



Proceedings of the 2010 Soref Symposium and 25th Anniversary Celebration

APRIL 21–22, 2010

THE
WASHINGTON INSTITUTE
for Near East Policy 





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

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Published in 2010 in the United States of America by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy,
1828 L Street NW, Suite 1050, Washington, DC 20036.

Design by Daniel Kohan, Sensical Design and Communication
Photography by Stan Barouh

EDITOR'S NOTE

This volume contains the on-the-record portion of The Washington Institute's 25th Anniversary Celebration and 2010 Soref Symposium. Speaker and panelist remarks are presented as edited transcriptions and may be cited as such. Complete audio and video of these presentations is available at www.washingtoninstitute.org.



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Preface

IN 1985, A SMALL GROUP of visionary Americans committed to advancing U.S. interests in the Middle East established the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Twenty-five years later, this special Soref Symposium celebrates the extraordinary achievement of the Institute's founders and fellows.

For the United States, the challenge to advance security, peace, and freedom in the Middle East is no less daunting today than it was twenty-five years ago. What has changed are the stakes. Given the specter of nuclear terrorism, the ideological challenge of Islamist radicalism, and the palpable yearning for peace, security, and change among people in every corner of the region, the reward for progress is greater than ever before. So, too, is the price of failure.

This year's gala celebration included off-the-record briefings by former Washington Institute directors Martin Indyk and Dennis Ross as well as Israeli ambassador Michael Oren, coupled with special dinners hosted by Egyptian ambassador Sameh Shoukry and Deputy Secretary of State Jacob J. Lew. The symposium itself centered on two keynote events: the Michael Stein Address on U.S. Middle East Policy delivered by Gen. (Ret.) James L. Jones, national security advisor to President Obama, and a panel discussion on Obama administration Middle East policy featuring *New York Times* foreign affairs columnist Thomas Friedman, *Weekly Standard* founder and editor William Kristol, Washington Institute Wexler-Fromer fellow Martin Kramer, and director of the Institute's Project on the Middle East Peace Process David Makovsky.

General Jones, speaking before an audience of policymakers, diplomats, media, and Institute trustees, delivered a substantive and often innovative statement on a wide range of key Middle East policy issues. Given the political and strategic timing, his remarks deserve to be considered as one of the most significant statements of administration policy on Middle East issues this year. The heart of the speech was what can be termed the administration's bill of indictment against the Islamic Republic of Iran,



■ 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*.

setting the predicate for possible further action to fulfill the U.S. commitment “to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.” At the same time, General Jones suggested that ending the Arab-Israeli conflict would weaken Iran’s influence over other Middle Eastern actors, and he restated President Obama’s commitment to the U.S.-Israeli alliance, calling it a “national commitment” and declaring that “no space” exists between the two allies on the issue of Israel’s security.

The keynote panel discussion focused on how effectively U.S. Middle East policy has been implemented in the early months of the Obama administration, prompting vigorous debate on the Iranian nuclear issue and on whether the current moment in U.S.-Israeli relations represents more than just diplomatic “tension.” Thomas Friedman praised the administration’s efforts in Iraq, which he called the likely major success of Obama’s first term, while William Kristol stressed the importance of advancing the U.S. democracy agenda as the best hope for achieving long-term stability in the region. This wide-ranging and lively discussion also covered the current impasse in Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking, America’s “addiction” to oil, and strategies to combat Islamist radicalism.

The Washington Institute’s commitment to innovation, ideas, and relevance is as firm today as it was twenty-five years ago. From the beginning, we have stood for the view that scholarship can inform and improve U.S. policy in the Middle East, and we have operated on the basis that our credibility as an effective player in the Washington policy community stands or falls on the quality of our expertise. Today, our analysis and recommendations form a core component of policy debates in Washington, and the quality of our scholarship has earned the Institute a broad and influential international audience, all of this building upon the solid foundation and principles put in place a quarter-century ago.

These anniversary proceedings capture the celebration of our achievements and illustrate why The Washington Institute remains such a vital force in U.S. Middle East policymaking today.

