Proceedings of the 2008 Weinberg Founders Conference

From President to President:

U.S. Middle East Policy at a Moment of Transition

September 19–21, 2008

THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE *for Near East Policy*

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Editor's Note

These conference proceedings are presented as edited summaries of speeches and panel discussions; text designated as such should not be cited as actual transcripts of speaker remarks.

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Preface

The 2008 presidential election is a watershed event, both historically and politically. It may also represent a landmark in America's engagement with the Middle East over the next decade. On so many critical issues, the next U.S. president will have to determine the direction of U.S. policy:

- Will deterrence or prevention characterize America's approach to Iran concerning the Islamic Republic's efforts to obtain a nuclear weapon? Which strategy is better designed for success?
- Beyond the debate over the deadline for withdrawal of U.S. forces, what can the United States do to ensure that Iraq emerges as a stable country at peace with itself and its neighbors—neither a threat to the region, a vassal of an emboldened Iran, nor a chaotic entity engulfed by ethnic and religious violence?
- Will a new president attempt to inject fresh ideas and enthusiasm into the "two-state solution" to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, or will he urge local actors to explore new paradigms of resolution for this festering conflict? Alternatively, will he ignore the conflict and focus his efforts instead on what he sees as more pressing regional crises?
- Will Middle Eastern autocrats face a continuation of the same U.S. efforts to promote democratic change in the region, or will the new president approach this critical issue with a different level of urgency?
- What unifying themes will animate the new administration's approach to the region: combating extremism; empowering local partners committed to moderation, development, and democracy; building structures of peace and regional cooperation; forging alliances to confront future threats; or reducing the friction created by our military presence and energy dependence in the region?

Robert Satloff is executive director of The Washington Institute and author of The Battle of Ideas in the War on Terror: Essays on U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Middle East.

These are just a few of the critical questions certain to be on the agenda of the next U.S. president, and they were the subject of thought-provoking discussion and debate at The Washington Institute's 2008 Weinberg Founders Conference, held on September 19–21 in Leesburg, Virginia. Speakers and participants hailed from every corner of the Middle East, every constituency of the Washington policymaking community, every part of our political spectrum, and every area of our nation. Together, in plenary sessions, breakout panels, and dinner conversations, The Washington Institute Board of Trustees, research staff, and guests previewed the debates and decisions that will characterize the administration of the forty-fourth president of the United States

In addition, this year's conference featured a very special event: the announcement of the first annual Washington Institute Book Prize. This lucrative prize is awarded by an independent jury to recognize three outstanding books that advance America's understanding of Middle Eastern politics and U.S. policy. Our book prize ceremony was a particular highlight of this year's Weinberg Founders Conference and, we hope, a fixture of conferences for years to come.

Robert Satloff
Executive Director

Speaker Biographies

Mohamed Abdelbaky is foreign affairs editor for *Akher Saa*, the largest weekly political magazine in Egypt, where he received the Ibdaa Award from Dubai Media City in both 2006 and 2007. In addition, he is an advisor to the UN World Food Programme regional office and a visiting fellow with Human Rights First in New York, where he assists the international policy advisor on developing activist networks in the Middle East and North Africa.

Ghassan Atiyyah is a former visiting fellow at The Washington Institute, focusing on Iraqi politics. An outspoken member of the Iraqi democratic movement in exile during Saddam Hussein's regime, he returned to Baghdad in April 2003 as director of the Iraq Foundation for Development and Democracy. He is the author of *The Making of Iraq, 1908–1921*.

Isaac Ben-Israel, a retired major general in the Israel Defense Forces, is a member of the Knesset representing the Kadima Party. A physicist by training and former chairman of the Israel Space Agency, he has also served as director of research and development for the Ministry of Defense.

Max Boot is a senior foreign policy advisor to Republican presidential candidate Senator John McCain and the Jeane J. Kirkpatrick senior fellow in National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. A widely acclaimed military historian and foreign policy analyst, he is a contributing editor to the *Weekly Standard* and the *Los Angeles Times*. His books include *War Made New: Technology, Warfare, and the Course of History, 1500 to Today* (2006) and *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (2002).

Soner Cagaptay is a senior fellow and director of the Turkish Research Program at The Washington Institute. In addition, he serves as chair of the Turkey Program at the State Department's Foreign Service Institute, and as an assistant professor at Georgetown University. His publications include *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who Is a*

Turk? (2005) and *Secularism and Foreign Policy in Turkey: New Elections, Troubling Trends* (The Washington Institute, 2007).

J. Scott Carpenter is a Keston Family fellow at The Washington Institute and director of its Project Fikra (Arabic for "idea"), a multidisciplinary program designed to advance policies to empower Arab moderates and liberals in the struggle against extremism. In government, he served as deputy assistant secretary of state in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and coordinator for the State Department's Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiatives. Previously, he served in Baghdad as director of the governance group for the Coalition Provisional Authority.

Richard Clarke is a senior foreign policy advisor to Democratic presidential candidate Senator Barack Obama. His three decades of government experience include service as special assistant to the president for global affairs, national coordinator for security and counterterrorism, and special advisor to the president for cyber security. An on-air consultant for ABC News, he is the author of *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (2004) and chaired the task force that produced the 2004 report *Defeating the Jihadists: A Blueprint for Action*.

Anthony Cordesman is the Arleigh A. Burke chair in strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a national security analyst for ABC News. A former national security assistant to Senator John McCain and director of intelligence assessment in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, he is the author of numerous works, including *Iraq's Insurgency and the Road to Civil Conflict* (2007), *Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War* (2007), and *Iran's Military Forces and Warfighting Capabilities: The Threat in the Northern Gulf* (2007).

Richard Danzig, former secretary of the Navy during the Clinton administration, is a senior foreign policy advisor to Democratic presidential candidate Senator Barack Obama. An attorney by profession, he has also served as undersecretary of the Navy and principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for manpower, reserve affairs, and logistics. He is coauthor of the book *National Service: What Would It Mean?* (1986).

Jackson Diehl is deputy editorial page editor of the *Washington Post*. He has worked at the paper as a reporter and editor since 1978, with posts including foreign correspondent, foreign editor, bureau chief in Warsaw and Buenos Aires, and assistant managing editor of the foreign and national desks.

Giora Eiland, former Israeli national security advisor, is a senior research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv and di-

rector of its Program on IDF (Israel Defense Forces) Force Structure. A retired major general in the IDF, he has served as head of both the Strategic Planning Branch and the Operations Branch, along with several command positions in the elite paratroops division. He is the author of the forthcoming Institute Policy Focus *Rethinking the Two-State Solution*.

Reuel Marc Gerecht is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, focusing on Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan, as well as on terrorism and intelligence. A contributing editor for the *Weekly Standard* and correspondent for Atlantic, he is the author of *The Islamic Paradox: Shiite Clerics, Sunni Fundamentalists, and the Coming of Arab Democracy* (2004) and *Know Thine Enemy: A Spy's Journey into Revolutionary Iran* (1997; published under the pseudonym Edward Shirley).

Jeffrey Goldberg is a national correspondent for the *Atlantic*. Before joining the magazine in 2007, he worked as Middle East correspondent and Washington correspondent for the *New Yorker,* in addition to writing for the *New York Times Magazine*, *Forward*, the *Jerusalem Post*, and other publications. Author of the 2008 book *Prisoners: A Story of Friendship and Terror*, he has also worked for the Jerusalem Foundation and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

Philip Gordon is a senior fellow for U.S. foreign policy at the Brookings Institution and a senior advisor to Democratic presidential candidate Senator Barack Obama. A former member of President Bill Clinton's National Security Council staff, he is the author or coauthor of several books, including *Winning Turkey: How America, Europe, and Turkey Can Revive a Fading Partnership* (2008), *Winning the Right War: The Path to Security for America and the World* (2007), and *Allies at War: America, Europe, and the Crisis over Iraq* (2004).

Engi El-Haddad, a strategy and communications consultant, is cofounder of Shayfeen.com, the Afro-Egyptian Human Rights Organization, and Egyptians Against Corruption. Each of these initiatives is aimed at mobilizing Egyptians (especially youth) to get involved in the reform process, using innovative advocacy campaigns regarding issues such as voter participation, election monitoring, judiciary independence, civic education, freedom of the press, and anticorruption efforts.

Isaac Herzog serves as Israel's minister of welfare and social services as well as minister of the diaspora, society, and the fight against anti-Semitism. Previously, he served as minister of tourism and minister of housing and construction. A senior member of the Labor Party, he was elected to Knesset in 2003, where he has served on the finance, internal affairs and environment, and anti-drug-abuse committees.

Kassem Jaafar is a Britain-based analyst and advisor on strategic and diplomatic affairs for the Policy Exchange of London and the Transatlantic Institute in Brussels, and has been a diplomatic advisor to the government of Qatar. Previously, he worked as a Middle East and defense correspondent with the BBC, and as defense and diplomatic editor for the London-based *al-Hayat* newspaper and its sister weekly, *al-Wasat*.

Michael Knights is a Boston-based Lafer international fellow at The Washington Institute, specializing in the military and security affairs of Iraq, Iran, and the Persian Gulf states. His Institute publications include *Provincial Politics in Iraq: Fragmentation or New Awakening?* (coauthored with Eamon McCarthy, 2008), *The Calm before the Storm: The British Experience in Southern Iraq* (coauthored with Ed Williams, 2007), and *Troubled Waters: Future U.S. Security Assistance in the Persian Gulf* (2006).

David Makovsky is a senior fellow and director of the Project on the Middle East Peace Process at The Washington Institute, as well as an adjunct professor of Middle East studies at the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University. He is currently writing a book on the Middle East with Dennis Ross. He is also the author of a variety of Institute publications, including *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizballah War* (coauthored with Jeffrey White, 2006).

Riad Malki serves as minister of foreign affairs, minister of justice, minister of information, and spokesperson for the Palestinian Authority. He is also general director and founder of the nongovernmental Panorama Center for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development in Palestine, one of the most influential peace and dialogue organizations in the West Bank.

Colin Mellis is policy advisor on radicalization for the City of Amsterdam. In addition, he is a lecturer on terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at University College, Utrecht, and an advisor to the University of Amsterdam's Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies, where he is participating in a research project on Salafism.

Marwan Muasher is senior vice president of external affairs at the World Bank and author of *The Arab Center: The Promise of Moderation* (2008). Previously, he served as Jordan's foreign minister, deputy prime minister, and ambassador to Israel and the United States.

Maajid Nawaz is founder and codirector of the London-based Quilliam Foundation, a think tank established by former Islamists to challenge radical ideology and develop an Islam that is in harmony with its host society.

He frequently shares his views on Islam, Islamism, and Muslim political thought in the British and global media.

Farah Pandith is senior advisor to the assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, focusing on Muslim communities in Europe and efforts to counter Islamic extremism. Previously, she served as director for Middle East regional initiatives with the National Security Council, where she coordinated U.S. policy on Muslim world outreach and the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative.

