations.

A principal component of this problem is the rift within the Palestinian polity. Because the government is split between the Fatah Party in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza, Palestinian negotiations with Israel can have no real legitimacy. Nor do Egypt's latest efforts to reconcile the two factions and reunite the Palestinian territories seem likely to bear fruit. Reconciliation is not in the best interests of either side, since neither is willing to risk losing sovereignty in the area it controls. At most, Cairo's efforts will produce an agreement on paper that will never actually be implemented on the ground. In other words, the current division of the Palestinian territories seems likely to last for a long time.

Even if it were possible to negotiate a legitimate agreement between Israel and Fatah alone, Abbas has shown no signs that he is willing or able to make the compromises necessary on the refugee issue. Moreover, Palestinian leaders continue to deny the Jewish people's deep-seated connection to Jerusalem—an attitude that puts negotiations over the holy places on shaky ground from the start. Such issues represent a larger problem: the leaders of the Palestinian people have shown no real desire or drive to push for a workable peace agreement. This yearning for a complete peace and true self-governance is something that no outside power, whether American or Arab, can impose on the Palestinian leadership—they must develop it themselves.

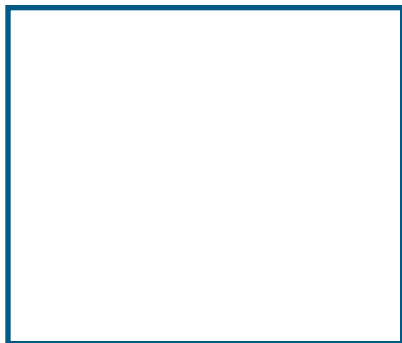
Given the current situation, pursuing a comprehensive settlement is not Washington's best path toward a two-state solution. Instead, it should set its sights lower and attempt to forge a deal that brings conditions on the ground closer to peace, and the Palestinians closer to true self-governance. The borders of the West Bank should be finalized, leaving out all the other more contentious and currently unsolvable issues. This would set the stage for an armistice agreement similar to those brokered in 1949 between Israel and the Arab states, giving Palestinians the beginnings of a state and the opportunity to more fully develop that entity over time.



■ *Ehud Yaari is a Washington Institute Lafer international fellow.*



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# Iran, Post–June 12: Politics, Survival, and the Nuclear Program





# Iran, Post–June 12: Politics, Survival, and the Nuclear Program

*Hossein Bastani and Patrick Clawson*

SUMMARY

## HOSSEIN BASTANI

Following the October 1 negotiations in Geneva, new questions have emerged regarding the future of relations between Iran and the West. Many observers are also concerned about the impact these talks might have on the opposition Green Movement in Iran—particularly in light of evidence that the regime is tailoring its foreign policy to domestic issues.

Currently, the government of President Mahmoud Ahmadinezhad is attempting to convey an image of control, in part by modifying the narrative in a manner that silences opposition arguments. For example, the regime has portrayed the Geneva negotiations as proof that it is not dangerous, and that the situation with the international community is not escalating. When critics and opposition members argue that they want to ratchet down tensions with the West, Ahmadinezhad supporters simply claim that there are no tensions to ratchet down. Therefore, any action by the international community that is construed as a victory for diplomacy will only benefit the regime.

Technically, Ahmadinezhad no longer needs the support of the people, as evidenced by the vote rigging in the June election. He therefore has a free hand in conducting his antagonistic diplomacy. Moreover, he has become desensitized to the people's suffering, so economic factors such as sanctions and inflation are no longer a major concern either.

In contrast, the Green Movement is fueled by popular unrest and will be sensitive to any further ills that plague the people. Most of the individuals and groups that make up the movement share common interests with Westerners. Yet they are also keenly aware that the West is contemplating stronger sanctions. The people of Iran prioritize their own interests first, and they will not support or pursue a path that jeopardizes their livelihood. This attitude is also evident in the movement's vocal disapproval of Ahmadinezhad's adventurism, as heard in chants such as "Not Gaza, not Lebanon, my life is only for Iran."

The Green Movement's complicated makeup has created difficulties for the government as well. It used to be fairly easy for the regime to identify



■ *Hossein Bastani is former secretary-general of the Association of Iranian Journalists.*

the opposition's key actors, who typically hailed from the reformist ranks. The Green Movement, however, has become increasingly autonomous, making clampdowns problematic. A wide assortment of factions have united against Ahmadinezhad's government; although many of them still listen to former reformist leaders such as Muhammad Khatami and Mir Hossein Mousavi, the opposition remains a grassroots movement that is difficult to contain.

The regime has recognized both the decentralized nature of the new opposition and the shuffling of priorities by the Iranian people. And each of these developments has factored into its calculus during negotiations. In the end, Iran's leaders believe that normalization with the West would spell disaster for them. From their perspective, the former Iraqi regime attempted to restore relations with the West only to be undermined and eventually overthrown. This sense of being cornered may mean that negotiations are far from over, especially if domestic threats place more pressure on Tehran. At the same time, the regime did not really agree to anything novel in Geneva, and conservative elements throughout Iran are quick to claim that they have not yet conceded anything. All of these factors further complicate any potential solution to the Iranian problem.

### PATRICK CLAWSON

Iran's recent concessions on the nuclear issue—namely, allowing the International Atomic Energy Agency to examine more of its facilities and agreeing to ship its enriched uranium to the West—are an extension of the truism that all politics are local. In the wake of the massive antiregime protests that followed the June 12 election, the Islamic Republic is at a crossroads. Its leaders are now formulating foreign policy with an eye toward how it might affect their domestic political situation.

The unpredictability of Iranian domestic movements, including the Green Movement, has been evident throughout much of the country's history. What is certain, though, is that Iran's leaders are terrified of the new movement's capabilities and the manner in which it has demonstrated its opposition using officially sanctioned events and holidays. In this sense, the Green Movement has provided the West with a means of facilitating a solution to the nuclear issue. Members of the regime have become so preoccupied with domestic political problems that they do not want a simultaneous confrontation with the international community. Thus, while the West has spent several years thinking of ways to gain leverage on Iran, the country's latest internal developments have given the United States and its allies a real opportunity to apply pressure.

Using this leverage will require the West to engage the Islamic Republic. Past concerns about this approach are dissipating—talks will not necessarily bolster the regime's legitimacy or damage the Green Movement. Clearly, the international community does not condone the Islamic Republic's domestic or international behavior, nor is it attempting to fur-



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ther the regime's legitimacy by finalizing a deal. The United States did not recognize the regime for thirty years, and once it finally did, the Iranian people rejected its legitimacy themselves. At the end of the day, the people are responsible for determining the Islamic Republic's future. The main U.S. considerations should be ensuring that the situation on the ground is both conducive to American interests and potentially useful in resolving the escalating crisis.

The Green Movement may be capable of maintaining pressure on the regime, as some have argued. It has already become something larger than what many reformist leaders had originally intended. Were it not for Ahmadinezhad's contemptuous attitude toward the opposition and his lack of finesse in rigging the election, the protests would not have become as problematic for the government as they are now. The regime's disregard for domestic Iranian concerns and its constant worries about a velvet revolution have turned a previously loyal opposition into a disloyal opposition—one that is truly calling for change. This works to the international community's benefit. The more the opposition asks for, the more pressure the regime will feel, and the better the West's chances will be of resolving the nuclear problem under favorable terms.

**“At the end of the day, the Iranian people are responsible for determining the Islamic Republic's future.”**



2009 WEINBERG FOUNDERS CONFERENCE



## Iran: A Call for Change



# Iran: A Call for Change

*Ataollah Mohajerani*

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## SUMMARY

THE GOVERNMENT OF Mahmoud Ahmadinezhad—who is not the legitimate president of Iran—continues to engage in adventurism and sensationalism on almost every issue it confronts, from the nuclear impasse to the Holocaust. Millions of people lost their lives in the Holocaust, and the lack of information about some of these victims does not diminish the gravity of the event. Besides, even if just one Jewish child had been burned or killed, it would have been a catastrophe. The relevant question, then, is the one posed by novelist and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel: how is it that a victim sometimes becomes a victimizer?