Robert Satloff
Executive Director
May 2010

Speaker Biographies

Gen. (Ret.) James L. Jones is national security advisor to President Barack Obama. Previously, he served as special envoy for Middle East regional security; in this capacity, he worked with Israeli and Palestinian officials in furthering the peace process, with particular focus on strengthening security for both sides. He has held the positions of Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), commander of the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM), and thirty-second commandant of the Marine Corps. In more than four decades with the Marines, he served in a variety of command and staff positions while stationed in the United States, Europe, and Asia.

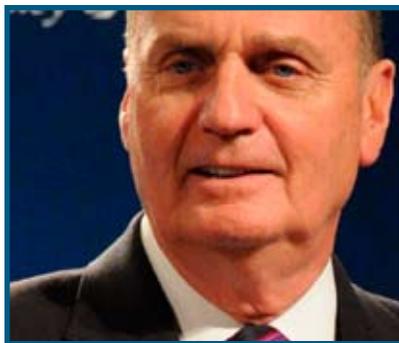
Thomas L. Friedman, foreign affairs columnist since 1995 for the *New York Times*, won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for commentary, his third Pulitzer for the paper. His twenty-nine-year career with the *Times* has been international in scope, with positions including chief economic correspondent in the Washington bureau, chief White House correspondent, and key posts in the Middle East. As Beirut bureau chief, he was awarded the 1983 Pulitzer for international reporting, winning again in 1988 after transferring to Jerusalem to serve as Israel bureau chief. He is the author of *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (winner of the National Book Award for nonfiction in 1989) and *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (winner of the 2000 Overseas Press Club award for best nonfiction book on foreign policy).

Martin Kramer is The Washington Institute's Wexler-Fromer fellow and author of its seminal 2001 monograph *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America*. An authority on contemporary Islam and Arab politics, he is currently a senior fellow at Harvard University's Olin Institute and at the Shalem Center in Jerusalem, where he is also president-designate of Shalem College. During a twenty-five-year career at Tel Aviv University, he directed the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle

Eastern and African Studies; taught as a visiting professor at Brandeis University, the University of Chicago, Cornell University, and Georgetown University; and served twice as a fellow of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington.

William Kristol, editor of the *Weekly Standard*, appears regularly as a commentator on *Fox News Sunday* and the Fox News Channel. Prior to launching the *Standard* in 1995, he led the Project for the Republican Future; served as chief of staff to Vice President Dan Quayle during the Bush administration and to Secretary of Education William Bennett during the Reagan administration; and taught politics at the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. He is coauthor of the *New York Times* bestseller *The War over Iraq: Saddam's Tyranny and America's Mission*.

David Makovsky is the Ziegler distinguished fellow and director of the Project on the Middle East Peace Process at The Washington Institute. In addition, he serves as an adjunct professor of Middle Eastern studies at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, and as a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies. He is coauthor, with Dennis Ross, of the book *Myths, Illusions, and Peace: Finding a New Direction for America in the Middle East* (2009). His commentary on the peace process and the Arab-Israeli conflict has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and various international media. He also appears frequently on television programs such as PBS's *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*.



Michael Stein Address on U.S. Middle East Policy

Michael Stein Address on U.S. Middle East Policy

Gen. (Ret.) James L. Jones

EDITED TRANSCRIPT

Robert Satloff, *The Washington Institute*: Welcome to the twenty-fifth anniversary Soref Symposium. Please rise for a moment of silence for the women and men of the U.S. armed forces on the front lines against terrorism around the world.

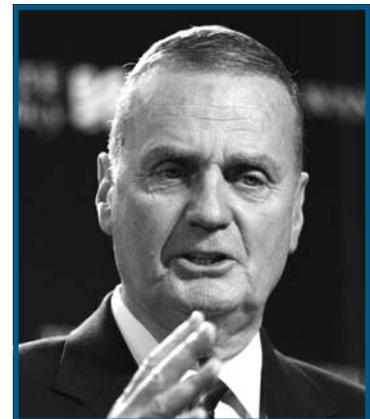
Twenty-five years ago, I came to Washington after graduate school at Harvard and took a job as a \$17,000 per year researcher at a brand-new organization. There were five of us then, led by a brilliant and enterprising young scholar named Martin Indyk. Before long, we published our first research paper, by another young scholar named Dennis Ross. Since then, we have gone on our various paths—I have stayed at the Institute, which has become my home.