Dennis Ross is an independent consultant to The Washington Institute. The author of *Statecraft, And How to Restore America's Standing in the World* (2007) and *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace* (2004), he served in senior foreign policy positions during the Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Clinton administrations.

Oussama Safa is general director of the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, a think tank based in Beirut. An expert on Lebanese and Arab contemporary politics, he is responsible for supervising the center's research and advocacy projects, including the development and implementation of democracy, good-governance, and anticorruption programs in Lebanon and the wider Arab world. He is also the cofounder of the Arab Election Monitoring Network.

Nader Said is president of Arab World for Research and Development and team leader for the UN's Palestine Human Development Report. He also serves as an advisor to a number of local and international institutions, including the UN Development Programme.

Richard Williamson, the president's special envoy to Sudan, is a senior foreign policy advisor to Republican presidential candidate Senator John McCain. A lawyer by profession, he has served as ambassador to the UN for special political affairs and as ambassador to the UN Commission on Human Rights. In addition, he has served as chairman of the Illinois Republican Party.

2008 Weinberg Founders Conference

Is Peace Still Possible? The Future of Israeli-Palestinian Relations

Is Peace Still Possible? The Future of Israeli-Palestinian Relations

Isaac Herzog, Riad Malki, and Dennis Ross

Summary

Isaac Herzog

Peace between Israel and the Palestinians remains both necessary and possible. Negotiations are taking place on a regular basis, and they are progressing—albeit slowly. But with the Iranian threat becoming more acute, it is more important than ever that the key parties—namely, the moderate coalition at the November 2007 Annapolis Conference, including Israel, the Palestinians, the United States, and the Arab states—must look toward their shared interests rather than their individual grievances in order to produce peace.

At the most fundamental level, the Palestinian Authority (PA) leadership refuses to budge on the issue of refugees, demanding partial right of return in addition to financial compensation. Moreover, it does not acknowledge Israel's significant step of limiting settlement construction to two blocs that would be transferred to Israel in the event of any peace agreement. With such an absence of cooperation at the top, the best way to create a stable foundation for peace is to encourage educational reforms that promote the principle of peace within Palestinian society.

Another problematic issue is Hamas, which remains in control of the Gaza Strip. It goes without saying that as long as the Palestinian territories are politically divided, an agreement is unattainable. The help of Arab governments could make a significant difference in resolving this issue. Through economic sanctions, Arab states have the capacity to pressure Hamas into cooperating with the PA and Israel.

Also, the thorny issue of Jerusalem lingers. Few observers see a solution on the horizon, but if one does materialize, the United States will undoubtedly be needed to broker any agreement regarding the city.

This is a time of uncertainty in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Given the transitions under way within the Palestinian, Israeli, and American governments, no one can foresee the character of negotiations one year from now. The important point now is to move ahead, develop

Isaac Herzog is Israel's minister of welfare and social services, as well as minister of the diaspora, society, and the fight against anti-Semitism.

momentum, and establish the basis for a settlement in the future—because without the foundation for peace, it will not matter who wins any of the upcoming elections.

■ *Riad Malki serves as minister of foreign affairs, minister of justice, minister of information, and spokesperson for the Palestinian Authority.*

Riad Malki

For some time now, Israel has been violating its commitments as set forth in the Quartet's 2003 Roadmap peace initiative: it has failed to remove roadblocks in the West Bank, refused to negotiate on Jerusalem, and, most important, continued its campaign of settlement construction. Although this campaign is limited to two blocs that will be transferred to Israel in the event of a final peace agreement, it has a negative effect on Palestinian psychology: Palestinians see ongoing construction as a sign that Israel simply no longer cares about resolving the dispute as it used to.

Generating trust between the PA and Israel is the first step on the path to symbiosis. Three factors can guide the relationship in that direction.

First, both parties must uphold all agreements, specifically the Roadmap and the 2007 principles formulated at the Annapolis Conference. Second, the PA needs to be strengthened, not weakened. Israel has done little to publicly praise the PA's security efforts, which is leading many Palestinians to favor the more radical Hamas government in Gaza. Moreover, the lack of overall progress delegitimizes the PA. Only when Palestinians see results will they consider Mahmoud Abbas the leader who can best realize their goals. Finally, all parties must be dedicated to reaching a solution, including Israel, the Arab countries, and the United States. Even the Palestinians could do more to show their commitment, particularly on issues of security, where there has been progress but no breakthrough.

Despite its qualms about Israeli behavior, the PA asserts its unwavering commitment to negotiations and the peace process. But the next five months are crucial. Accelerated discussions leading to progress would demonstrate the viability of peace between Israel and the Palestinians, whereas stagnation and uncooperativeness could crush any remaining hopes for a solution.

■ *Dennis Ross is an independent consultant to The Washington Institute.*

Dennis Ross

Israel and the Palestinians have two fundamentally different views regarding the current status of negotiations. The Israelis say there is progress and that both sides are taking steps toward an eventual agreement. The Palestinians, however, dispute that progress, arguing that Israel is negotiating with no intention of finalizing a solution.

Regardless, there are significant points of convergence between the two parties. The most important one concerns the threat of Iran. If Tehran eventually weaponizes its nuclear technology, it could derail the entire peace process. Although Israelis and Palestinians may view that process

differently, both ultimately desire a peace agreement. Second, there is Gaza: The PA and Israel have a vested interest in addressing the Hamas issue together, and such action will be necessary at some point for any peace settlement to have legitimacy and permanence.

Long-term questions aside, both parties are capable of doing more at present. They need to respect agreements rather than make excuses for violating them. This is the only way to create the trust that each government will need in order to take leaps of faith when a permanent-status agreement is near. Moreover, when one party recognizes efforts by the other to encourage peaceful behavior, it should publicize its satisfaction in order to build momentum—which will hopefully lead to peace.

Tehran weaponizing its nuclear technology could derail the entire peace process.

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America's Grand Strategy in the Middle East: Views from the Campaigns

America's Grand Strategy in the Middle East: Views from the Campaigns

Max Boot and Richard Danzig

Summary

Max Boot

The next president will face a daunting array of challenges in the broader Middle East: preventing terrorist attacks, stemming weapons proliferation, maintaining the free flow of oil, and protecting U.S. allies from Afghanistan to Israel. No ideology or grand strategy can provide all the answers to these challenges. The situation requires a leader who is guided by a lifetime of experience—one who will confront our enemies unflinchingly while remaining realistic about the possibilities of diplomacy. Although the next president should retain an element of "realistic idealism" in his foreign policy—mainly by promoting liberal democracy—he must also realize where idealism is appropriate and where it is not.

In Iraq, the troop surge was crucial to stabilizing the security situation. Its success enables us to withdraw some forces, rotating out five brigades this year and others as conditions permit. Yet the notion of withdrawing all combat brigades within sixteen months from January 2009—when the new U.S. president is inaugurated—would risk relinquishing the gains of the surge, which Gen. David Petraeus has noted are fragile and reversible. Iraq policy should be dictated by the advice of military commanders on the ground, who advocate going slow on drawdowns.

The counterinsurgency lessons of Iraq—which focus not on killing insurgents, but on providing security to the population—are also applicable to Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Afghanistan, those lessons would require deploying three additional U.S. brigades, doubling the Afghan army's size, streamlining its command structure, appointing an Afghan policy czar and special presidential envoy, and formulating a plan that coordinates civilian and military efforts. In Pakistan, the United States should try to mobilize the western tribes in the same way it mobilized tribes in Iraq's Anbar province. This approach would require better cooperation from the Pakistani government and army. In contrast, a policy that triples nonmilitary aid to Pakistan while browbeating its government and applying conditions to that military aid is a policy at war with itself.

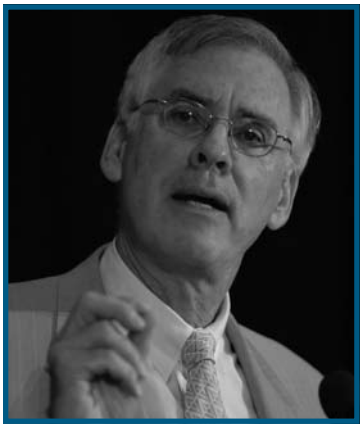
On Iran, the United States should pursue a strategy of prevention

Max Boot, a senior foreign policy advisor to Republican presidential candidate Senator John McCain, is the Jeane J. Kirkpatrick senior fellow in National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.

rather than deterrence. One troubling consequence of an Iranian nuclear-weapons capability is that it could surreptitiously provide fissile nuclear material to terrorist groups and ignite runaway proliferation in the region. Accordingly, the United States should not make concessions unless Iran is willing to match them. Tehran thus far has rejected all U.S. overtures, attempting to lure Washington and Europe into open-ended negotiations while it develops nuclear weapons. Direct presidential diplomacy with Iran without preconditions would only dishearten Iranian dissidents and demoralize regional friends. Realistically, forcing Iran to abandon its nuclear ambitions and sponsorship of terrorism will require increased pressure through additional UN sanctions. If those fail, the United States could pursue several other options: multilateral sanctions outside the UN on Iranian imports of refined petroleum, similar sanctions against the country's central bank, a worldwide divestment campaign, and designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization.

On the Israeli-Palestinian front, the United States must maintain its unshakable commitment to Israel's security. Now is not the time to deepen our engagement in the kind of negotiating process that would pressure the Israelis into concessions that might endanger their security—particularly on behalf of a peace agreement that the Palestinians are not likely to honor. Although the United States should not stand in the way if Israelis and Palestinians wish to conduct peace negotiations, there can be no lasting settlement until the Palestinians show they are truly interested in peaceful coexistence. Moreover, the conflict is only one of many regional problems, and an Israeli-Palestinian agreement would do little to solve the larger issues that give rise to terrorism.

In Lebanon, Hizballah has become a state within a state, and Syria continues to undermine the democratic process. Proponents of striking a deal with Syria ignore the price: return of the Golan Heights and the betrayal of Lebanon's democracy movement. Rather than spurning the lawfully elected government of Lebanon for a nebulous Syrian promise to cease supporting terrorism, the United States should provide more military aid to the Lebanese Armed Forces, increase support for schools and hospitals to undercut Hizballah's appeal, and ramp up efforts to isolate and weaken the Syrian regime until it ends its support for terrorism.



■ *Richard Danzig is a senior foreign policy advisor to Democratic presidential candidate Senator Barack Obama.*

Richard Danzig

The next U.S. administration should pursue a policy of "sustainable security," which involves thinking strategically and building alliances that make its goals achievable. Toward this end, the next president should make rational use of a range of options; otherwise, U.S. economic and military resources could become drained to the point that they provide only short-term solutions. For example, the president should at least be open to the possibility of talking to adversaries and exploring common interests, particularly in relation to pressing challenges such as

the mounting threat posed by Hizballah, Hamas, and Iran; the difficulties of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations; the tumult in Iraq; and the danger of instability in a nuclear Pakistan or a volatile Afghanistan.