This question must be addressed from a human perspective, as must the question of nuclear weapons. The production or use of such weapons should be opposed from this universal perspective, as well as from an Iranian cultural and Muslim perspective. For example, Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri—recognized by some as the spiritual leader of Iran's new opposition, the Green Movement—recently declared that Islam does not allow for access to weapons of mass destruction.

The Green Movement emerged from more than a century of efforts by the Iranian people to achieve democracy, freedom, and justice. Representing a spectrum of different ideas and aspirations, it is a national, long-term movement, and it needs more time to grow. Indeed, its struggle will be more like a marathon than a 100-meter race. It is a struggle in which generations will take part, and it has no expectations in the short term.

As President Barack Obama stated during his September 24, 2009, remarks at the United Nations, democracy cannot be imposed on a country from outside. Rather, a nation must choose democracy for itself. Accordingly, the Green Movement does not ask the United States or the international community for direct support—it asks only that they not impede its growth. Psalm 69 says, “In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” The Green Movement does not wish to be put in such an unpalatable predicament, whether in the form of military action, further sanctions, or appeasement of the illegitimate government in Tehran.



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More specifically, most of the movement's leadership—including Mir Hossein Mousavi, Mehdi Karrubi, and Muhammad Khatami—agree that a foreign military strike would have negative consequences, such as weakening the pro-democracy movement and strengthening the current government and military intelligence apparatus. The Iranian people—who have a 6,000-year history—would not view a foreign attack on their territory as a deserved blow against the regime's illegal leader, Ahmadinezhad. They would regard it as an assault on their national sovereignty and unity. In fact, most Iranians, even in the Green Movement, would rally around the regime. U.S. leaders should therefore stop using phrases like “all options are on the table,” because force is not a solution.

Likewise, increased sanctions and economic pressures would not resolve the diplomatic crisis or help the pro-democracy faction. To succeed, the Green Movement requires a strong middle class based on industry, trade, and other sectors. Further sanctions would weaken those sectors and give the regime the upper hand in the economic debate. More broadly, they would rob the Iranian people of the historic opportunity for change that has emerged since June.

Instead of military force or sanctions, the United States should proceed with dialogue to end the standoff with Iran and reach a *détente*. Even the Green Movement supports this approach, despite not recognizing the government's legitimacy. Currently, the P5+1 nations—that is, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany—are negotiating with Iran, and some have suggested that they wait until after the Green Movement's outcome has been determined before reaching an agreement. This, however, is an unrealistic proposal. The Green Movement therefore supports talks between the United States and the current government.

At the same time, the United States should not negotiate terms with Tehran that favor U.S. interests but harm the Iranian people's long-term democratic aspirations. Many in the Middle East believe that the United States does not want powerful, democratic, sovereign nations in the region because such states make it more difficult for Washington to achieve its objectives. President Obama must change this perception. Moreover, some Iranians worry that the current U.S. administration would be willing to fully support Ahmadinezhad's government even if it completely lacked legitimacy. For example, on June 15, 2009—the same day that three million people walked from Imam Hussein Square to Azadi Square in Tehran to protest Ahmadinezhad's reelection—U.S. authorities in Irbil, Iraq, released several Iranian officials who had been detained for alleged ties to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Qods Force. Many Iranians viewed this as a conciliatory gesture to Ahmadinezhad. Similarly, the recent U.S.-Iranian talks in Geneva have been viewed as a greeting card to Tehran.

In light of these issues, the United States would be wise to look at the

“To succeed, the Green Movement requires a strong middle class based on industry, trade, and other sectors.”



lessons of history. For example, the year 1953 was a pivotal time in many countries. In the Soviet Union, it was the year Stalin died; in Yugoslavia, it was the year Tito came to power; and in the United States, it was the year Truman announced the development of the hydrogen bomb. For Iranians, 1953 is full of meaning because it was the year the nation's aspirations for freedom and democracy were crushed by a coup.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt once stated that America must be “the great arsenal of democracy.” Yet thirteen years after that declaration, Iran succumbed to a coup against its national government. The two decades following that event were a very sad period for the country, during which the United States never stood up for Iranian democracy or the rule of law. Had the national movement not been crushed in 1953, Iran would surely have had a different fate—there would not have been a need for the Islamic Revolution that has created so many problems since 1979.

U.S. policymakers should learn from this history—they should not make concessions to the current government in Iran. If they do, future generations of Iranians will remember how the United States once again disserved the interests of the Iranian people.

“The United States should not negotiate terms with Tehran that favor U.S. interests but harm the Iranian people’s long-term democratic aspirations.”





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# Terrorists in the Middle East: The Military Capabilities of Hizballah, Hamas, and al-Qaeda-Inspired Groups



# Terrorists in the Middle East: The Military Capabilities of Hizballah, Hamas, and al-Qaeda-Inspired Groups

*Daniel Byman, Matthew Levitt, and Jeffrey White*

SUMMARY

## DANIEL BYMAN

Popular opinion suggests that Hizballah—especially its leader, Hassan Nasrallah—emerged victorious from the summer 2006 conflict with Israel. Yet, with no precedent of success to imitate, Hizballah is currently wading in uncharted waters and faces critical questions regarding its existence as a resistance organization. What does a terrorist group do after gaining credibility and political legitimacy by defeating the most potent military in the region? Should it continue down this path and transform itself into a political organization, or would a resumption of violence against Israel make more sense?

One thing is certain: if Hizballah continues as a resistance organization, it cannot simply abandon violence as a political tactic. In Lebanon, the group is viewed as a collection of fighters; even with the credibility it gained from the 2006 victory, it cannot exchange its arms for a seat at the policy table as a nonviolent political entity. In fact, in the Lebanese political environment, violence often serves as a tool to bolster credibility. Hizballah is fully aware of this dynamic and has deliberately used violence to gain political power.

That said, Hizballah today is notably distinct from the violent resistance organization that emerged in 1982. It no longer operates as a “conventional” terrorist group insofar as it actively participates in political processes, garners significant support in Lebanese elections, and fields parallel militias and terrorist cells. Moreover, its use of force has diminished since the 2006 war, due in large part to the deterrent effect of Israel’s massive military response. Yet the group could resume using violence in the near future for any number of reasons, such as (1) supporting its main sponsor, Iran, in the event of a U.S. or Israeli military strike, (2) avenging recent targeted killings carried out by Israel (e.g., the assassination of Imad Mughniyah), or (3) disrupting the peace process by aiding Palestinian resistance efforts.

Hizballah’s current transitional state is remarkably stable compared to Hamas’s situation. The January 2009 Israeli incursion into Gaza—Operation Cast Lead—substantially crippled the group’s military and organi-

“In the Lebanese political environment, violence often serves as a tool to bolster credibility.”

zational capabilities. In addition, Hamas is facing challenges on multiple fronts simultaneously. In Gaza, it must contend with Salafi jihadist groups intent on taking its place. More broadly, the organization is battling Fatah for Palestinian political power, at a time when the latter has improved conditions in the West Bank under the leadership of Prime Minister Salam Fayad. Hamas is also subject to pressure from Iran and Syria, both of which oppose any perceived political or strategic moderation in the wake of the January hostilities. Last but not least, the Hamas government is charged with caring for its constituents in Gaza, a duty it assumed after filling the political vacuum created by Israel's 2005 withdrawal. All told, Hamas is in an unenviable position.