Over that time, the Middle East has changed from being a strategic theater in the great rivalry between the superpowers to being the central focus of American foreign policy in its own right. And through that change, the Institute has grown and matured to the point that it today justifiably boasts the greatest collection of knowledge, expertise, and insight on the politics and policy of the Middle East.

It is with great pride that I stand here this evening—with more than 130 members of our board of trustees, who have given so generously to ensure the health and vitality of this institution; with more than 45 colleagues from the Institute staff who work tirelessly to improve the quality of U.S. Middle East policy; with valued members of our board of advisors, whose wisdom and counsel have been priceless; and with more than 200 members of the Washington policy community, people who make, shape, implement, and interpret policy, people whom I have fed more times than they care to remember—to celebrate a quarter-century of the Institute and a quarter-century of my association with it. To all of you, I say thank you.

Let me now call upon our Institute president, Martin Gross, who will introduce our keynote speaker.

Martin Gross, *The Washington Institute*: On behalf of the Institute's board of directors and board of trustees, I extend my own welcome to all



■ *Gen. (Ret.) James L. Jones is national security advisor to President Barack Obama.*

“These are not simple times for America in the broader Middle East.... But we are not without tools for change.”

of you as we hold this gala reception to celebrate our twenty-fifth anniversary. This is a very important milestone in the life of an organization. At twenty-five, we are no longer a start-up. At twenty-five, we are no longer the new kid on the block. At twenty-five, we have a mile-long paper trail that defines the excellence of our research and the credibility of our scholarship. At twenty-five, we have a record of ideas and recommendations that stands the test of time. And at twenty-five, we have a growing group of Institute alumni—from young foreign service officers in their first overseas posts to seasoned veterans like Dennis Ross—who are doing their best to advance American interests around the world. Put all this together and, at twenty-five, we have much to be proud of.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize those who preceded me as president of the Institute. They had the idea, they gave birth to the organization, they nurtured it through its infancy, they guided it through its adolescence, and they led it to where it is today—a solid, mature institution that is a fixture in the Washington policy community. Please join me in thanking our founding president, Barbi Weinberg; our chairmen emeriti, Mike Stein and Fred Lafer; and our current chairman of the board, Howard Berkowitz.

I would also like to recognize the more than 130 members of the Institute’s board of trustees who have traveled from every corner of our nation to be here today. One of the finest aspects of this organization is that when these women and men enter a room as trustees of the Institute, they cease to be Democrats or Republicans—they all understand that they are here to advance the national interest above party or politics. It is for that reason that today we welcome a representative of the fifth president to serve in the White House since we put out our shingle twenty-five years ago. We believe that commitment to nonpartisanship is a principle that, like our research, stands the test of time.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are not simple times for America in the broader Middle East. The litany of challenges is well known: two wars; the specter of nuclear proliferation; the ever-present threat of terrorism; the scourge of extremism; the deficit of democracy, governance, and human rights; the unfulfilled promise of recognition, reconciliation, and peace between Arabs and Israelis. The list goes on.

But we are not without tools for change. And one of those tools is the impressive human capital that can be brought to bear on these problems. Our special guest today is a prime example of such an asset.

In and out of uniform, Gen. James Jones has devoted a lifetime of service to his nation. As a Marine, he saw combat in Vietnam and was a commander in northern Iraq and Bosnia. He rose through the ranks to serve as commandant of the Marine Corps, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, and head of the U.S. European Command. Almost immediately after his retirement from active duty, he decided to take on an easy job—he was appointed by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as the State

Department's special envoy for Middle East regional security. In this capacity, he worked with Israeli and Palestinian officials in furthering the peace process, focusing on the full range of issues related to strengthening security for both sides. Then, in January 2009, he was named as President Obama's assistant for national security affairs—the administration's top advisor on all aspects of national security.