Regarding Afghanistan, we need a timetable for reallocating resources from Iraq to Afghanistan, accepting the fact that the United States is in a stronger position when it is taking steps to withdraw from frontline combat. The Iraqis themselves—and now the Bush administration—have moved toward this position. The United States should retain enough forces in Iraq to continue training the Iraqi army and to strike at terrorists. At the same time, Washington should push the Iraqis to make the difficult choices that political reconciliation requires.

In the end, Afghanistan and Pakistan are the central fronts in the war on terror. At least two additional combat brigades should be sent to Afghanistan, but any serious strategy will effectively require training the Afghan army and police force to deal with corruption, improve the command structure, tackle the drug trade that funds the Taliban, and eliminate terrorist safe havens in Pakistan. On that last point, the U.S. military needs to be able to strike high-value targets in Pakistan if Islamabad is unable or unwilling to do so. Discussions on this and other issues must take Pakistani concerns and perceptions into account, including Islamabad's continued support for the Taliban (via its intelligence services) and its fears about Afghanistan. We must reassure Pakistan that we can jointly pursue overlapping interests; we can best convey this reassurance by using all elements of national power and not resorting to the militarization of U.S. policy.

Regarding Iran—a threat to regional stability and an existential concern for Israel—the United States and its allies should pursue a preventive strategy that involves large carrots and big sticks. Washington should not rely on a fundamentally risky strategy of deterrence. The Bush administration's policy of refusing to talk to Tehran has failed, and the regime has continued to produce enriched uranium. The United States needs to do all it can to avoid having to make the terrible choice between bombing Iran or living with a nuclear Iran. Any new strategy must offer the Iranians a means of rejoining the community of nations; at the same time, the United States must push for tougher multilateral sanctions targeting Iran's ability to import gasoline and conduct trade. Such sanctions would require the participation of China, Russia, India, and the United Arab Emirates. Therefore, unhelpful moves such as threatening to expel Russia from the Group of Eight only damage Washington's chances of securing Moscow's cooperation and doom efforts to make sanctions work. All in all, the carrot-and-stick strategy will require a credible American president who is inclined to work with others and is willing to talk, but who would nevertheless use force if necessary.

On the Israeli-Palestinian front, the proper U.S. role for the new administration is one of deep involvement from the beginning, which includes the appointment of an official envoy. This more vigorous engagement

Proponents of striking a deal with Syria ignore the price: betraying Lebanon's democracy movement.

should come with an understanding that the United States cannot force a peace—it is up to the Israelis and Palestinians to resolve the fundamental issues. U.S. involvement can give the negotiating parties the economic and security resources to withstand the criticism that they will inevitably receive from their own publics. Yet, this role is not sufficient for a successful process; we must also involve European and Middle Eastern nations diplomatically and financially, principally by convening an international meeting to discuss how to move forward. Whatever avenue is chosen, working for a solution would benefit Israel while helping the United States defuse an issue that feeds jihadist rhetoric and complicates a number of regional relationships.

In the end, Afghanistan and Pakistan are the central fronts in the war on terror.

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McCain-Palin on the Middle East

McCain-Palin on the Middle East

Richard Williamson

Summary

John McCain committed his life to national service when he joined the U.S. Navy at the age of eighteen. Ever since, his involvement in security and foreign policy issues has been extensive, direct, and personal. Through his own distinguished career and as a parent whose son served in Iraq, he knows both the importance of a strong military and the terrible costs of war.

His experience and knowledge are critical, given today's dangerous world and the challenges that the next administration will face. Russia is reasserting itself in dangerous ways by cutting off energy to Europe and deploying troops into Georgia. In Latin America, Hugo Chavez is disrupting oil flows and challenging still-fragile democratic regimes. Partnerships with many of our European allies are badly frayed. McCain knows, as George Schultz used to say, that "diplomacy is like gardening—you have to till the field constantly if it's going to grow." The next administration will face the diplomatic and strategic challenge of forming constructive partnerships; it's difficult work but absolutely necessary, particularly in the Middle East.

Richard Williamson, the president's special envoy to Sudan, is a senior foreign policy advisor to Republican presidential candidate Senator John McCain.

McCain understands that we have not finished the job in Afghanistan, where opium production feeds destabilizing narco-trafficking networks in the country and around the world. Reestablishing collaborative relationships with Pakistan would go a long way in bolstering border security—particularly in the autonomous tribal areas on the Pakistani side, where the Taliban and al-Qaeda have established strongholds. Yet civil-military relations in Pakistan have been dominated by the army and the nation's intelligence services, and President Musharraf's recent resignation, following a drop in the military's approval rating to 58 percent, was a telling sign of the burgeoning national opposition to the military's continued domination of Pakistani politics.

Meanwhile, Iraq remains central to the war on terror. Last year, McCain voiced his support for the "surge" strategy, despite the unpopularity of that position. In his view, a commitment to genuinely serving the American public requires one to go up against the system at times—a commit-

ment that also underlies his fight against congressional earmarks and his bipartisan approach. Throughout his career, Senator McCain has stated and demonstrated that his beliefs are more important to him than politics, a value he recognized in his vice presidential candidate, Gov. Sarah Palin. For McCain, winning the war in Iraq is more important than being elected president. This stance makes him an uncharacteristic politician, and with respect to the difficult issues of the Middle East, it warrants a moment of reflection: character and courage are critical in that arena.

Regarding Iran, the country is ruled by leaders who have denied the Holocaust, sponsored Hizballah and Hamas, and steadily pursued a nuclear capability. The Iranians already have between 3,000 and 6,000 uranium-enriching centrifuges, and although they have not perfected the technology, they are fitfully advancing toward the weaponization of nuclear material. While Senator Barack Obama has stated that he would negotiate with Tehran without preconditions, McCain has been unambiguous in stating that the only thing worse than military action against Iran would be a nuclear-armed Iran.

At the same time, McCain is committed to keeping diplomacy on the table. There are a variety of areas in which the United States can and should work with Tehran. The Iranians have participated in several meetings regarding Iraq and have played a positive role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The next administration will have to balance the benefits of wider discussions with Tehran against the regime's intrusions in Iraq, its support of Hizballah and Hamas, and its continued defiance of the International Atomic Energy Agency—not to mention President Ahmadinezhad's aggressive statements.

In the Arab-Israeli arena, promising moments in the past have never translated into concrete progress.

In the Arab-Israeli arena, promising moments in the past have never translated into concrete progress, and in many ways Israel's security has declined. Israel needs to be confident in its security situation before it can vigorously address the many questions related to a two-state solution. Under a McCain administration, Israel could count on U.S. support in dealing with the difficult and inseparable political and security questions it faces. The United States has many friends and allies in the Middle East, but Israel has a special role based on its strategic position, its shared values, and its leadership as a democracy in the region. In the tradition of Teddy Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy, and Ronald Reagan, McCain believes that American values—in addition to American interests—must animate U.S. foreign policy. Accordingly, he would make the U.S. perspective on Lebanon and Syria clear while remaining respectful of Israel's sovereignty.

Beyond specific country strategies, McCain's approach to the broader Middle East includes a belief in energy independence. Our dependence on foreign oil has crippled some of our capacity to pursue other interests. In order to develop long-term solutions to this problem, McCain advocates

greater use of nuclear reactors, offshore drilling, and alternative energy sources such as solar power and wind.

McCain understands the importance of multilateral diplomacy, yet he recognizes the limitations of some traditional diplomatic tools. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, there have been serious shifts in the international system, evidenced by NATO's identity crisis in the post–Cold War era, swings in the effectiveness of the United Nations, and the evolution of the Group of Eight. Although the UN has an unparalleled capacity to establish international norms, taking vigorous action through that body can become difficult or impossible if any of the permanent, veto-wielding Security Council members have a special interest in a given international security issue. McCain recognizes fluidity in the international system and the need to look for better instruments to handle disputes and crises. Former U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright gave an important and historic speech at the founding of the Community of Democracies, and McCain's proposed League of Democracies would not replace this or any other similar entity but, rather, would offer another way for countries to organize and to rebuild frayed relationships under more stringent membership criteria.

Although we have to be realistic about the way the world is, we also need idealism to see where the world should go.

Russian prime minister Vladimir Putin's recent actions in Georgia showed the wisdom of some of McCain's concerns regarding Moscow's steady authoritarian drift and its related redefinition of the post–Cold War international order. Russia has a resurgent economy, a rising middle class, and an emerging civil society. The U.S.-Russian bilateral relationship should be considered mature enough that Washington can both work with the Russians and challenge them when they violate the sovereignty of another independent country. Senator Obama's comments placing equivalent blame on Russia and Georgia and then suggesting that the United States refer the issue to the UN Security Council showed a lack of experience—even naiveté—by comparison.

Henry Kissinger recently wrote a tribute to the late Peter Rodman, in which he commented that the typical division between realists and idealists is a false one: although we have to be realistic about the way the world is, Kissinger argued, we also need idealism to see where the world should go. This perspective captures Senator McCain's approach to international politics. He has advocated the use of force to effect regime change—in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. He has taken a muscular view on Sudan's Darfur region in the form of supporting a NATO no-fly zone, a measure that could dramatically change that situation. At the same time, he has opposed the use of force under other circumstances. For example, as a freshman congressman who idolized President Reagan, McCain spoke out against the president's deployment of Marines to Lebanon. Moreover, as chairman of the International Republican Institute for the past sixteen years, he is committed to supporting nascent civil

society the world over and the global spread of democratic values that can contribute to peaceful regime change where it is wanting. He will bring sophistication and a renewed energy to this effort. He knows the importance of building civil societies, but he will not preclude the use of force from the support of such efforts. As Defense Secretary Robert Gates has pointed out, diplomacy without the threat of force is like sheet music without instruments to play it.

Diplomacy without the threat of force is like sheet music without instruments to play it.

2008 Weinberg Founders Conference

Obama-Biden on the Middle East

Obama-Biden on the Middle East

Richard Clarke

Summary

It is a different world today than it was before the September 11 attacks. The United States is engaged in two large-scale military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, al-Qaeda is resurgent, and Iran has gained enormously in power and influence since our intervention in Iraq and continues to pursue a nuclear weapons program. Furthermore, our ability to act as a superpower is now limited as a result of our financial meltdown. In fact, the message the secretary of the Treasury and chairman of the Federal Reserve Board gave this week to the congressional leadership was that we were days away from complete economic collapse.

In order to restore our strength as a nation, we need a leader with the qualifications necessary to deal with the many challenges that lie ahead. The past eight years have demonstrated that prior length of service does not ensure good judgment in national security issues. If that were the case, the current enormously experienced administration would have guided us on the path to greater security. Yet, seven years after September 11, the United States still faces the threat of terrorism and the risk of another attack by al-Qaeda.