### MATTHEW LEVITT

Although al-Qaeda-inspired groups currently have only limited representation and support in Gaza, their influence could spread. As many as eighteen such groups are active in the volatile territory today, but most include only a few members, aside from Jaish al-Islam, Jaish al-Umma, Jund Ansar Allah, and Jaljalat. Since Hamas came to power in 2006, it has proactively targeted and weakened its rivals, with special attention given to al-Qaeda-inspired factions that challenge its authority. In August 2009, for instance, Hamas raided a Gaza mosque sheltering Jund Ansar Allah members, killing more than twenty people after the group's leader announced the establishment of an Islamic emirate in Gaza.

Salafi jihadist groups in Gaza have increased the pace of their attacks against Israel, though they have not yet carried out large-scale al-Qaeda-style strikes. At the same time, one group—Jaish al-Islam—has carried out several attacks tied to global jihadist rather than Palestinian interests. For example, after kidnapping a BBC journalist in early 2007, the group's leaders relayed their demands for releasing him using an al-Qaeda-linked website. They also called for the release of an al-Qaeda leader jailed in Britain—an issue far removed from the cause of armed resistance against Israel. Later, in July 2008, Jaish al-Islam came close to mounting a high-profile, al-Qaeda-style assassination attempt against former British prime minister Tony Blair (the plot was thwarted by Israeli intelligence).

Israeli experts claim that the threat of Salafi jihadist attacks emanating from Gaza remains serious, despite the fact that al-Qaeda has not shifted its focus to Israel. Clearly, though, al-Qaeda would look favorably on any attack that served as inspiration for a budding Gaza-based group. Al-Qaeda could also use local events to motivate attacks against Israel, whether by Gaza-based supporters or external affiliates such as the North Africa-based group al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM—it should be mentioned that this affiliate has garnered increased attention recently because of its access to European Islamist operatives). In addition, al-Qaeda-inspired groups in Gaza could grow stronger if foreign fighters enter Gaza in significant numbers, or if Palestinians who have



■ *Matthew Levitt is director of The Washington Institute's Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence.*

fought abroad decide to return to the territory in support of the Palestinian cause. In the past, many foreign jihadists left Gaza out of disgust for the inadequacies of local groups, so any returning supporters would likely be welcomed. Whatever the case, officials in Israel and elsewhere remain focused on nascent cells that could carry out their own large-scale attacks, thereby thrusting Gaza onto the center stage of al-Qaeda's global jihad.

## JEFFREY WHITE

The performance of Hizballah and Hamas in their conflicts with Israel in 2006 and 2009, respectively, reveals much about their current capacities. Assessing their status in the wake of those conflicts shows that both groups have become something more than terrorist organizations: they can also employ conventional fighting strategies against an enemy military by using well-defined forces, regulated tactical behavior, and formal organization and doctrine.

Although Hizballah and Hamas are capable of participating in conventional conflict, they have traditionally turned to irregular and asymmetric warfare instead. Irregular warfare is understood as a violent struggle between state and nonstate actors for control of a population. Asymmetric warfare is defined as conflict between parties whose relative military power, strategy, or tactics differ significantly. Both Hizballah and Hamas are highly capable in the realm of irregular warfare. Hizballah advances a coherent and persuasive ideology, oversees extensive social and financial structures, controls influential media outlets, and maintains potent armed forces. Hamas is similarly capable in this regard and has also succeeded in suppressing its main opponents, namely Fatah and local clans.

The two organizations differ, however, in their asymmetric capabilities. Hizballah has adaptable, experienced leadership and well-trained, professional forces. In addition, it claims crucial support from Iran and Syria and follows a cogent theory of combat calling for attacks against Israel and the defense of southern Lebanon. All of these elements were on full display during the 2006 conflict with Israel, resulting in a perceived Hizballah victory. That is, the group's theory of combat proved correct: its forces carried out their missions effectively and professionally; it received the support it needed from Tehran and Damascus; and, aside from a poor decision to kidnap Israeli soldiers, its senior members displayed effective leadership. In contrast, Hamas lacks effective military leadership, receives significantly less foreign support, and has poorly trained, unprofessional, inexperienced, and limited forces. In Operation Cast Lead, Israel exposed these inadequacies, leaving Hamas substantially weakened.

Although both groups incurred heavy losses in their engagements with Israel, they have learned from their mistakes and are refining their irregular and asymmetric capabilities. Yet Israel's abilities are evolving as well, with the aim of effectively countering Hizballah and Hamas should hostilities erupt in the coming years.



■ *Jeffrey White is a defense fellow at The Washington Institute.*





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# Jihadist Radicalization: Coming to a Theater Near You?



# Jihadist Radicalization: Coming to a Theater Near You?

*Myriam Benraad, Soner Cagaptay, and Mary Habeck*

SUMMARY

## MYRIAM BENRAAD

To truly understand jihadist radicalization—from its multiple, complex patterns to its proliferation of homegrown forms—we must first clearly define the phenomenon. The term is typically used to describe the processes through which individuals and groups follow the path of “holy war” into active militancy. The global radicalization phenomenon is not homogenous—it encompasses different political, cultural, and economic environments, as well as different doctrinal currents. Radical jihadists fall into two main categories: “nationalist” mujahedin who focus on defensive jihad, and Salafists who view jihad as a global offensive. Individual “self-radicalization” is also becoming more common, though group dynamics remain an important factor in pulling people along this path. As deviant ideologies and value systems develop and fester within such groups, they create momentum toward more radical forms of action.

At a time of growing threats, the United States must focus on defining and implementing effective counterradicalization policies on the home front. The first step in doing so is to examine the strategies that have already been implemented in the Middle East and Europe and to evaluate their successes and failures. In order to improve its ability to prevent terrorist attacks, the U.S. government must couple military measures and other repressive tactics with a greater focus on intelligence and robust legal provisions. Moreover, structural, social, and economic reforms must be reprioritized in those societies where radical ideology is still spreading. Pioneering approaches such as rehabilitation and reeducation of redeemed jihadists should also be considered. These types of programs have already been employed in countries such as Indonesia and India, where former radicals now partner with police and intelligence services to combat radicalization. Such partnerships have proven particularly valuable when it comes to engaging in dialogue with jihadists.

The United States can also learn from Saudi Arabia’s recent counter-radicalization experiences. For example, the Saudi government’s “Sakinah” campaign has focused on countering radical ideology and recruit-

“Structural, social, and economic reforms must be reprioritized in those societies where radical ideology is still spreading.”

ment online by using Muslim scholars to interact and debate with jihadist recruiters and recruits alike. In addition, the kingdom has put some former terrorists and extremists on television to publicly issue recantations. Such efforts have had an impact on the ground, with various communities increasingly rejecting violence.

France and the United Kingdom offer useful models as well. In Britain, one of the four pillars of the government’s “CONTEST” counter-radicalization strategy is prevention. Under this framework, the government has gathered several Muslim organizations dedicated to articulating a mainstream understanding of Islam for young British Muslims. Such measures are aimed at undermining jihadist narratives. For its part, France has addressed homegrown radicalization through a mix of repressive instruments, domestic intelligence, and sophisticated and robust legal structures to prosecute jihadists. The French have separate institutions to handle these types of cases, including judges and courts specializing in terrorism as well as trained prosecutors and Muslim chaplains. The United States could also learn from France’s handling of Islamist radicalization in prisons—a growing problem highlighted by recent incidents in North Carolina and elsewhere. For instance, the French government has monitored radical material in prisons for years, and it provides specially trained Muslim chaplains for such institutions.



■ *Soner Cagaptay is director of the Turkish Research Program at The Washington Institute.*

### SONER CAGAPTAY

Although Turkey has never had a reputation for radicalization, this trend is changing under the Justice and Development Party (AKP). Ankara’s foreign policy is moving away from the West, especially Israel, while becoming more friendly toward Iran. The AKP is also building links with Hamas and Hizballah. These and other anti-Western trends are the first steps toward radicalization.