General, we have a history of moving mountains to get our job done, but we didn't realize it would take the Icelandic volcano to make your presence here possible. So let me thank you for being here, and welcome you to deliver this year's Michael Stein Address on U.S. Middle East Policy. Ladies and gentlemen, Gen. James Jones.

General Jones: Thank you all very much. Thank you, Martin, for your very kind introduction, and for your leadership as the Institute's new president. You have twenty-five years of Institute history to live up to...and twenty-five years of Institute presidents watching to make sure you get it right. Thank you, Rob Satloff, for welcoming us tonight.

On this, your twenty-fifth anniversary, let me commend all those who have made the Washington Institute for Near East Policy the respected institution it is today—especially past presidents Barbi Weinberg, Fred Lafer, Michael Stein, and your chairman, Howard Berkowitz. I also want to thank your distinguished trustees and board of advisors—which has one empty chair tonight because of the recent loss of one of your longtime advisors—a public servant, a true warrior-diplomat, and one of my predecessors as Supreme Allied Commander Europe. Tonight, we remember Gen. and Secretary of State Alexander Haig.

For a quarter-century—through five different administrations—this institute has provided an invaluable service to policymakers and the American people. Instead of partisanship, you've given us scholarship. Instead of simply recycling old arguments, you've given us fresh and objective analysis. So I want to thank Rob and your entire staff—and twenty-five years of scholars and fellows—for your insights and your contributions.

I've seen it myself. A few years ago, I served as special envoy for Middle East regional security. Our work was strengthened by the advice and counsel of many experts, including one of our special advisors—and your senior fellows—Matthew Levitt. We benefited from discussions with other Institute fellows, including David Makovsky and Dennis Ross. And, of course, President Obama's administration was all too happy to steal Dennis away from you, and he is now helping to lead our efforts in the region at the National Security Council. And I believe Dennis is here tonight.

I especially want to thank the Institute for your work on behalf of the effort that President Obama called for in his speech last year in Cairo—that is, greater understanding between the United States and Muslim communities around the world. The president called for “a sustained effort to listen

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“Since taking office, President Obama has made it clear that his first and foremost priority is the safety and security of the American people.”

to each other, to learn from each other, to respect one another, and to seek common ground.” In that spirit, you’ve been promoting mutual understanding for many years—whether it’s welcoming to Washington scholars from Cairo to Baghdad, your Arabic-language website, Rob’s weekly Arabic-language interview show, or his recent documentary recounting the little-known story of how Arabs saved Jews from the Holocaust.

So thank you all for analysis that has strengthened our national security and for promoting the mutual understanding that can lead to a safer, more secure world for us all. And I wish you continued success, because, frankly, our nation—indeed, the world—needs institutions like yours now more than ever.

Indeed, since taking office, President Obama has made it clear that his first and foremost priority is the safety and security of the American people. To this end, he has pursued a new era of American leadership and comprehensive engagement based on mutual interests and mutual respect.

In the coming weeks, we’ll be releasing a new National Security Strategy that formalizes the president’s approach—an approach that is rooted in and guided by our national security interests. These interests are clear and enduring:

- Security—we have an enduring interest in the security of the United States, our citizens, and U.S. allies and partners.
- Prosperity—we have an enduring interest in a strong, innovative, and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity.
- Values—we have an enduring interest in upholding universal values, at home and around the world.
- International order—we have an enduring interest in an international order advanced by U.S. leadership that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges.

Security, prosperity, universal values, and an international order advanced by American leadership—these are the interests that the president and his administration are working to advance around the world every day, including in the Middle East.

To strengthen our security, we are responsibly ending the war in Iraq. As evidenced by the successes this weekend of military operations against al-Qaeda in Iraq, Iraqi security forces are in the lead. The United States will end our combat mission by the end of August. In accordance with the U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement, all U.S. forces will be out of Iraq by the end of next year. Now, the most immediate challenge is for Iraqi political leaders to form an inclusive and representative government. As they face the longer-term challenges of expanding prosperity and opportunity, the Iraqi people will continue to have a partner in the United States.