Barack Obama has the judgment on national security affairs we need to get us back on course. In particular, he has shown better judgment than John McCain on two key issues: first, Senator Obama had the courage to oppose the war in Iraq when the vast majority of experts were in favor of it. He was right when he said that going into Iraq would greatly strengthen our enemies in the region and prove counterproductive. Second, he astutely identified Afghanistan and Pakistan, not Iraq, as the central front in the war on terror. While Senator Obama called for the deployment of an additional two brigades to Afghanistan last August, Senator McCain suggested that we merely "muddle through" in that country. Today, a year later, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has called for two additional brigades to be sent there, and the secretary of defense has done so as well. Although the president has now said he agrees that such a move is necessary, he claims it cannot be done during his administration.

Senator Obama's solid judgment on national security issues is also

Richard Clarke is a senior foreign policy advisor to Democratic presidential candidate Senator Barack Obama and former national coordinator for security and counterterrorism.

demonstrated in his choice of Senator Joe Biden as his running mate. Any president, no matter how young or old, may unexpectedly leave office; therefore, the choice of vice president is the first major national security decision a candidate makes. Ideally, such a choice is done not according to who will help provide the most electoral votes or political appeal, but who has the most experience and ability to walk into the Oval Office in the president's absence and give orders during a crisis. Choosing Joe Biden, a man who has spent an enormous amount of time on national security affairs and foreign relations, shows that Obama has judgment we can rely on—judgment that is demonstrably better than that of his opponent.

Obama has viable plans for tackling national security issues at home and abroad. Having consulted a number of military leaders, he has laid out a legitimate timetable for withdrawing our forces from Iraq. Specifically, he has proposed the withdrawal of one brigade per month over the course of fifteen to sixteen months, but he remains flexible and willing to adjust the schedule as necessary.

He also has asserted that Tehran's growing influence must be curbed and that Iran's acquisition of a nuclear weapon is unacceptable. Despite facing much criticism for his approach, Obama intends to use diplomacy as part of his campaign against Iran's nuclear ambitions. When Ronald Reagan called the Soviet Union the "evil empire" and sent diplomats to negotiate with Moscow, no one thought of it as a sign of weakness; that approach, in fact, may have prevented far greater calamities. Obama supports negotiating even with today's "evil empires," including such states as Iran and North Korea. If circumstances required the use of military force, Obama would not hesitate, but his first inclination is not to pull the trigger.

If we continue to make the wrong decisions about our leadership, America's continuing role as a force for peace and justice will no longer be assured.

Obama has also called for genuine negotiations concerning Middle East peace—not just at the end of an eight-year administration, but beginning from the first month. Furthermore, he has pledged his personal involvement, demonstrating his commitment to achieving a lasting peace in the region.

At home, Obama will provide a steady hand at restoring our economic strength. Among the many things he called attention to long before anybody else was the need for greater regulation of the financial markets in order to prevent economic collapse. In the uncertain conditions we now face, we need someone who is consistently looking forward—someone who sees problems that are coming down the pike and formulates the correct solutions. That person is Barack Obama. If we continue to make the wrong decisions about our leadership and fail to do enough as individuals to affect the outcome of this election, America's continuing role as a great superpower and a force for peace and justice will no longer be assured. Barack Obama is the future, and electing him is the way to restore our strength as a nation and defeat the enemies of the United States and other democracies around the world.

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Reversing the Tide of Radicalization

Reversing the Tide of Radicalization

Colin Mellis, Maajid Nawaz, and Farah Pandith

Summary

Colin Mellis

Following the murder of film director Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam by a violent Islamist in 2004, the city's leaders recognized a policy gap between general preventive work—official acts and institutions that promote mediation of disputes and social cohesion—and the counterterrorism measures implemented by police, military, and intelligence officials. To close the gap, the City of Amsterdam developed a three-tiered approach to local security centered around general prevention, specific prevention, and direct intervention.

Most municipalities in the Netherlands include general preventive strategies in their local governance functions; such strategies take a long-term perspective and address grievances, real and perceived, that are prevalent in the community. Specific prevention seeks to avoid polarization between groups, particularly Muslims and non-Muslims, and focuses on vulnerable groups such as Muslim youth. In particular, specific prevention seeks to empower and mobilize the young voices of moderation within the Muslim community, particularly those who can help counter radicalism and provide ways for Muslim youth to resolve identity crises within a civic framework.

Direct intervention is the most novel—and innovative—among the Dutch local security strategies. It is designed for Muslim youth who have already internalized radical ideology but have not yet acted on it. As a central part of its direct intervention strategy, the City of Amsterdam established the Information House to build expertise on radical Islamist ideology, create formal and informal civic support networks throughout the city, and provide advice and other assistance on specific cases of urban political violence. The Information House receives calls from social workers, teachers, and others in the community who are concerned that particular individuals may be on the path toward violent radicalism, and its staff helps these callers determine whether there is a reason to be concerned—that is, whether the individual is expressing radical or merely religious beliefs.

■ *Colin Mellis is policy advisor on radicalization for the City of Amsterdam as well as a lecturer on terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at University College, Utrecht.*

By establishing this program, the City of Amsterdam has been able to assuage fears and change misconceptions regarding Islam and radicalization. The initiative has strengthened key moderates in the Muslim community—mainly, charismatic and well-informed young people who illustrate how to be a good Muslim and a good citizen simultaneously. In receiving such formal and informal official support, these individuals become empowered to mediate interventions and counter Islamist radicalism. The program's overall efficacy remains to be seen, as it is a relatively new program. Yet there have been visible improvements in the Muslim community.

Both the program and Dutch society in general still face several challenges, including resistance to religion entering into the public domain, misconceptions about Muslim radicalism and religious conservatism, and privacy issues. The wider identity crisis among Muslim youth in Western Europe is a factor as well. As the Netherlands attempts to define what it means to be Dutch, certain ethnic and cultural tropes may need to undergo redefinition or removal in order to fully and effectively integrate all communities within the country.

Maajid Nawaz

The UK-based Quilliam Foundation opposes both violence and the ideology of Islamism in general, the latter of which has four defining traits: Islam as a political ideology, not a faith; the propagation of Islamic law as state law; the belief that *sharia* is common to a global political community known as the *umma*; and the idea that the *umma* must be represented by an expansionist entity referred to as the caliphate.

■ *Maajid Nawaz is founder and codirector of the London-based Quilliam Foundation, a think tank.*

These four ideas are shared and advocated by all Islamists—an important consideration given that all jihadist movements have stemmed from Islamism. And although violence is not intrinsic to Islam, or even necessarily to Islamism, it is clearly a real problem among many Islamist groups. In this regard, it is important to note that the idea of a *sharia*-ruled country is not based on Islamic religious texts—it is a modern invention. So, too, is the contemporary concept of the *umma*, which was once linked closely with religious identity but has recently been transformed under Islamism into an exclusive political identity. Accordingly, the Quilliam Foundation opposes Islamism, believing that this ideology poses a significant threat.

There are many legitimate grievances at work within many Muslim communities. Islamists manipulate these grievances to further the cause of their ideology, finding ways to tie individual grievances to broader ones. In many cases, recruiters try to appeal to young Muslims' sense of alienation by making them feel that they are part of a cause, convincing them that all Muslims are suffering because of the West's actions. For example, Islamists have portrayed the war in Iraq as a war against all Muslims. Dur-

ing Nawaz's years as a recruiter for the international Islamist group Hizb al-Tahrir, he used this technique as a means of bringing young Muslims into the ranks of Islamism.

Maajid Nawaz's time in prison was critical to his deradicalization. During his incarceration, he learned Arabic and was able to read sacred Islamic texts for himself. Another vital factor was Amnesty International's decision to work for him as a prisoner of conscience. By working to secure his release, the organization helped him realize that there were good non-Muslims.

Farah Pandith

From the U.S. perspective, Europe is one of the regions of greatest concern regarding radicalization, second only to Pakistan. The European concern is rooted in several factors: the freedom of movement across borders, the ease with which European citizens can acquire a U.S. visa, the easy access to technology, the broad freedoms accorded to individual expression, and the relatively high conversion rate to Islam. Viewed against the backdrop of the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, these factors taken together have a major impact on questions of identity among European Muslims, particularly youth.

The United States has begun to engage with Muslims across Western Europe in a wide variety of ways. Such a diversity of methods is important, because Europe has many communities of Muslims, not a single community. Muslim issues in one city may not be the same as those in another country, or even in a neighboring city. Therefore, we must focus on what is taking place at the local level as we develop official engagement policies and programs at the U.S. Department of State.

Our main goal at present is to amplify moderate Muslim voices, because Muslims themselves are the only remedy against violent Islamist ideology. In Europe, mainstream Muslim leaders usually lack the tools necessary to combat radicalization, and we have sought to provide them with those tools. Similarly, many of the moderate European Muslims who are willing to speak out against extremism are unaware of or unconnected to one another. Helping them develop a network is crucial; accordingly, the United States has opened up avenues of dialogue to facilitate trust building among Europe's Muslim communities.

The issue of youth and identity is another essential part of the deradicalization process. It is important to determine where youth are hearing about alternative ideologies. The United States hopes to illustrate how democracy and Islam can go hand in hand, and how to reconcile being Western and Muslim. We need to be savvy about this; we need to provide alternatives via technology and the internet, where young people are likely to encounter such ideological messages.

■ *Farah Pandith is senior advisor to the assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs.*

Muslims themselves are the only remedy against violent Islamist ideology.

We also need the help of European imams. We are beginning to work on imam training, but it is difficult to apply the Christian model of theological training to another religion. Moreover, the fact that sermons are often in Arabic can alienate certain youths, leading them to seek answers elsewhere. Nevertheless, many young Muslims do consult with their imams, so it is crucial that these religious leaders help their parishioners reconcile being Muslims with living in a non-Muslim-majority country.

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What Arab Democrats Want from Our Next President

What Arab Democrats Want from Our Next President

J. Scott Carpenter, Mohamed Abdelbaky, Oussama Safa, Engi El-Haddad, and Nader Said

Summary

J. Scott Carpenter

This year, The Washington Institute's Project Fikra launched a Presidential Task Force to make recommendations on ways to combat radical extremism in the broader Middle East. Yet a missing element of the task force thus far has been the perspective of the region's people—specifically, their thoughts on the likely policies, expectations, and desires of the next U.S. administration. Such a perspective is vital, for the governments, private sectors, and nongovernmental sectors in the United States and Europe have to find partners among those who are involved in changing their societies; otherwise, the West's efforts to combat extremism and thus bolster its security will ultimately be undermined. We must ask these putative participants what they want—or don't want—from future Western governmental policies, their thoughts on Muslim youth and on how to engage Islamists in constructive futures for these youth, and their perceptions of democracy and its basic meaning in their lives.

Such a dialogue raises four critical points for the next administration: First, the demographic predominance of youth in the Arab world must be acknowledged and addressed in U.S. policy, for this sector will eventually decide on the region's new political leaders. Second, democratization efforts should be country-specific and accommodate the richness and diversity of the region; once established, democratic rule should be consistently applied, with direct and sincere acknowledgment of opposing interests. Third, to attract public support, democratization efforts must strive to produce tangible results—economically and otherwise—in peoples' daily lives at all levels of the socioeconomic scale. Fourth, the United States should be supporting—rather than leading—locals already engaged in these efforts.