Perhaps more important, Turkish public attitudes toward the West have soured after seven years of AKP rule. Today, most Turks oppose European Union accession, many hate America, and few if any look favorably on Israel. Young Turks in particular are increasingly adopting anti-Western mindsets, due to both internal Turkish dynamics and foreign developments such as the September 11 attacks. The ultimate goal of those attacks was not merely to hurt America, it seems, but to rally Muslims worldwide around a politically charged concept: that the Muslim world is in perpetual conflict with Israel, the United States, and the West. This perception is becoming more widespread in Turkey.

The shift in public attitudes is a big problem. Although Ankara may be persuaded to change its foreign policy, the “us vs. them” dichotomy promoted by Islamists in the post–September 11 world makes it almost impossible to reverse public opinion once it has gone anti-Western.

Fortunately, Turkey has not yet reached the apogee in its swing away from the West—it is still on an outward trajectory. In this regard, it is

essential that Washington adopt a zero-tolerance policy toward anti-American, anti-Western, anti-Israeli, or anti-Semitic rhetoric emanating from Turkey. The aim of such an approach is to eradicate homegrown radicalization by preventing radicals from indoctrinating others. Another important step is to ask the Turkish government to cease funding anti-Western propaganda. In its efforts to manipulate domestic politics, the AKP continues to encourage radicalization, and Washington would be wise to highlight this problem.

As for specific tactics, the United States should emphasize that those who are disseminating radical propaganda in Turkey are anti-Islamic—that they are giving the faith a bad name. U.S. policymakers should also acknowledge that technology is a key facilitator in the radicalization process. The internet is a particularly important and dangerous instrument in this regard, and its impact should be taken very seriously.

There is hope in Turkey so long as the country is a democracy. Therefore, maintaining an independent media is crucial. If the Turkish press ceases to be free, democratic continuity and public discourse on radicalization and other topics will be jeopardized.

## MARY HABECK

Views on radicalization are rapidly changing, in large part because the phenomenon can be looked at through a number of different lenses. According to one school of thought, individuals are driven toward radical change due to a “push” within their own lives, such as economic conditions, a poor political situation, or a personal issue. This push must also be accompanied by a “pull” from outside—a vision such as the one offered by al-Qaeda and affiliated groups.

The al-Qaeda narrative has four main components. First, the group claims that Muslims have fallen away from true Islam, and that al-Qaeda and its sympathizers are the only true believers. Second, the rest of the world is controlled by unbelievers who are hostile to Muslims and seek the destruction of Islam. Third, because these hostile unbelievers declared war on Islam first, waging war against them is justified—in other words, the true believers are fighting a defensive campaign. This view allows al-Qaeda to argue that even in the case of the September 11 attacks, the group was simply responding defensively to the war being waged against it by unbelievers. Fourth, an Islamic state is necessary not only to implement *sharia*, but also to carry on the war against the hostile unbelievers.

These narrative elements are mirrored by four concepts that al-Qaeda typically uses to help pull outsiders toward radicalization. The first is *jihad fi'l sabil Allah*; that is, fighting to defend one's community from attacks by unbelievers while washing away one's own sins. In Europe, for example, many of the young men attracted to al-Qaeda have previously been convicted of petty crimes; they may see the group's struggle as a way to atone for their sins and avoid hell. Second, al-Qaeda often encourages potential



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“Al-Qaeda often encourages potential recruits to see themselves as saviors of their communities.”

recruits to see themselves as saviors of their communities—as heroes who are avenging wrongs (such as those committed in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq). Third, the group tells recruits that they can help build a new society by “promoting virtue and preventing vice.” In al-Qaeda’s view, this Quranic phrase means taking direct action in one’s own neighborhood, forcing other Muslims to follow a radical version of Islamic law. Finally, al-Qaeda tells recruits that they are helping to build a utopia on earth, a caliphate where righteousness will reign and virtue will be rewarded. Together, these four concepts act as the strongest pull toward radicalization—a potent vision for young men who are hoping to make a difference in the world and dedicate their lives to a cause.



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# Syria: Prospects for 'Strategic Realignment'





# Syria: Prospects for ‘Strategic Realignment’

*Amr al-Azm, Andrew J. Tabler, and Ehud Yaari*

SUMMARY

## AMR AL-AZM

The Syrian regime is indeed interested in improving relations with the West and Israel. Yet one must recognize the factors that would preclude Damascus from agreeing to a final peace deal. Most important is that the regime will not compromise its own survival or stability. Therefore, any meaningful engagement with Syria must include some mechanism for addressing what the regime considers its legitimate security concerns.

One such concern is the prospect of an anti-Syrian government forming in Lebanon. Damascus has long believed that a friendly government in Beirut is essential to guarding its flank—it has not forgotten the Maronite-Israeli cooperation during the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The idea of Israeli tanks rolling into Lebanon and parking on the Masnaa—essentially a downhill road to Damascus—is truly frightening to the Syrian regime.

Hizballah is Syria’s most realistic hope of ensuring a friendly government in Lebanon. Accordingly, maintaining the organization’s strength has become a common interest for both Damascus and Tehran. From Syria’s perspective, submitting to U.S. demands that it back out of Lebanon and cut ties with Iran is not in its strategic interest. Hizballah is an ally Damascus believes it cannot afford to lose.

Without some major quid pro quo on this issue—such as a proposal that ensures at least limited Syrian sway in Beirut—Damascus will not bend to Western pressures. And the notion that strong sanctions will bring Syria to its knees is neither realistic nor plausible given the regime’s longstanding resilience against past Western sanctions.

While the U.S. policy of engagement has so far been frustrating for Washington, from Syria’s perspective things are actually looking up. With six official U.S. visits to Damascus since the beginning of the Obama administration—and, later this month, the first high-level Syrian visit to Washington in five years—the regime believes it is proving its point that cooperation with Syria is necessary for comprehensive Middle East peace. If Washington does not move ahead with engagement, Syria believes it can wait out the American election cycle for a more forthcoming administration.



■ *Amr al-Azm is an assistant professor of Middle Eastern history and anthropology at Shawnee State University.*

Another factor that might preclude Syria's "strategic realignment," especially with regard to peace with Israel, is the Baath ideology that still plays a role in holding the country together. Sacrificing current alliances and agreeing to normalization with Israel would require a major change in Syria's identity—one that the country has so far proven unwilling to make.

### ANDREW J. TABLER

"Strategic realignment"—the idea that Syria can be induced to abandon its alliance with Iran and terrorist groups and move in a pro-Western direction—has had many names over the years. It first emerged after the 1973 October War under the rubric of "constructive engagement"—the idea that the United States had a greater ability to reward Syria's positive behavior than to punish its negative behavior, and that it could therefore pull Syria out of its Soviet orbit. The 1970s effort to engage Damascus (which included about half a billion dollars in U.S. aid) paralleled similar outreach toward Egypt. Yet, while Cairo went on to sign a peace deal with Israel at Camp David in 1978, Syria rejected that route and was placed on the State Department's founding list of state sponsors of terrorism the following year. Washington then cut off all aid programs to the country.

U.S.-Syrian relations remained bad throughout the 1980s. A form of constructive engagement briefly reemerged during the 1991 Gulf War, when President George H. W. Bush asked Syria to join the coalition against Saddam Hussein. Gradually, however, the fraught though relatively stable relationship became one of outright confrontation during the George W. Bush administration, as Syria allowed jihadist fighters to cross the border into Iraq to kill American personnel following the 2003 invasion. Washington tightened sanctions against Damascus in May 2004, making it more difficult for American companies to do business in Syria than Iran.

At the tail end of the Bush administration, as Washington focused on stabilizing Iraq, U.S. officials began a form of limited engagement with Syria to discuss Iraqi security and the flow of foreign fighters. Yet, the regime of Bashar al-Asad waxed triumphant in its opposition to U.S. policy in Iraq and eagerly awaited the coming of a new American administration. There soon emerged an unbridgeable expectations gap, evident in the regime's demand for high-level talks and an end to sanctions. These demands came amid growing U.S. skepticism on four major issues: Syria's deepening ties with Iran, its continuing support for Hamas and Hizballah, its facilitation of fighters entering Iraq, and the International Atomic Energy Agency's discovery of undeclared nuclear material at al-Kibar, the eastern Syrian site bombed by Israel in September 2007. When coupled with the breakdown of indirect peace talks between Israel and Syria following the upsurge in Gaza hostilities, this skepticism slowed U.S. engagement to a crawl.