In Afghanistan and beyond, we have refocused the fight against al-Qaeda and its extremist allies. We've struck major blows against their leaders, who are now hunkered down in the tribal regions along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. At the same time, we're forging partnerships that isolate extremists, combat corruption, and promote good governance and development—all of which improves the daily lives of ordinary people and undermines the forces that fuel violent extremism.

And to confront the greatest threat to global security—the danger that terrorists will obtain nuclear weapons or materials—the president hosted last week's historic Nuclear Security Summit, where forty-six nations joined together to support the goal of securing the world's vulnerable nuclear materials in four years.

To advance our prosperity, the president has worked with allies and partners to expand the global economic recovery and pursue growth that is balanced and sustained, launched a national export initiative to double American exports and support two million American jobs, and reformed the international economic architecture so that the G-20 is now the premier forum for international cooperation. And as he promised in Cairo, next week the president will host a Summit on Entrepreneurship with business leaders and entrepreneurs from more than fifty nations—including many Muslim-majority countries and Israel—to promote our common prosperity.

To advance values that are universal, the president has made it clear that the United States will uphold our ideals both at home and abroad, including the right of people to have a say in how they are governed. As the president said in Cairo, the United States is committed to supporting governments that reflect the will of the people, because history shows that these governments are more stable, more successful, and more secure. So political reform and effective and accountable governance will remain core elements of our vision for the future, in the Middle East and around the world.

And to advance a just and sustainable international order, the United States is working to ensure that both the rights and responsibilities of all nations are upheld. For example, the new START treaty with Russia is part of the president's comprehensive agenda to free the world of nuclear weapons, an agenda that reflects the three pillars of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty: nations with nuclear weapons will reduce their stockpiles, nations without nuclear weapons will forsake them, and nations retain their right to peaceful nuclear energy.

Whether or not the rights and responsibilities of nations are upheld will in great measure determine whether the coming years and decades result in greater security, prosperity, and opportunity—for Americans and for people around the world. Perhaps nowhere do we see this more than in the Middle East, where we face two defining challenges that I want to touch on tonight: preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them, and forging a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians as part of a comprehensive peace in the region.

“The United States is committed to supporting governments that reflect the will of the people, because history shows that these governments are more stable, more successful, and more secure.”

When President Obama took office, Iran had already assembled thousands of centrifuges and accumulated nearly a bomb's worth of low-enriched uranium. Iran was in active violation of five UN Security Council resolutions. Moreover, Iran's sponsorship of terrorist actors in Iraq, Lebanon, and Gaza signaled a continued determination to sow its brand of violence and coercion across the Middle East.

Clearly, a policy of not engaging Iran did not work. That is why President Obama made clear his commitment to engage Iran on the basis of mutual respect on the full range of issues that divide our countries. As the president repeatedly said, he was under no illusions. He knew it would not be easy to overcome decades of mistrust, suspicion, and even open hostility between our countries. But he also knew that engagement was necessary to present Iran with a choice and to unite the international community around the need for Iran to meet its international obligations.

So to advance our interests, President Obama extended his hand and the opportunity for dialogue. American and Iranian diplomats met in Geneva in October and through the International Atomic Energy Agency. With strong support from the United States, France, and Russia, the IAEA put forward a creative offer to produce nuclear fuel using Iran's own low-enriched uranium. It was an offer with humanitarian benefits, ensuring that Iran would meet its need for medical isotopes. It gave Iran the opportunity to show that its nuclear program was for peaceful purposes. It would have built confidence on both sides in the possibility of further agreements. In addition, the United States went to great lengths to demonstrate our commitment and establish assurances for Iran.