■ *J. Scott Carpenter is a Keston Family fellow at The Washington Institute and director of the Institute's Project Fikra.*

Mohamad Abdelbaky

In the Middle East, 63 percent of the population is under the age of 25—the region's highest percentage of youth ever. Their vast numbers mean that they compete for dwindling opportunities for employment and civic participation, contributing to the growth of radical extrem-

ism. In a world where secularism and civil society are either weak, nonexistent, or offer few opportunities for political expression and personal development, Islam becomes a powerful alternative. At the same time, a growing segment of the region's youth has created an alternative, virtual political community, using the internet to promote democracy: To date, Egypt has 180,000 blogs, representing 40 percent of Arabic-language social networks, and these young Egyptian bloggers have been successful in mobilizing their cohorts to demonstrate against the government. Facebook groups and YouTube videos instruct youth throughout the Middle East on how to be political activists; form prodemocracy groups; and raise awareness about sensitive political issues, such as human rights violations. The Bush administration's efforts throughout the Middle East to promote democracy and empower women have lacked an explicit focus on youth, thus bypassing an opportunity to tap into this vast reserve of political and social activism in the majority of the Middle East's population. Hence, the next U.S. administration should make the empowerment of Arab youth a top priority in its regional democratization programs.

■ *Mohamed Abdelbaky is foreign affairs editor for* Akher Saa, *as well as a visiting fellow with Human Rights First.*

Oussama Safa

As it begins to formulate its new foreign policy orientation toward the Middle East, the next U.S. administration should rely on some critical lessons from the past seven years. Foremost, it will have to clarify the ambivalence about regional democratization that was fostered by the policy of waging war in the name of peace. Yet such efforts at clarification will be challenging because of the serious policy coordination and communication problems among Middle Eastern governments, and between state and nonstate actors throughout the region—including Islamists, Arab prodemocratic political leaders, and nongovernmental organizations. These lessons suggest that U.S. foreign policy in the region should be crafted and conducted with patience and consistency. Specifically, democracy promotion efforts should not adopt a short-term perspective; rather, they should incorporate long-term political, economic, and social indicators designed by the reformers in the region. To be sure, the United States needs to adopt a consistent regional strategy that applies the same unwavering commitments to all Middle Eastern countries, albeit one that is tailored to the specific needs and challenges in each state.

■ *Oussama Safa is general director of the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, a think tank based in Beirut.*

Fostering more structures for intraregional collaboration would also ease pressure on the United States and encourage local solutions. The United States must clarify its attitude toward local elections, support social and political change in the region, and avoid credibility problems that undermine the work of Arab democrats. In formulating and pursuing its regional policies in the Middle East, the United States should make an effort to incorporate local public opinion—especially informed criticism—to broaden the appeal of such policies among more relevant publics in the Middle East.

Engi El-Haddad

Arab democrats are becoming extinct, struggling to survive in the narrow passage between autocratic governments, on the one side, and Islamists, on the other. Although each side should be supporting these political reformers as an alternative to the other side's opposing ranks, the intentional or unintentional result of the political status quo during the past few years has been the steadily fading appeal of the few Arab democrats who remain. The inconsistent policy of democracy promotion—launching programs and then canceling them prematurely—has eroded these reformers' base of support, undermining the capacity and sacking the aspirations of the political leaders who have stepped forward in their support. What changes in U.S. foreign policy in the region can prevent the imminent extinction of Arab democrats?

Democracy promotion in the Middle East should be a priority among U.S. foreign policy goals, because it creates the necessary politically moderate alternative to a potentially violent and protracted power vacuum effected when autocratic regimes eventually exit the political scene. Of course, the United States will always have superseding foreign policy interests and goals, yet it should be honest about them and promise only what it will be able to deliver. The ongoing debate over "sequencing" in democracy promotion has continually underemphasized the establishment of the rule of law before the conduct of elections and the reform or design of governing institutions. The intangible ideas of democracy, which are incomprehensible to many people in the Middle East, must be connected to the very real need for economic prosperity by providing the rule of law, eradicating corruption, and ensuring social justice. Such a connection could be forged by linking foreign aid to the recipient government's demonstrated commitment to anticorruption laws rather than to human rights alone—as the latter approach tends to focus criticism on no one but the human rights activists themselves. Washington needs to help provide the political space for the Arab democrats to grow, which may mean turning the spotlight away from them in order to preserve their credibility in the community or to deflect attention from the government.

The United States should not engage with Islamists—that is a critical role that the Arab democrats could and should fill. U.S. engagement with Islamists would only serve to seriously undercut the Arab democrats and give credibility and power to the Islamists, who have not demonstrated the kind of inclusiveness and transparency that are the hallmarks of democratic rule. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt is a telling example: despite the Brotherhood's popular appeal on the street as a viable political alternative, it revealed the more problematic and nondemocratic aspects of its platform when it faced demands to publish a charter containing specific political goals.

Engi El-Haddad, a strategy and communications consultant, is cofounder of Shayfeen.com, the Afro-Egyptian Human Rights Organization, and Egyptians Against Corruption.

Nader Said

■ *Nader Said is president of Arab World for Research and Development and team leader for the UN's Palestine Human Development Report.*

Democracy promotion is an interaction of values and ideologies that must take both the international and the Arab context into account. Accordingly, future efforts should eschew the overly idealistic and overbearing approach of the past, which treated democratization in the Middle East as if it were a social engineering project. U.S. efforts to promote democracy in the region have lacked rhetorical clarity in their articulation and suffered from double standards in their application—for example, using overwhelming force in Iraq and not exerting an equivalent degree of effort in attempting to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian issue, a key priority for those in the region. The creation of an aid bureaucracy has also harmed democracy promotion, diverting money away from the actual programs on the ground and toward centralized administrative offices far away from the programs' officers and intended recipients. These fundamental problems in U.S. democracy-promotion programs have caused Arab democrats to distance themselves from the Bush administration's democratization efforts in the region. Simultaneously, there has been a sharpening of the development crisis in the Arab world that has created further disillusionment about democracy's ability to deliver prosperity and greater dissatisfaction with Arab governments' inability to cater to their citizens. These twin developments suggest strongly that democracy promotion can no longer consist of short-term, disconnected projects but, rather, must be undertaken in a concerted, integrated effort across all aspects of society. To be sure, the next U.S. administration must take a holistic approach in its regional democracy-promotion policies and programs. Such an approach would augur more inclusiveness in terms of not only socioeconomic interests but also political forces—Islamists, leftists, opposition, and government.

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Israeli Politics: A Guide for the Perplexed

Israeli Politics: A Guide for the Perplexed

Isaac Herzog and David Makovsky

Summary

Isaac Herzog

Israel's political system is very different from America's. The Israeli idea of a political coalition, for example, is not well understood in the United States. Israeli society is not cohesive—several prominent groups are constantly vying for their share of power, particularly the secular, modern orthodox, ultraorthodox, Russian immigrant, and Israeli Arab constituencies. The parliament's (Knesset) members represent a wide array of political persuasions, from left-wing Arabs who want to eliminate the Jewish nature of the state to far-right members who want to rid Israel of Arabs. As a result, many interesting alliances have emerged over the years. The kind of pragmatic cooperation that one sees in the United States between Senators John McCain and Joseph Lieberman is quite common in Israel. For instance, Ehud Barak of the Labor Party and Binyamin Netanyahu of the Likud Party have been close friends since their years in the army, although one might not guess this based on their public personas.

The current governing coalition between the Kadima Party and the Labor Party is strong and has been well managed by outgoing prime minister Ehud Olmert of Kadima. It has overcome many challenges, such as the second Lebanon war and accusations of corruption against Olmert. It has also overseen indirect talks with Syria, expanded talks with the Palestinians, and maintained sound economic policy.

What does the immediate future hold? Tzipi Livni has just won Kadima's primary election by a very small margin over Shaul Mofaz and will most likely become the next prime minister. Although Olmert will probably submit his formal resignation tomorrow, he will continue to serve as prime minister until a new one is sworn in. This means he could remain in power until next March if Livni is unable to form a government—a scenario that would require a new round of national elections. Although Olmert's caretaker administration will retain full authority on paper, many fear that the government will be unable to make important decisions while Olmert is still in charge.

Isaac Herzog is Israel's minister of welfare and social services, as well as minister of the diaspora, society, and the fight against anti-Semitism.

The Labor Party is the key to Livni's ability to form a coalition. There are some in Labor who would rather force elections—they do not believe a prime minister should be chosen based on a 400-vote margin in a Kadima primary, arguing that the general public should have a say. At the same time, early elections could be dangerous for Labor: in the public's view, the party has not separated its political agenda from that of Kadima. In fact, Labor—Israel's founding political party—could disappear if the elections do not go its way, and this fear looms over party members.

It remains to be seen whether Livni can form a government with Labor and move ahead with a joint agenda for the next two years. She has up to forty-two days to form a new government. If she cannot, and general elections are held, Likud's Netanyahu may emerge victorious: he is currently leading in the polls, and his tough rhetoric appeals to Israelis.

David Makovsky

Tzipi Livni has three political tasks ahead of her. First, she must solidify Kadima's ranks after the party's primary election and bring Shaul Mofaz's supporters back into the fold. Livni won by a very narrow margin, and some Mofaz supporters assert that the primary result would have been different had the media not begun announcing exit poll results before the balloting actually concluded. In addition, voting divided along ethnic lines, with Ashkenazi (European origin) Jews overwhelmingly supporting Livni, and Mizrahi (Middle Eastern origin) Jews supporting Mofaz. Livni could try to repair the rift by promising an important cabinet position to Mofaz or another prominent Mizrahi if Mofaz follows through on his announced intention to take a "time out" from politics.

■ *David Makovsky is a senior fellow and director of the Project on the Middle East Peace Process at The Washington Institute.*

Second, despite the differences between Kadima and Labor, the two parties are the core of the governing coalition, and Livni must acknowledge Labor's importance in sustaining that coalition. Foreign political observers easily can make the broad conclusion that Labor would never choose early elections under current conditions. Yet, as Minister Herzog mentioned, there is at least one reason that astute Israeli pundits can point to as to why the party might do so.

Third, Livni must consider which other parties she wants to join the government. The easiest approach would be to replicate the current coalition, including the Pensioners Party and Shas. Yet, even if a coalition can be built in the near term, the longer-term question is whether both Labor and Kadima can survive. In other words, can Israel afford two peace parties? If Livni and Ehud Barak do not put aside their bickering, the moderate camp may split instead of uniting, which would benefit Netanyahu.