Washington's renewal of sanctions in May and August of this year finally caught the Syrians' attention—they are now focused on seeking relief from the economic restrictions. Syria has traditionally con-



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cerned itself primarily with political matters, not economic ones. Yet, as the regime attempts to create jobs for its 1980s boomer generation, the Obama administration has discovered that it now wields unexpected economic leverage. Engaging Syria remains a key part of Washington's policy of rolling back Iranian influence in the Levant. Moving forward, U.S. policymakers will try to take advantage of their newfound economic influence to achieve this end.

## EHUD YAARI

For years, Israel's leaders believed strongly in the "Syria first" approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict. This is no longer the case today. The Syrians are not ready to be flipped, and it is not in Israel's interest to flip them, particularly if that means postponing the Palestinian issue for the final round of peacemaking. From Israel's perspective, it is too late for Syrian engagement at the moment—the Palestinian track must take precedence.

During the secret indirect peace talks between Syria and Israel in Ankara—which broke down in December 2008 after years of effort—Damascus did not rule out the idea of a comprehensive peace deal. In reality, though, implementing such a deal would be a dangerous proposition for the regime given its current situation and alliances. For one thing, if Syria agreed to full normalization with Israel, it would have to permit Lebanon to do the same, and Hizballah and its Iranian sponsor would not react kindly. Holding sway in Lebanon via Hizballah is much more important to Syrian interests than regaining a winery and a crocodile farm in the relatively inconsequential Golan Heights. In that sense, a peace deal with Israel is not a priority for Syria.

As for Iran, Damascus will never formally divorce Tehran, even though there are some areas of divergence between the allies (particularly in Lebanon and Iraq). Their alliance is not merely a marriage of convenience—it stretches back thirty years, to the legacy of President Bashar al-Asad's father, Hafiz, and the current regime feels comfortable with it. Even if Syria were willing to carry out such a split, the Iranian problem would not significantly change for Israel and the West. Iran does not depend on Syria for its penetration of the Arab world.

It must be remembered just how deeply President Asad believes in his doctrine of *mumanaa* (opposition or rejectionism) vis-à-vis Israel and the West. From his perspective, Syria's current strategic orientation has been effective: the Americans are sending delegations to talk to him; Damascus has more clout in Lebanon today than it did during the heyday of Syrian occupation; and a new anti-Western axis appears to be forming in the Middle East, one that will eventually span Syria, Iran, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government in Turkey, and Iraq (depending on how political developments in Baghdad play out). For the moment, then, only containment and pressure can move Syria in the right direction.



■ Ehud Yaari is a Washington Institute Lafer international fellow.



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# Understanding 300 Million Arabs: Attitudes vs. Actions



# Understanding 300 Million Arabs: Attitudes vs. Actions

*David Pollock, Mohamed Abdelbaky, and Nabeel Khoury*

SUMMARY

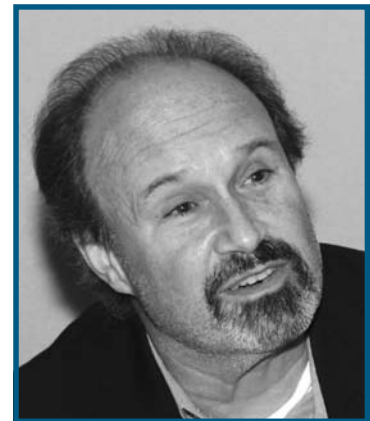
## DAVID POLLOCK

Conventional wisdom tells us that relations between the United States and the Arab world deteriorated under the Bush administration. Public opinion polling in the region supported this assertion. But polling in the Arab world is fraught with complications, and the results tell us nothing about how Arabs actually act on their opinions. These complexities have encouraged the development of a new means to assess Arab public opinion. In the Arab Behavioral Index, Arab actions are used to appraise the relationship between the United States and the Arab world at both the popular and official level. Specifically, the Index attempts to quantify the relationship using a variety of indicators and statistics. All of the statistics use the year 2000 as a baseline in order to chart changes between the pre-September 11 era and the present.

As with other statistical measures, the Index serves only to summarize events. There are certain gray areas or incidents that could not be directly quantified in the Index despite the substantial impact they may have had on U.S.-Arab relations. The Index's focus is not on these events, however, but on the day-to-day issues affecting the Arab world.

Analyzing the Index uncovers an interesting trend: relations between the United States and Arab countries have generally improved in the past decade despite opinion polling asserting the opposite. The Index supports this conclusion by treating the actual actions of Arabs in the region as more policy relevant than their rhetoric.

In terms of organization, the Index evaluates popular ties and official ties separately. The sections devoted to popular ties illustrate the changes in individual Arab actions related to the United States. These include statistics and ratios focusing on student ties, visa issuance, and consumption of U.S. goods. The student-ties ratio looks at the number of students from a given country who choose to study in the United States. Over the past decade, this ratio witnessed a modest increase. Similarly, the visa ratio looks at the number of U.S. visas issued to Arabs. Although this ratio dropped immediately following the events of 2001, the trend line



■ *David Pollock is a senior fellow at The Washington Institute.*

increased steadily thereafter, finally surpassing the 2000 figure last year. Lastly, the consumer-imports ratio measures the amount of U.S. consumer products purchased by Arabs. This ratio excludes large government purchases and is limited to products designed for individual consumption. Once again, the statistics show a large, steady increase in this figure. To delve more deeply into this phenomenon, an investigative poll was commissioned in Jordan and Egypt to see whether people were more or less likely to buy U.S. products. Only a small percentage reported that they would be less likely to buy U.S. products for political reasons; in fact, only about half of the population could identify U.S. products, with some even identifying fake products in the study as American. Overall, then, popular ties between the United States and the Arab world improved despite contrary expectations engendered by opinion polling.

The same trend was largely evident on the official side, albeit with one deviation. The Index sections devoted to official ties illustrate the changes in Arab government actions toward the United States on issues such as bilateral trade, arms delivery, and UN vote ratios. Both the bilateral trade and arms-delivery ratios showed a steady increase throughout the decade. Yet, the vote ratio—which measures the coincidence of U.S. and Arab voting patterns in the UN—witnessed a near-annual decline from 2000 to 2008.

The Washington Institute's Arab Anti-American Protest Database confirms the Index's overall findings by highlighting the recent decline in protest incidents. Chronicling anti-American demonstrations in the Arab world from 2000 to 2009, the database shows a large spike in protest activity in 2003 due to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, followed by a drop in the years since. Moreover, this project's new Arab Political and Economic Reform indices, based on the best expert assessments by nongovernmental organizations and international institutions such as the World Bank and Freedom House, show that in several Arab countries, the greatest progress toward reforms was registered precisely in those years when overall U.S. popularity dropped to record lows.

Going forward, Washington should inform its policymaking with analysis that focuses on Arab actions rather than just Arab attitudes. Although President Obama gave people in the region cause for excitement with his June 2009 Cairo speech, these sentiments have yet to register as tangible changes in the behavioral data. Such a shift will be the true test of whether Obama can change not only public opinion, but also public action toward the United States.

### **MOHAMED ABDELBAKY**

Egyptian public opinion contradicts Egyptian actions. Even as polling results point to one conclusion, the actual behavior of the Egyptian people is usually the opposite. For example, despite relatively frequent anti-American protests and generally unfavorable sentiments in Egypt,

“In several Arab countries, the greatest progress toward reforms was registered precisely in those years when overall U.S. popularity dropped to record lows.”



students still deem the United States a desirable place to study. In 2005, some 84,000 Egyptian students received support from America-Mideast Educational and Training Services (AMIDEAST) to pursue studies in the United States. Even the Islamist-leaning al-Azhar University, a hot-bed of anti-American sentiment, has had numerous applicants to such programs.