To date, we have seen no indication that Iran's leaders want to resolve these issues constructively. After initially accepting it, they rejected the Tehran Research Reactor proposal. They have refused to discuss their nuclear program with the P-5 + 1. The revelation of a previously covert enrichment site, construction of which further violated Iran's NPT obligations, fed suspicion about Iran's intentions. Iran recently increased the enrichment levels of its uranium to 20 percent. All the while, Iran continues to brutally repress its own citizens and prohibit their universal rights to express themselves freely and choose their own future.

These are not the behaviors of a responsible international actor, and they are not the actions of a government committed to peaceful diplomacy and a new relationship with a willing and ready partner. Indeed, Iran's continued defiance of its international obligations with respect to its nuclear program and its support of terrorism represents a significant regional and global threat. A nuclear-armed Iran could transform the landscape of the Middle East, precipitating a nuclear arms race, dramatically increasing the prospect and danger of local conflicts, fatally wounding the global nonproliferation regime, and emboldening the terrorists and extremists who threaten the United States and our allies. Therefore, we are now working actively with allies and partners to increase the costs

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of Iran's continued failure to live up to its international obligations. This includes a UN Security Council sanctions resolution.

As President Obama has stated, our offer of engagement with Iran stands, and we remain prepared to pursue a better and more positive future. Iran has rights, but with those rights come responsibilities. If Iran's leaders do not fulfill those responsibilities, and if they continue to violate their international obligations, they will face ever-deepening isolation. Iran's government must face real consequences for its continued defiance of the international community. We hope that Iran will make the right choice by acting to restore the confidence of the international community in the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear program. However, should Iran's leaders fail to make that choice, President Obama has been very clear, and I want to repeat it here: the United States is determined to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. In so doing, we will avoid a nuclear arms race in the region and the proliferation of nuclear technology to terrorist organizations.

Of course, one of the ways that Iran exerts influence in the Middle East is by exploiting the Arab-Israeli conflict. Iran uses the conflict to keep others in the region on the defensive and to try to limit its own isolation. Ending this conflict, achieving peace between Israelis and Palestinians, and establishing a sovereign Palestinian state would therefore take such an evocative issue away from Iran, along with Hizballah and Hamas. It would allow our partners in the region to focus on building their states and institutions. And peace between Israel and Syria, if it is possible, could have a transformative effect on the region.

Since taking office, President Obama has pursued a two-state solution—a secure, Jewish state of Israel living side by side in peace and security with a viable and independent Palestinian state. This is in the United States' interest. It is in Israel's interest. It is in the Palestinians' interest. It is in the interest of the Arab countries and, indeed, the world. Advancing this peace would also help prevent Iran from cynically shifting attention away from its failures to meet its obligations.

And since there has been a lot of distortion and misrepresentation of our policy recently, let me take this opportunity to address our relationship with our ally Israel. Like any two nations, we will have disagreements, but we will always resolve them as allies. And we will never forget that since the first minutes of Israeli independence, the United States has had a special relationship with Israel. And that will not change.

Why? Because this is not a commitment of Democrats or Republicans; it is a national commitment based on shared values, deep and interwoven connections, and mutual interests. As President Obama declared in Cairo, "America's strong bonds with Israel are well known. This bond is unbreakable." They are the bonds of history—two nations that earned our independence through the sacrifice of patriots. They are the bonds of two people, bound together by shared values of freedom and individual

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opportunity. They are the bonds of two democracies, where power resides in the people. They are the bonds of pioneers in science, technology, and so many fields where we cooperate every day. They are the bonds of friendship, including the ties of so many families and friends.

This week marked the sixty-second anniversary of Israeli independence—a nation and a people who have survived in the face of overwhelming odds. But even now, six decades since its founding, Israel continues to reside in a hostile neighborhood with adversaries who cling to the false hope that denying Israel’s legitimacy will ultimately make it disappear. Those adversaries are wrong. As the president said in Cairo, for the entire world to hear, the state of Israel “will not go away.” As he said at the United Nations, nations “do the Palestinians no favors when they choose vitriolic attacks against Israel over constructive willingness to recognize Israel’s legitimacy and its right to exist in peace and security.”