One factor that could favor Livni is the slate of municipal elections scheduled for November. Kadima has a chance to do well in those elections—they will be held while Livni is still enjoying a political honeymoon of sorts, and the Knesset allocation system for municipal seats

favors the party that won the previous elections (i.e., Kadima). If Kadima does emerge victorious, more Israelis will begin to view the phenomenon as more than fleeting, which will in turn boost Livni's political fortunes.

Labor's objections notwithstanding, Livni does have the moral legitimacy to lead. Kadima came to power not because of Olmert's merits, but because voters supported the policies of the relatively new party. Such support weakens the potential argument by Netanyahu that Livni was not elected by the people, because the people already elected her party. In any event, Livni will face a number of formidable policymaking constraints even if she is successful at building a coalition. On the Palestinian front, Livni's coalition may not be able to bear the pressures of a renewed peace process if negotiations are approached as an all-or-nothing deal. For example, Shas refuses to support any prime minister who is willing to negotiate on Jerusalem. Yet, some have argued that the historic decision to relinquish part of Jerusalem should be made only by a government composed mainly of Jews, which would make it politically difficult to exclude Shas in favor of Israeli Arab parties.

Labor, Israel's founding political party, could disappear if the elections do not go its way.

Regarding Syria, much uncertainty surrounds the notion of a viable outcome in a new round of peace talks between Damascus and Israel. Nevertheless, Israel believes it is a proposition worth testing. Indirect talks in Turkey could last indefinitely, but they will not produce a successful outcome without U.S. efforts to wean Syria away from Iran.

Much uncertainly also surrounds the question of whether Livni's first diplomatic test will come on the Palestinian or the Syrian track. As with many previous Israeli leaders, her first challenge will likely take the form of a security crisis. For example, if the Gaza ceasefire is violated, will she continue to respect its terms or retaliate against Hamas? How will she handle the Iranian nuclear issue? And what about Hizballah? A security crisis, perhaps not of her choosing, could enable her to demonstrate her mettle to the Israeli public. At the same time, the lessons of the 2006 Lebanon war are difficult to ignore—any military moves that are not well thought out in advance can have lasting deleterious consequences, as was the case for Olmert. Therefore, how Livni handles crises early on could determine whether she is viewed as an interim figure on the Israeli political scene or as a more permanent part of the political firmament.

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Will Iraq Be an Ally of the United States or of Iran?

Will Iraq Be an Ally of the United States or of Iran?

Ghassan Atiyyah, Reuel Marc Gerecht, and Michael Knights

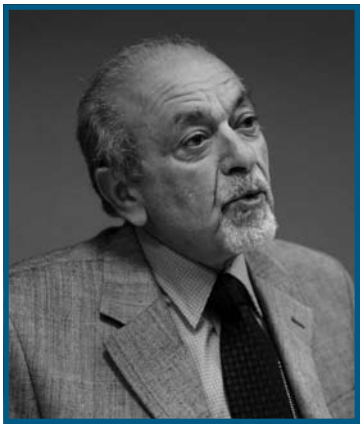
Summary

Ghassan Atiyyah

Although toppling Saddam Hussein was the right decision, the immediate post-Saddam period was clearly full of mistakes. Many U.S. officials approached Iraq with certain misconceptions. One of the most unproductive was thinking of the country in primarily Shiite and Kurdish terms. Other mistakes included the de-Baathification law, the disbanding of the army, and the establishment of a highly sectarian and ethnically divisive governing council. Such policies turned the Sunnis into enemies of the new system.

These errors were compounded by the premature introduction of new electoral processes, which harmed rather than helped national reconciliation efforts. The election results marginalized the Sunni population and exacerbated ethnic and sectarian tensions. To make matters worse, the United States sided with pro-Iranian Shiite parties such as the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) and Dawa, while elements of the Mahdi Army and the Badr Organization infiltrated the Iraqi Security Forces. Such a shift in the composition of the security forces in turn led to ethnic cleansing in Baghdad. Before the war, the capital was 50 percent Shiite; today that figure is 70 percent, a development of great consternation to the Sunnis. Moreover, Sunnis who entered the political process based on the promise that various laws would be amended were further antagonized when that promise went unfulfilled.

The upcoming provincial elections provide a new window of opportunity. The strong sectarian overtone in Iraqi politics is beginning to fade, and the elections could accelerate this trend. Other trends are moving against the Islamists now, including the emergence of a variety of political parties of all stripes—mostly with nationalist agendas. The United States should do all it can to maintain this momentum and ensure that the elections are free and fair. Although no electoral problems are anticipated in the northern provinces or in the Sunni areas, the southern provinces will likely prove more difficult. In those provinces, the city councils are controlled by members of entrenched parties. However, the elections will



■ *Ghassan Atiyyah is a former visiting fellow at The Washington Institute and director of the Iraq Foundation for Development and Democracy.*

be at least a good opportunity to replace those elements with new leaders who are more representative and have more of a national agenda than the incumbents.

Otherwise, we must ask ourselves what kind of Iraq will exist after the departure of U.S. forces. Will Iraqis begin fighting over places like Kirkuk, or will a stable country emerge? Clearly, without free and fair elections, the Iraqi situation will devolve, and Iran will pick up the pieces, forcing the United States to repeat the "surge" in order to achieve its ultimate goal of stability for the country.

■ *Reuel Marc Gerecht is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, focusing on Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan, as well as on terrorism and intelligence.*

Reuel Marc Gerecht

Although Iraq may well fall apart, it is unlikely to become Iran's stepchild. At present, the Iranians are facing difficulties in Iraq, and the United States would do well to understand the reasons behind this fact. It was truly shocking to see how much trouble the Americans had differentiating Shiites and Sunnis in the early postwar period. Everyone else in Iraq knew who was Shiite and who was Sunni. They did not always say it, but they knew it. This was an extremely important part of their identity, and the United States should have known it as well.

In general, the Iraqi heart is not secular in nature—it lies in the mosque and other religious establishments. Thus, if the United States hopes to oppose Iranian influence, it should do so through Iraq's religious Shiites. There are several key differences between Iraqi and Iranian Shiites. For example, very few Iraqis support the doctrine of clerical rule, while in Iran it has become part of the orthodoxy. The distance inherent in such differences will only grow as more Iraqis begin to view Iranian interference as threatening. The Iraqi Shiite Arab community is too large to be controlled by one ideology, and the growing distance between the Iraqi Shiites and Iran may not emerge immediately, but a backlash will most likely materialize in the long term. Such divisions will be beneficial to many parties, including the Iraqis and the Americans. This is not to say that Iraqi Shiites will become a bastion of U.S. support, of course, but they will not support the Iranians either.

From a practical standpoint, the United States has an essential role to play in the development of an Iraqi national identity—namely, providing enough troops to ensure that the provincial elections in the south are free and fair. The elections will have the benefit of bringing new faces and new blood into Iraqi politics. We should be prepared to protect these new leaders because Iran will attempt to assassinate them if they are not aligned with Iranian objectives. We should also be comfortable with the new system that emerges in Iraq even if it is not pro-American.

Michael Knights

Looking at the situation of the United States in Iraq now, one cannot help but be struck by the historical parallels of a disengaging

colonial power, going through many of the same processes that we have seen in places where colonial powers held a mandate for some time. On the one hand, there is a deep and immediate need for the Iraqis to demonstrate full, genuine independence. The craving for such independence is already apparent in Baghdad's handling of issues such as the status-of-forces agreement and the timeline for U.S. withdrawal. On the other hand, as we have seen in other cases of disengaging colonial powers, the two countries still share areas of deep engagement . This connection did not exist five or six years ago, but it exists now, and it may persist there for a long time to come.

Historically, Iran has a longer connection with Iraq than does the United States, but it is marked by suspicion—from 1980 to 1988, Iraq and Iran fought one of the longest ground wars in history. At times, Iran may intervene in what could be called a peacemaking role, as it did in March 2008, when it served as a mediator between the Sadrists and the Shiite-dominated Iraqi government. Yet such interventions simply reinforce the degree to which Iran can destabilize Iraq. The evidence of Iran's involvement in Iraq is thoroughly convincing, not just to outsiders but to Iraqis as well. Iranian weaponry has been used to target both American forces and Iraqi officials, including provincial governors and police chiefs. Those officials represented ISCI, which is supposedly very close to Iran, so it is certainly a very complex relationship. ISCI and other movements spent most of the 1980s in Iran but now seem to be parting ways with the Islamic Republic. Iran is also deeply involved in the Iraqi economy, especially in the southern and central parts of the country. The Iranian government provides refined oil to Iraqi provincial governors, thereby increasing the influence of Iran and the provincial governors.

Looking at Iraq's provincial politics, it is obvious that Iran has been meddling in the Iraqi political scene. These activities are not limited to assassinations and intimidation of local elections workers; they also include efforts to spread messages through the media. Moreover, given the lack of Iraqi legislation governing contributions to political parties, Iran can financially support whatever factions it likes, giving them a much better chance of winning seats in the elections. Tehran cannot and does not wish to influence the general Iraqi population. Instead, it depends on the support of narrow political elites to achieve its objectives.

■ *Michael Knights a Lafer international fellow of The Washington Institute, specializing in the military and security affairs of Iraq, Iran, and the Persian Gulf states.*

2008 Weinberg Founders Conference

Is the Two-State Solution Still Relevant?

Is the Two-State Solution Still Relevant?

Giora Eiland and Marwan Muasher

Summary

Giora Eiland

Israeli prime ministers have been trying to solve the Palestinian problem since the time of Menachem Begin. Various methods have been attempted, including West Bank autonomy and the Oslo process, which began in 1993 and culminated with the Clinton-Barak-Arafat round of diplomacy in 2000. All of these attempts failed.

There is a paradox here: Everyone agrees that it is important to resolve the conflict, and that the way to do so is by means of the two-state solution. Nevertheless, the peace process has been unsuccessful. The solution eluded us even in 2000—when both Yasser Arafat and Ehud Barak were very popular, Hamas was less relevant, there were fewer Israeli settlers, and the overall security situation was good. Eight years later, we are further away than ever. The problem, it seems, lies in the concept.

The crux of this paradox is clear: the most Israel can offer is less than the minimum the Palestinian Authority can accept. Under the parameters being discussed, Israel would have indefensible borders and Palestine would not be a viable state. Accordingly, we need to consider other options. One potential solution is Palestinian political autonomy coupled with Jordanian responsibility for security. Another alternative is a regional solution, with land swaps between Israel, Egypt, and the Palestinians.

The Jordanian option, long considered infeasible, is now a possibility for several reasons. The Palestinians may decide that life under Jordanian security control is better than life under Hamas, which otherwise will inevitably take over the West Bank. From the Jordanian perspective, further Hamas gains would undermine Amman by strengthening the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. The Jordanian option is also one of the few scenarios under which Israel would feel safe. After all, rockets have been introduced into the security equation, and there is no way of stopping them without controlling the territory from which they are being launched.