The Egyptian workforce exhibits similar tendencies. For example, the Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZs) project established industrial areas in Egypt that were permitted to enter the U.S. market free of tariffs so long as they included a certain percentage of Israeli inputs. Although they spurred a vast increase in trade, the zones were wildly unpopular in opinion polls: according to a 2005 Pew survey, some 70 percent of Egyptians opposed the initiative. Despite this seemingly overwhelming unpopularity, however, 24,000 Egyptians applied for jobs in the QIZs.

At the official level, the Egyptian government has received public criticism for actions deemed to be supportive of U.S. policy. For example, when Egypt became the first Arab state to send an ambassador to postwar Iraq, only 38 percent of the public backed the decision.

Overall, then, Egyptian anti-Americanism operates under a unique dynamic: it is a sentiment, but not a movement. Egyptian attitudes toward the United States are mixed. The public vehemently opposes U.S. foreign policy, but it also desires the democratic reforms that the United States preaches. Attitudes and actions are not the same thing in Egypt. Although protests in the streets reflect dissatisfaction, these same Egyptian protesters want what the United States has to offer and hope to reap the benefits of a healthy relationship.

## NABEEL KHOURY

Attitudes toward U.S. policy shape Arab response and thus need to be fully analyzed. The Arab Behavioral Index (an analytical framework and data compilation project that The Washington Institute aims to unveil in the coming months) does an excellent job of seeking to understand the actions of individual Arabs and their governments. Although many view the West as being at odds with the Arab world, the underlying truth may be that most Arab regimes are in fact pro-American even as they oppose U.S. foreign policy. And at the popular level, many Arabs are in favor of U.S. support for civil and democratic reforms but reject Washington's unwavering support for Israel.

Yet, alongside these important insights, the Index makes some fundamental assumptions that may not necessarily be true. For example, the Index assumes that negative opinions should lead to negative behavior. When people express their disdain through protests or other public means, they are expressing their dislike toward certain aspects of U.S. policy—in general, however, they still welcome the ideals of democracy and an active civil society. The groups that truly represent anti-Americanism



■ Mohamed Abdelbaky is a Keston visiting fellow at The Washington Institute.



■ *Nabeel Khoury is director of the State Department's Office of Analysis for Near East and South Asia, Bureau of Intelligence and Research.*

in the region and pose an actual threat to the United States are the fringe jihadist groups that operate in secret and through violent means. These groups require some measure of popular support, however small, in order to operate. Although such support is waning, this trend is not necessarily tied to public sentiment toward the United States; rather, it is a function of the difficulty that jihadist groups have in establishing themselves within their societies after the initial resistance phase. Therefore, even if poor public attitudes toward the United States do not directly change the Index's "popular ties" ratios, such sentiments could eventually garner more popular support for jihadist groups, which pose a far greater risk to U.S. policy interests than negative poll results.

For policymakers in Washington and elsewhere, the Index sends the message that public opinion does not matter. Yet, can indicators such as consumer trends really offer an adequate picture of Arab public opinion? Do U.S. policymakers really have no cause for worry so long as these trends remain positive? Washington would be wise to strike a more delicate balance, striving to understand not only what Arabs do, but also what they think.

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# Viability and Consequences of Preventive Military Action against Iran's Nuclear Program



# Viability and Consequences of Preventive Military Action against Iran's Nuclear Program

*Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Aharon Farkash, Hussain Abdul-Hussain, and Gen. (Ret.) Charles Wald*

SUMMARY

## AHARON FARKASH

The Iranian determination to achieve a nuclear capability is clear. By the end of 2009, the Iranians will have enough low-enriched fissile material to produce a nuclear bomb within four to six months' time. This means they could have a weapon in hand as soon as summer 2010 if they chose to take that route.

Tehran's nuclear ambitions are part of an internal strategic decision to become a superpower in the region, not an effort to develop a new means of attacking Israel. After all, the Iranians do not want to be the second state in the region to be attacked by a superpower. They are a very proud, sophisticated nation. They can launch satellites into space, and they have handled the complexities of operating thousands of centrifuges quite successfully. In their view, a nuclear capability will help them achieve superiority in the region.

The Sunni Arab states greatly fear the prospect of a Middle East under the umbrella of Iranian nuclear weapons. This has already created the underpinnings of a nuclear arms race in the region. For example, Saudi Arabia purchased its first nuclear-capable surface-to-surface ballistic missiles in 1988, and the kingdom is known to have invested in Pakistan's nuclear program. A nuclear Iran would surely trigger an all-out race with not only the Saudis, but also Egypt and Turkey. It would also threaten the stability of Arab regimes throughout the region.

Regarding the viability of military action against Iran, the U.S. military could carry out such a campaign more readily than Israel. As for a decisive strike similar to past Israeli actions in Syria and Iraq, it would be very difficult to determine everything needed to conduct that sort of attack successfully. Israel would take such a step only in an emergency, after carefully weighing the positive and negative factors.

Israel alone cannot stop Iran from achieving its nuclear ambitions—the only approach with a chance of succeeding would be a combined effort that sends a strong message to the regime. For example, when the EU-3 (Britain, France, and Germany) opened the Iran file and the United States



■ Aharon Farkash is the former chief of military intelligence, Israel Defense Forces.

carried out its campaign of shock and awe in Iraq, Tehran halted its nuclear activities for more than a year, from late 2003 until January 2005.

The Iranian regime is not going to commit suicide—there is ample evidence of its pragmatism and its unwillingness to lose power. Once the Iranians become convinced that Israel and the international community mean business, they will acquiesce. This happened with Hizballah, which has been quiet for three years, and with Hamas.

Regarding U.S. policy, the Obama administration would be wise to heed two pieces of advice. First, leave Iraq with the smell of victory—this would serve as an important symbol against Iran's doctrine of *muqawama* (resistance). Second, deal with North Korea in a manner that demonstrates America's seriousness on nonproliferation.

### HUSSAIN ABDUL-HUSSAIN

The world should confront and contain Iran whether it has nuclear weapons or not, including via military action as a last resort. Estimating when the regime might go nuclear obscures a more pressing issue—Iran is problematic even now, without a bomb.

The majority of Arabs understand that Iran wants nuclear weapons for deterrent purposes rather than for direct use. The regime is already bullying Lebanon, Iraq, Gaza, and Yemen. Arabs fear that if the Iranians go nuclear, nobody will be able to stop them.

Unlike past conflicts in which Arab countries faced a direct military threat, the current situation has been characterized by proxy wars with the Iranians. Arab regimes are privately crossing their fingers that a military strike will take out Iran's nuclear capabilities, but they will not say this publicly. They may even denounce such ideas in order to reduce the chances of Iranian retaliation, even while offering the United States low-key assistance on the matter. In light of this situation, the United States should be the one to carry out any military strike on Iran—the Israelis need to practice self-restraint as they did in 1991 against Saddam Hussein.

The world cannot wait forever for a “Green Revolution” in Iran. It is unclear whether the regime's nuclear activities are acceptable to the Iranian people, who can be very nationalistic and chauvinistic. Therefore, the international community should act sooner rather than later. Time is running out, and diplomacy will not work, especially the kind currently being used by the West. Although a military strike may generate more Iranian public support for the regime, such a step may be necessary.

### CHARLES WALD

Iran could have a nuclear weapon as early as summer 2010. A military strike—however unpalatable and undesirable that option may be—could set the regime's progress back a few years. Such a solution would be very difficult to carry out, and the consequences would be problematic. A serious campaign would be required, including hundreds of sorties per day



■ Hussain Abdul-Hussain is a visiting fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

for weeks, possibly months, targeting not only Iran's fuel cycle but also military assets such as missiles and aircraft. And those carrying out the attacks would need to be prepared for follow-up strikes in the event Iran began to rebuild its program.