Similarly, the regional option would solve several of the problems inherent in the current approach. If a Palestinian state were created under

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the traditional parameters, the rapidly growing population of the Gaza Strip would soon overwhelm the small land area, and building a seaport there would cause severe environmental damage to the coastline. Meanwhile, in the West Bank, Israel would face the daunting challenge of removing 100,000 settlers. The answer to all of these obstacles would be for Egypt to cede enough land to double or triple Gaza's size. Israel would then annex an equivalent amount of land from the West Bank (roughly 12 percent of that territory), which would reduce the number of relocated settlers to 30,000. In return, Israel would cede Negev land—again, in equal amounts—to Egypt, creating a direct corridor to Jordan. A railway could then be built connecting the Red Sea to a now-sustainable port in an enlarged Gaza, which would also have the space to build an international airport. In addition, Israel would allow the Egyptian military to deploy in the Sinai.

In contrast, the peace initiative proposed by the Arab League in 2002 is no solution at all. It asks Israel to return to the pre-1967 borders, but it would not insist that Egypt and Jordan undertake the same security responsibilities they had prior to 1967. Without a credible allocation of such responsibilities, it would be nearly impossible to enforce the overall security requirements of any agreement. International forces have proven themselves unreliable in this regard, and the Arab security guarantees offered thus far are equally so. Israel cannot be asked to sacrifice everything for mere words.

■ *Marwan Muasher is senior vice president of external affairs at the World Bank and former Jordanian foreign minister, deputy prime minister, and ambassador to Israel and the United States.*

Marwan Muasher

The two-state solution is relevant today because all other options are worse. A one-state solution (an Israeli-Palestinian binational state) is contrary to Israel's raison d'être. Indefinite occupation is immoral. Unilateral withdrawal has failed twice, in Lebanon and Gaza. Jordan and Egypt cannot take control of security because such an approach ignores the Palestinians' desire for independence, and because no one in Jordan would support it.

It is critical to resolve the conflict as soon as possible because time will not do so. On the contrary, the demographic trends among Jews and Arabs mean that delaying will only lead to the end of Israel. Moreover, the status quo in the Arab world fuels radicalization—the longer the occupation continues, the more difficult it will be for Israel to find peace partners. Those who argue that time is needed to build trust must recognize that opposition to peace will grow during that interval as well. Israel should take advantage of the moderate sentiment in the Arab world today and accept the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002.

Israel's stated goal is to be accepted within the region, and the Arab Peace Initiative would grant it acceptance by all members of the Arab League. These states would guarantee Israel's security, thereby alleviating that concern. Moreover, they would make no claims to any part of

pre-1967 Israel, nor demand the return of Palestinian refugees to Israel proper.

The idea that Jordan would be willing to take control of Palestinian territories in any capacity is preposterous. Jordan's outlook has changed significantly since the 1980s, when it still claimed the West Bank. There is an intense debate underway in Jordanian society about what it means to be Jordanian and what it means to be Palestinian. Jordanians certainly have no desire to aggravate this situation or take any steps that might make them a minority in their own country.

Regional moderates had a difficult time convincing the Arab League to approve its 2002 peace initiative. If the Israelis continue to reject it out of hand, using security concerns as an excuse to avoid even discussing the details, then they will lose a unique opportunity to make peace. Granted, the Olmert government has been more receptive to certain aspects of the initiative than was the Sharon government. But Israel cannot wait for better days, when all the stars are aligned for peace; we are living in the better days now. If we do not seize the moment, the future will most likely be bleak.

The status quo in the Arab world fuels radicalization.

2008 Weinberg Founders Conference

What Should the Next Administration Expect from Turkey?

What Should the Next Administration Expect from Turkey?

Soner Cagaptay and Philip Gordon

Summary

Soner Cagaptay

In formulating its policy toward Turkey, the next administration should make clear to Ankara that some aspects of the relationship need to be adjusted. First, the new president should show zero tolerance toward anti-American statements from Turkish officials. Just as the U.S. president would not disparage Turkey, its values, or its religion, Turkish leaders should not use such rhetoric against the United States or its values. Turkey is a rather insular country culturally and politically; less than 10 percent of its citizens are fluent in English or another European language. Consequently, they tend to follow world events through the statements of their leaders, as reported in domestic media. In addition, most Turks are fence-sitters when it comes to their relationship with the West, taking cues from their leaders regarding the future of Turkey's attachment to Europe and the United States. Hence, Turkey is a special case in the realm of anti-American rhetoric. It resembles neither Denmark (where an anti-American remark would be dismissed as crazy) nor Egypt (where a pro-Western statement would be treated in the same way)—rather, pro- and anti-Western rhetoric alike have a role in shaping Turkish public opinion. The next administration should do what it can to ensure that Turkish officials avoid the negative rhetoric.

Second, although Turkey is in a challenging neighborhood and has every right to maintain its regional standing, this should not come at the expense of its role in Western institutions such as NATO. Because Turkey is a NATO member, the next U.S. administration can justifiably ask Ankara to prioritize its policy engagement with the United States, stay focused on its commitment to the West, and act as a true NATO ally in the region.

Third, the next president should expect the Turkish government to respect European democratic norms. Although Turkey is a predominantly Muslim country like Egypt, it is also a European democracy like Spain. Thus, politically speaking, the United States should expect from Ankara not what it expects from other Muslim governments but, rather, what it

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expects from other European democracies. Such expectations include setting benchmarks that would hold the Turkish government to high standards on issues such as respect for civil liberties and human rights.

Together with newly appointed U.S. ambassador James Jeffrey, the next administration should get a blank check of goodwill from the Turks—and it would be best if the president himself went to Turkey to pick up this check. Such a visit could be part of a wider European trip, which would signal U.S. commitment to Turkey's membership in the European Union.

The next administration should also consider further action against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) presence in northern Iraq, from where the group carries out terrorist attacks against Turkey. Most Turks blame the United States for allowing these attacks to continue. Enhanced U.S. cooperation against the PKK would defuse a major source of Turkish public antipathy toward the United States, particularly if coupled with pro-American statements from Turkish leaders.

For its part, Turkey deserves two things from the West: From Europe, it should receive fair treatment in its EU accession process. By meeting this need, the EU would give a clear signal that it truly considers Turkey part of "the West." Ankara should also be afforded stronger cooperation in its efforts to counter the PKK, not just from the United States, but also from Europe. Just as the West continues to support counterterrorism efforts around the globe, Turkey should receive its share in fighting the PKK. European and U.S. commitment on this front is perhaps the main litmus test of whether or not they view Turkey as Western.

■ *Philip Gordon, a senior fellow for U.S. foreign policy at the Brookings Institution, is a senior advisor to Democratic presidential candidate Senator Barack Obama.*

Philip Gordon

A couple of overriding issues must be addressed before one can talk about what the next administration should do regarding Turkey: first, the country's importance, and second, the direction in which it is headed. It is easy to understand why Turkey is so important for the United States. It sits at an extremely important geopolitical junction, has a population of seventy million people, and boasts a developed economy with a growing gross domestic product. It is the most thoroughgoing democracy in the Muslim world, as well as a critical corridor for transporting energy resources from Russia, the Caucasus, and Iran to the West.

Yet there are two main reasons to be concerned about Turkey's current direction. First is the public's increasingly negative attitude toward the United States. Until 2003, both countries assumed that they needed each other so much that they would never abandon their strong bilateral ties. This view changed drastically with the Iraq war. Today, 91 percent of Turks view the United States unfavorably or disagree with its policies in the region. Anti-EU sentiment is increasing as well. Both the number of Turks who favor EU accession and the number who believe that Turkey will actually be granted membership have dropped. Turkey may

yet remain a stable liberal partner that trades with the United States, but current trends augur that it could just as easily become a more nationalist country that resents its rejection from the EU and isolates itself from the West.

The second main reason for Washington's concern is the degree to which Turkey is polarized. Debates about the presidential elections in 2007 and, more recently, the Constitutional Court case against the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) only sharpened the contrast between those who consider themselves secularists and those who consider themselves, for lack of a better term, Islamists.

Turkey is a special case in the realm of anti-American rhetoric.

Although much more could be said about the complexity of Turkey's current domestic dynamics, the recommendations for the next administration are fairly simple. First, it should not simply base its Turkey policy on a broader, grander Middle East policy. Second, the next president should emphasize U.S. support against the PKK. Since the beginning of the Iraq war, many Turks have come to believe that Washington's priority is the conflict in Iraq rather than any external PKK activities. They also feel that Americans care about only those terrorist threats that affect the United States. It is crucial to convince Turks that the United States is concerned about terrorist attacks on Turkish soil as well, and that the United States will be there to help them. Also, the next administration should not take sides in Turkish domestic affairs. Turks should pick their leaders as they see fit, and the United States should work in cooperation with that choice as long as it results from a democratic process.

In short, the next administration should make sure that Turkey stays on the right path, because it would be sad to discuss four years from now why we lost a valued ally.

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Bombing Iran or Living with Iran's Bomb?

Bombing Iran or Living with Iran's Bomb?

Isaac Ben-Israel, Kassem Jaafar, and Anthony Cordesman

Summary

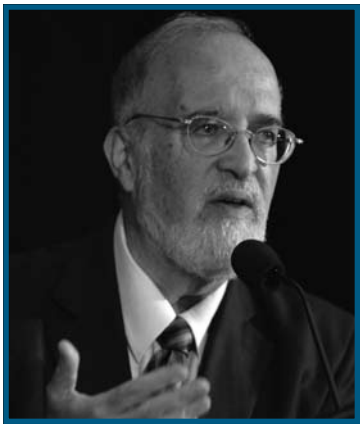
Isaac Ben-Israel

The international community needs to decide whether prevention or deterrence is the correct strategy for dealing with Iran. Although prevention may fail, it is the better option.

There are many reasons to be concerned about a nuclear Iran, apart from the regime's frequent anti-American and anti-Israeli statements. Iranian nuclear capability would mean the end of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and would quickly spark a Middle Eastern nuclear arms race. In fact, Arab countries feel less threatened by Israel's nuclear capability than they would by an Iranian nuclear capability: Iran is a Shiite, non-Arab state, and when its leaders talk about "exporting the revolution," its Sunni Arab neighbors regard such statements as serious threats. A nuclear Iran would also have terrible consequences on the terrorism front, because transnational terrorist organizations would be able to acquire fissile material for use the world over.

Israeli military planners have assessed that Israel would survive a nuclear war with Iran, but that Iran would be returned to the Stone Age in such a war. Yet Israel cannot conclude from such assessments that Iran would hesitate to attack: We have few insights into Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's decision making, particularly regarding regional and international security assessments, so his actions remain unpredictable. Moreover, Iran prefers using proxies rather than direct engagement to achieve its foreign policy goals, so how would Israel retaliate for nuclear attacks that are sponsored, but not carried out, by Iran?

For these reasons, it is clear that Israel—and, indeed, the international community—cannot allow Iran to acquire nuclear weapons. Some observers argue that Iran will never agree to halt its nuclear program, and that the military option is therefore the only option. Yet, although the use of force could destroy the program temporarily, it could not stop Iran's nuclear activities forever. That makes diplomacy an even more important option, particularly in light of Iran's announcement that it would retaliate against Israel and the global oil market if it were attacked.



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The urgent question is how much time is left for diplomacy to work. Estimates regarding Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons range from two to five years; the regime still must overcome a few technological obstacles before its program is complete. This interim should be sufficient to mobilize the international community to put pressure on Iran. And such directed pressure would necessarily include a special role for Russia, which has so far focused its diplomatic efforts on playing the United States against Iran.

Kassem Jaafar

This crisis is a "Damned if you do. Damned if you don't" situation. Because of that, the international community remains mired in uncertainty on whether it can allow a nuclear Iran among its ranks. To clear away such uncertainty, we need to examine Iran's purpose in having a nuclear program, remembering that its efforts on that front are part of a general, ongoing military build-up.

Iran claims that it is pursuing a civilian nuclear program. Moving from civilian to military technology is relatively easy, so the application of this knowledge to military purposes is inevitable. Iran's actual purpose is to become a superpower. The regime believes that it has the right to play a role in the Arab-Israeli conflict. It also believes that it has a duty to undo the wrongs committed by the majority of Muslims (that is, Sunnis) in deciding not to follow the Prophet Muhammad's son-in-law Ali (who is revered by Shiites). And from a more realpolitik perspective, nuclear weapons would give Iran control over the region's economy.

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Regarding the regime's general military build-up, Iran has been developing missiles capable of reaching Europe, as well as chemical and biological weaponry. There are no reliable figures available on these and other military expenditures, making it difficult to estimate the exact size of the country's military programs. Clearly, though, it has been a strong supporter of terrorism.

These trends are worrisome, not just to Israel, but also to Arabs—particularly in the Persian Gulf states. If Iran were to acquire nuclear weapons, dramatic proliferation would follow. When Arab governments are threatened, they seek protection rather than take direct action. Thus, although they may quietly ask for help, they will not publicly provide tactical assistance to the United States in confronting Iran. There are indications that the Saudis have been discreetly trying to influence Russia to do more on Iran. For instance, following a series of unannounced visits to Moscow by Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Russia offered to supply Iran with nuclear fuel so that it would forgo its uranium enrichment program; Tehran rejected the offer.

These and other factors sustain the climate of uncertainty on how to deal with Iran. Should the main strategy be diplomacy or military action? If the latter, should the goal be limited to destroying all nuclear facili-

ties, or should it include regime change? And how should Iran's proxies be handled? On the diplomatic front, there are several specific measures that could help the situation. For example, the United States would have a much better chance of enlisting Russia's help if it abandoned its missile defense shield in Eastern Europe. And if countries such as Israel and India became NPT signatories , they would remove an excuse for Iran to opt out of the treaty. In any case, if Iran becomes a nuclear power, the resulting war will not be a mere Cold War. The time for the international community to be certain and resolute on Iran is coming soon.

Anthony Cordesman

The most significant problem in determining how to handle Iran is lack of knowledge. We know that Tehran has developed several new types of uranium-enriching centrifuges in recent months, and that its desire for a nuclear program goes back to the 1970s. Yet we have no firm knowledge of how many facilities the regime has, or how the centrifuges have been distributed among them. The known nuclear sites are spread out, and the only good intelligence on them is classified. Even intelligence experts may not be able to determine when the point of no return has been reached regarding the extent of Iran's nuclear program.

This lack of knowledge creates several tactical problems in military scenarios against Iran, complicating decisions about where to strike, how to strike, and whether the action taken is sufficient. A premature attack based on insufficient information would be as dangerous as waiting too long to attack; for example, it could spark increased activity at other, unknown nuclear plants or provoke a biological or chemical counterattack.

International decision makers must also keep in mind that a U.S. strike would be significantly different from an Israeli strike. Israel favors hard and fast attacks because its military is not capable of sustained operations. The United States, however, favors longer, more thorough operations; the initial phase alone would likely last three to seven days. In other words, we need to determine whether the best method of eliminating Iran's nuclear program is with a scalpel or a chainsaw.

The most important question before the international community now is not whether Iran will acquire a nuclear weapon, but what the consequences will be when it does. Thus far, Tehran's reaction to perceived threats against its nuclear program, such as the destruction of the Syrian reactor, has been to better secure its facilities. The situation has been further complicated by Arab unwillingness to publicly join the United States in its efforts, and by the fact that Iranian public sentiment is most likely incapable of toppling the regime. Whatever course of action is taken, the results of that decision will play out for decades.

Anthony Cordesman is the Arleigh A. Burke chair in strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a national security analyst for ABC News.

2008 Weinberg Founders Conference

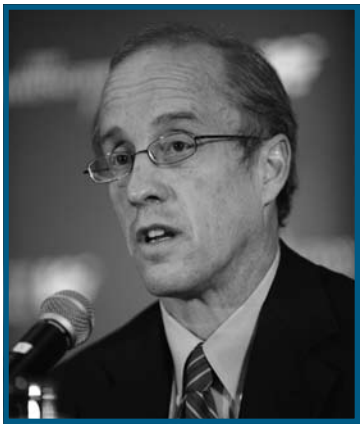
From Campaigning to Governing: What Really Matters on the Stump

From Campaigning to Governing: What Really Matters on the Stump

Jackson Diehl and Jeffrey Goldberg

Jackson Diehl

Foreign policy statements made during political campaigns are usually poor indicators of what presidential candidates will do in office—and that's a good thing. History tells us that voters do not usually take offense at such policy reversals; after all, much of every president's actual foreign policy work consists of reacting to crises and other unexpected events. In those situations, we want our presidents to be pragmatic, not dogmatic. But if campaign rhetoric is so unreliable, how can we determine what candidates will really do once in office? Putting each candidate through four tests can help answer this question.



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

The Practice Test. When The Practice Test: Russia invaded Georgia last month, Barack Obama produced one statement the first day that seemed to divide responsibility for the war between Georgia and Russia. The next day, however, he shifted his position toward much tougher criticism of Moscow—likely a reflection of the reportedly heated debate among his many advisors on the issue. In contrast was the quick, direct, and somewhat emotional statement from John McCain, who has a much smaller, more informal circle of advisors: "We are all Georgians." Would that mean defending Tbilisi as we defended Berlin during the Cold War, with military force and even a nuclear deterrent? We already know that McCain tends to speak out quickly and sometimes impulsively, without much input from advisors. Would that carry over to his presidency?

The Dogma Test. Obama, for example, has softened some of his rhetoric on Iraq and now admits that the troop surge was a success. At the same time, he has maintained his central theory about the war—that the withdrawal of U.S. troops will force Iraqis to come to a political settlement. There is growing evidence that just the opposite may be true, however, and Obama does not seem to have absorbed how the situation has changed from two years ago, when he first articulated his theory. This should cause our dogma detectors to flash yellow.

On Iran, Obama famously favors direct and unconditional negotiations on the nuclear issue. If this commitment to direct diplomacy has hardened into dogma, he may be inclined to ignore such difficult realities as an obstinate Iran or a Syria with hegemonic aspirations in Lebanon, causing him to waste time on fruitless diplomacy even as the Iranians continue their race for nuclear weapons.

For his part, John McCain has been warning for years about Russia's authoritarian drift and imperial ambitions. But if this healthy distrust of Russia hardens into a dogma of hostility, he will have trouble striking the difficult balance between resisting Russia's aggression in Europe and extracting the necessary cooperation from Moscow to stop the Iranian nuclear program.

The Anxiety-of-Influence Test. This describes the tendency to reject out of hand any policies associated with the previous administration. For example, at least one key aspect of the Bush Doctrine is at risk: the push for greater political freedom, especially in the Arab Middle East. The authoritarian regimes that govern countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia are both highly unstable and highly unreliable as U.S. allies, and it is an American national security interest to press for change. Yet, that is the policy most closely tied to Bush, so the next president is likely to shun it, especially if he is Obama.

The Seeing-Eye Test. This is the most important test of all: will the next president be smart and agile enough to quickly perceive unexpected challenges that might prove to be the most crucial issues of his presidency? We are looking for someone who will not make categorical statements or inflexible commitments in the upcoming debates, who is quick in making decisions while still producing results that remain effective a month or two later, who does not let his rhetoric harden into dogma that prevents him from taking in new information, and who does not reflexively oppose solutions that the current administration has arrived at after painful trial and error.

■ *Jeffrey Goldberg is a national correspondent for the* Atlantic.

Jeffrey Goldberg

John McCain sees the Arab-Israeli peace process as something to be engaged in only after the defeat of terrorism. He does not agree with the position that peacemaking will help us end terrorism. In this regard, he is like former Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon, who believed in the power of military force to solve political problems. This is not to say that McCain is an unreconstructed or oversimplistic militarist, but he does believe that many political problems—and certainly the problem of terrorism—have military solutions. In any case, he seems not to have a sense of urgency regarding the peace process, and he is unlikely to make it a priority.

McCain also echoes Sharon in his unpredictability. Because of this characteristic, it is ultimately fruitless to analyze in great detail how his stump speech policies might play out in the White House. He is a man who makes many decisions with his gut rather than his head.

Another striking fact about McCain is his relative lack of knowledge about the Middle East: He has had difficulty sometimes distinguishing various terrorist groups or figuring out who is doing what, where, and when. He also seems somewhat incurious about Islam, which does not speak well for any presidential candidate at this point in history.

In contrast, Barack Obama is actually quite curious about the Middle East, but he is also deeply inexperienced on regional issues. In a May 2008 interview, he referred to the Arab-Israeli conflict as a "constant sore" that infects all of U.S. foreign policy. The general impression he gave in the interview is his belief that hard work on the Israeli-Palestinian track is key to bettering America's strategic position and reputation in the Middle East, as well as addressing the problem of terrorism.

On Iraq, it is doubtful that Obama actually believes his own implications that the country is not a central front in the war on terror; statements to that effect are mainly for his political base, which needs to hear repeatedly that the Iraq war has been a mistake. One could reasonably argue that Iraq was not a central terrorism front in 2002 or early 2003, but Obama seems too smart to believe that now, in 2008, Iraq is not crucial in the fight against al-Qaeda.

Ultimately, it is difficult to discern what the candidates actually think on every issue of import. The exigencies of campaigning are such that the less the candidates talk about certain issues, the better off they are. Both candidates have remained surprisingly quiet about two of the most important issues we face: the threat of nuclear terrorism on American soil, and the Pakistan dilemma. On the first, Obama puts great faith in a program that he says will control or account for all of the fissile material in the world within the next four years; McCain does not talk about this issue much at all. Regarding Pakistan, the campaigns cannot be blamed for their lack of concrete plans—few people, even the experts, claim to know what should be done on that front.

All in all, it seems that we will not know fully or clearly what these two candidates think until after the election.

Foreign policy statements made during campaigns are usually poor indicators of what presidential candidates will do in office.

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