Israel would not be able to conduct this sort of campaign on its own. Past Israeli air force operations against the Osirak reactor in Iraq and nuclear facilities in Syria were simple compared to attacking the Iranian program. Israel would be able to carry out initial strikes, but it could not sustain them over several weeks or months. This fact should be cause for concern in Washington: the Israelis seem to believe that if hostilities with Iran break out, the United States will join in. Israel views Iranian nuclear activities as an existential threat, and there is domestic pressure on Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to do something—as a result, the United States may be strategically forced into participating at a point when the circumstances are not advantageous. This pressure will mount over the next year.

In light of these and other factors, the United States must pursue multiple tracks against Iran simultaneously, from diplomacy to preparing for a military strike. The Iranians believe that America has war fatigue, so making Iran understand that its actions have consequences will be critical to establishing credibility. At the same time, going through the process of diplomacy is necessary in order to open up options such as military action. The Obama administration deserves credit in this regard, as it has made positive steps on diplomacy while making clear in repeated statements that all options remain on the table. But the administration must remember that other tools are available, including punitive measures such as sanctions, embargoes, and blockades. The United States should also be preparing its friends in the region. The United Arab Emirates has already begun equipping itself with the best U.S.-made air defense systems, including Patriot surface-to-air missiles and the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system.

It is crucial that Washington compare the consequences of permitting Iran to go nuclear versus launching military strikes, however uncomfortable such analysis may be. The regime's support for Hizballah and Hamas means that the aftermath of military action would be problematic for Israel and the rest of the Middle East. Yet the strength of those two groups is often overstated. Moreover, if Washington chooses to live with a nuclear Iran, it would have to accept a dramatically changed Middle East with some second- or third-order consequences, including a nuclear arms race. America's Arab allies in the region share Israel's deep concerns about this issue.



■ *Charles Wald is the former deputy commander, U.S. European Command.*







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# Assessing Engagement: Strategy, Tactics, and Content



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# Assessing Engagement: Strategy, Tactics, and Content

*John Hannah and Ronald Neumann*

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SUMMARY

## JOHN HANNAH

Thus far, the Obama administration has placed diplomatic engagement at the forefront of America's relations with its adversaries. This strategy is aimed at convincing these adversaries that a genuine alternative path is available to them, assuming they are willing to change their behavior on matters of critical concern to Washington. As the president has repeatedly stated, this path can lead to new relations with the United States based on mutual respect and mutual interests.

The Obama administration's strategic shift was heavily influenced by its negative assessment of Bush-era policies. According to this critique, Washington's approach had been too confrontational, antagonizing adversaries and allies alike while failing to achieve U.S. objectives. Whether accurate or not, this widespread narrative had a significant effect on the Obama administration's conception and pursuit of engagement.

With respect to Iran, the shift has meant offering an open hand rather than a closed fist. Instead of threatening isolation, punitive actions, and possible military attack, the administration has repeatedly sought to reassure the Islamic Republic of America's benign intentions and desire to engage in direct negotiations as soon as possible. At the same time, high-level U.S. officials have publicly cast doubt on the viability of a military option, objecting to potential Israeli military action in particular.

By design, this concept of engagement requires 100 percent U.S. effort even if there is only a 10 percent chance of success—as may be the case in negotiations over contentious issues such as Iran's nuclear activity. Specifically, Washington must demonstrate to Iran and the rest of the world that it is absolutely committed to achieving peaceful, diplomatic solutions. In the administration's view, this policy kills two birds with one stone: it gives Iran no excuse to avoid serious negotiations, and it gives America's more reticent international partners no reason to question Washington's good faith or avoid taking on their own required responsibilities.

During President Obama's first six months in office, the results of this "open hand" approach were far from encouraging. It produced prac-



■ *John Hannah is a senior fellow at The Washington Institute.*

tically nothing from Iran, and it seemed to shape the administration's rather reluctant reaction to the remarkable developments that unfolded in Iran after June 12. These events—the first serious internal threat to the Islamic Republic in thirty years—were initially viewed as more of a complication for the administration's engagement strategy than an opportunity.

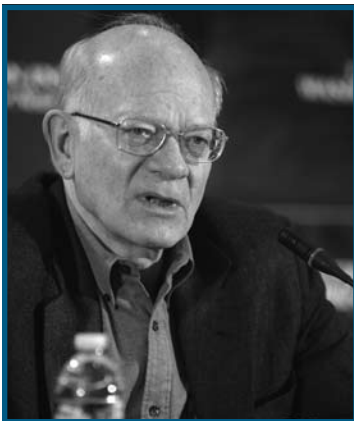
By midsummer, however, Washington appeared to realize that the “soft” approach of engagement was not producing the desired results. That realization—combined with a growing sense of urgency from Israel in particular that the diplomatic clock may be running out—was crucial in two respects. First, it seemed to spur the administration into adding elements of pressure to its approach and, second, it may have helped bring Iran to the table in Geneva. This is a hopeful sign—perhaps the administration has recognized the primary lesson of its first nine months of engagement, namely, that pressure works.

At the same time, the president must not overlook engagement's potential impact on domestic political dynamics in Iran, especially after June 12. Whether the October negotiations in Geneva were a net gain or loss for U.S. interests, the embattled Iranian regime clearly achieved a degree of legitimacy and stature when it sat down as an equal with the United States and other world powers. Geneva also shifted the global spotlight away from the severe problems the Islamic Republic was experiencing on its own streets, and onto the high politics of what was being discussed in the negotiating room.

### RONALD NEUMANN

In general, engagement is just one tool among many in the diplomat's arsenal. The choice of which particular tool to use in a given situation should be guided not by ideology, but rather by the underlying policy objective. Yet the United States too often views diplomatic relations in more simplistic terms: as a reward for a country's good behavior, and as something to take away if a country is misbehaving. This creates a double challenge for policymakers—it endangers Washington's ability to inform and influence while raising the political cost of reengagement once relations have been cut off. Moreover, by requiring target countries to meet preconditions for reengagement, the United States is essentially demanding concessions before negotiations even begin. Conspicuously, there are no examples in the past two decades of diplomatic history where isolation has led to a breakthrough in the Middle East.

Engagement need not be viewed as surrender, however. Other diplomatic tools, including pressure, can be judiciously combined with engagement to secure U.S. policy objectives. The notion that one must choose between negotiations and the use of force is therefore a false dichotomy. Remaining engaged even at the most difficult moments can give Washington options and information it might not otherwise have.



■ Ronald Neumann is president of the American Academy of Diplomacy.

Iran is a case in point. Washington's thirty-year absence from that country has contributed to profound knowledge gaps regarding cultural differences and diplomatic modalities. As a result, the United States has lost much of its ability to understand and influence Iran. Today, Washington has a broad range of concerns related to Tehran, from Afghanistan and Iraq to the nuclear issue and Hizballah. Without direct engagement, it is difficult to see how the United States can manage the most contentious of these issues, let alone those on which it might share interests with Iran.

To be sure, engagement should not be viewed as an end in itself—it must be defined by clear objectives, even if these are not publicly shared. In general, however, it is difficult to envision a scenario in which contact with another government would not afford some benefits to the United States.

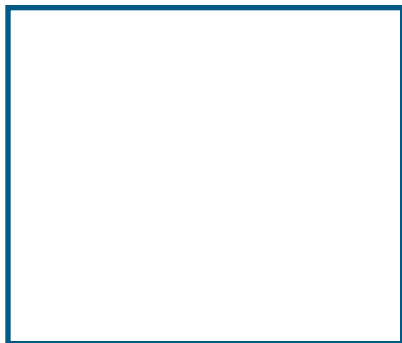
As for whether engagement will actually succeed with countries such as Iran, Syria, and North Korea, it is still too early to judge. The Obama administration has the idea of engagement, but does it understand that engagement is not an alternative to pressure, but rather one tool among many? Moreover, can it curtail its tendency to talk too much about these issues and do things too publicly? This tendency creates undue risk for U.S. policy—words that are not backed up by actions can undermine credibility, creating the impression of weakness in the Arab world and beyond.

In particular, the administration should be wary of speaking out in support of Iran's Green Movement, the nascent but widespread opposition faction. Assessing, let alone understanding, what is happening inside Iran remains inordinately difficult, and linking nuclear negotiations to domestic developments is risky at best. Washington's prospects for success hinge on convincing the Islamic Republic that the United States does not seek regime change—emphasizing support for the Green Movement or even human rights in general could create the opposite impression. The administration should therefore look for ways to push Iran into putting more on the table without provoking the regime's existential fears.

“Washington’s thirty-year absence from Iran has contributed to profound knowledge gaps regarding cultural differences and diplomatic modalities.”



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# Israel: The Search for Peace and Security





# Israel: The Search for Peace and Security

*Dan Meridor*

SUMMARY

THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT remains focused on the longstanding search for peace and security. And the prospect of Iran obtaining nuclear capabilities remains Israel's most dangerous threat. If Iran is successful in its efforts to become a nuclear power, the consequences could be devastating.

The ramifications of a nuclear Iran are not limited to Israel, however. If Tehran realizes its ambitions, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty could collapse. For example, Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt have stated that they would pursue their own programs if Iran goes nuclear. These ambitions could spread further, leading to unchecked proliferation worldwide. Interestingly, most Arab countries believe that Israel possesses nuclear weapons, yet they do not feel threatened by this fact. Only after Iran stated its nuclear intentions did these countries begin to speak of building their own nuclear capabilities.

A nuclear Iran would also undermine America's alliance with the Gulf states. These bonds are already being challenged by Iran's growing influence in the region. If Iran becomes a hegemonic nuclear power, the Gulf countries would have no choice but to submit to Tehran and reduce their ties with Washington.

In addition to unsettling Arab states, a nuclear Iran would have a major effect on the Islamic world. As Tehran's power grows, it will weaken moderate Muslim-majority states as well as those moderate individuals and factions that support these governments. Meanwhile, jihadists and other extremists will rally around Iran and treat it as the leader of their revolution. Thus, while Iran has directly and explicitly threatened Israel and pledged to "remove this cancerous tumor," its efforts to attain nuclear weapons are in fact a global issue that endangers the entire world.

Clearly, then, time is of the essence. Iran is building missiles and enriching uranium on a daily basis. Washington must act now to avoid finding itself in a position where it is limited to two options: attack Iran or live with a nuclear Iran. If the United States mounts sufficient pressure and builds a coalition that takes concrete political, economic, and diplomatic steps against Iran, it will produce positive results, however difficult



■ *Dan Meridor is the deputy prime minister of Israel.*

“The Israeli government is confident that negotiations will resume and result in measurable progress.”

this route may be. Alternatively, if no immediate action is taken and Iran becomes nuclear and hegemonic, progress will be many times more difficult to achieve.

European countries seem to be voicing stronger rhetoric against Tehran’s nuclear activities than is the United States. Yet, they have not matched their speech with actions, especially regarding their deep trade relations with Iran. Moreover, it is unclear if other key countries such as Russia would join a coalition against Iran. Russia’s participation is not a prerequisite for success, however—Western countries possess enough power, economic and otherwise, to make effective moves against Iran. By using sanctions, coalition building, and an assortment of carrots and sticks, the U.S. administration is assembling a strategy that will likely yield results.

Iran’s attainment of nuclear weapons would also have an impact on the peace process, another issue at the top of the Israeli government’s agenda. By going nuclear, Iran would strengthen proxies such as Hizballah and Hamas in their fight against Israel and seriously impede any peace efforts.

In recent years, the Israeli leadership has offered significant compromises toward a peace agreement and the establishment of a Palestinian state. The Israeli right wing has moderated its desire to possess all of the land of Israel, and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of the Likud Party recently expressed support for a two-state solution. Former Likud prime minister Ariel Sharon also made a large concession in 2005 by disengaging from Gaza. Yet this concession led to an unstable and dangerous situation with the election of Hamas and its subsequent takeover of Gaza. Even as Israel made compromises, the Palestinians in Gaza squandered an opportunity to assume control over their own land when they elected Hamas. Now Israel faces a serious security threat from Gaza, and the Palestinian leadership is divided. Progress is further impeded by the fact that many Palestinians are not serious about establishing a state alongside Israel because they refuse to recognize Israel’s right to exist. Until they are willing to recognize that the Jewish people are not simply a religious group but rather a nation that deserves its own state, a final agreement will be difficult to reach.

Despite recent setbacks in peace negotiations—specifically, the paralyzing focus on a settlement freeze—the process has come a long way in recent years. In the West Bank, the threat of terrorism has been diminished through cooperation between the Israeli and Palestinian security forces. The more-stable security situation has enabled economic progress to take hold. Checkpoints and roadblocks erected to prevent terrorist attacks are now being lifted, and trade is increasing. Today, the economic growth rate has risen to an estimated 8 percent. The improved situation on the ground is also providing a more normal life for Palestinians in the West Bank and giving them hope for the future.

In light of these conditions, the Israeli government is confident that negotiations will resume and result in measurable progress. Yet it is important to articulate exactly what these negotiations should aim to

accomplish, rather than creating unrealistic expectations and running the risk of dashed hopes and resultant destabilization. In particular, the parties are unlikely to resolve final-status issues at this time. Although they can discuss such issues, it is more important that they emphasize issues on the ground, such as institution building and economic progress. Building these initiatives from the bottom up can change the reality of Palestinian and Israeli lives.

In addition to the peace process and Iran, the Israeli government is concerned about the UN's Goldstone Report on Gaza and its implications for international law. Following World War II, international laws regarding war became more relevant. The Geneva Conventions, the UN Security Council's courts, the International Criminal Court, and, more generally, the expansion of universal jurisdiction have all empowered the international community to set boundaries on traditional warfare. This idea of upholding certain moral standards during times of war is vital. Yet Hamas and Hizballah have changed the paradigm of war through their use of terror and civilian shields. During Operation Cast Lead, Israel showed more concern for Palestinian civilians than Hamas did, dropping flyers and making phone calls warning civilians of impending attacks. Despite these efforts to protect civilians, the Goldstone Report found Israel guilty of war crimes.

Clearly, those who drafted the report did not account for Hamas and Hizballah's paradigm-shifting tactics and therefore found Israel to be overwhelmingly at fault. Moreover, the UN Human Rights Council, which commissioned the report, has a history of unfairly targeting Israel. Many members of the investigative committee openly opposed Israel's conduct in Gaza even before the investigation was launched. As a result, the text of the report is one-sided and contains recommendations that would make it impossible for Israel to defend itself against enemies who change the rules of war. Overall, the report was intended to intimidate Israel into avoiding military action in the future, but Israel will not be intimidated.

The Goldstone Report's ramifications are not limited to the Gaza war—they will influence the future of the peace process as well, since Israel will cede land only if it knows that it can defend itself if attacked. Moreover, the report could dictate how other countries around the world defend themselves in the future. Alternatively, nations can take steps to adjust international law in a way that reflects recent changes in the rules of war.

Despite many challenges, Israel has made great progress since its inception. It has built a strong economy and flourishing culture and produced countless scientific and technological advances. The Israeli government is hopeful that even the difficult issues currently facing the nation can be solved. Specifically, the Iranian threat can be contained if the correct amount of pressure and sanctions is applied; the peace process can move forward if the bar is not set prohibitively high; and international law can be enhanced if countries are willing to discuss the new paradigm of warfare.

“Hamas and Hizballah have changed the paradigm of war through their use of terror and civilian shields.”



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