So America’s commitment to Israel will endure. And everyone must know that there is no space—no space—between the United States and Israel when it comes to Israel’s security. Our commitment to Israel’s security is unshakable. It is as strong as ever. This president and this administration understand very well the environment—regionally and internationally—in which Israel and the United States must operate. We understand very well that for peace and stability to exist in the Middle East, Israel must be secure.

The United States will never waver in defense of Israel’s security. That is why we provide billions of dollars annually in security assistance to Israel, why we have reinvigorated our consultations to ensure Israel’s qualitative military edge, and why we undertake joint military exercises, such as the Juniper Cobra ballistic missile defense exercise that involved more than a thousand U.S. servicemen and women. We view these efforts as essential elements of our regional security approach, because many of the same forces that threaten Israel also threaten the United States.

I can also say from long experience that our security relationship with Israel is important for America. Our military benefits from Israeli innovations in technology, from shared intelligence, from exercises that help our readiness and joint training that enhances our capabilities, and from lessons learned in Israel’s own battles against terrorism and asymmetric threats.

Over the years, and like so many Americans—like so many of you here tonight—I’ve spent a great deal of time with my Israeli partners, including my friends in the Israel Defense Forces. These partnerships are deep and abiding. They are personal relationships and friendships based on mutual trust and respect. Every day, across the whole range of our bilateral relationship, we are working together for our shared security and prosperity. And our partnership will only be strengthened in the months and years to come.

In our pursuit of a two-state solution, we recognize that peace must be made by the parties and cannot be imposed from the outside. At the same

time, we understand that the status quo is not sustainable. It is not sustainable for Israel's identity as a secure, Jewish, and democratic state, because the demographic clock keeps ticking and will not be reversed. The status quo is not sustainable for Palestinians, who have legitimate aspirations for sovereignty and statehood. And the status quo is not sustainable for the region, because there is a struggle between those who reject Israel's existence and those who are prepared to coexist with Israel—and the status quo strengthens the rejectionists and weakens those who would live in peace.

Obviously, we are disappointed that the parties have not begun direct negotiations. The United States stands ready to do whatever is necessary to help the parties bridge their differences and develop the confidence needed to make painful compromises on behalf of peace. As we play this role, we will also strongly support the Palestinian Authority's efforts to develop its institutions from the ground up and call on other states, particularly in the region, to do their part to support the Palestinian Authority as well. We also continue to call on all sides to avoid provocative actions, including Israeli actions in East Jerusalem and Palestinian incitement, that fuel suspicion rather than trust. As Secretary of State Clinton has said many times, "We believe that through good-faith negotiations, the parties can mutually agree to an outcome which ends the conflict and reconciles the Palestinian goal of an independent and viable state based on the '67 lines, with agreed swaps, and Israel's goal of a Jewish state with secure and recognized borders that reflect subsequent developments and meet Israel's security requirements."

So it is time to begin those negotiations and to put an end to excuses. It is time for all leaders in the region—Israeli, Palestinian, and Arab—to support efforts for peace. It is time for today's leaders to demonstrate the courage and leadership of Anwar Sadat, King Hussein, and Yitzhak Rabin.

I want to conclude tonight by returning to some simple words that President Obama spoke in Oslo—this is a "moment of challenge." And when it comes to the Middle East, it is a moment of many challenges. It is the challenge of transitioning to full Iraqi responsibility for the country's future. In Afghanistan and beyond, it is the challenge of defeating violent extremists who threaten us all. It is the challenge of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them. It is the challenge of forging a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians as part of a comprehensive peace in the region. It is the challenge of realizing greater prosperity and opportunity for all who call the Middle East home.

Alone, any one of these issues would demand extraordinary patience and perseverance. Together, they will require a comprehensive and coordinated approach. This is the work that President Obama has undertaken. And this is the work we will continue to pursue in the months and years ahead—not only for the sake of America's security, but for the world's.

Thank you all very much.

“In our pursuit of a two-state solution, we recognize that peace must be made by the parties and cannot be imposed from the outside. At the same time, we understand that the status quo is not sustainable.”



The Obama Administration and the Middle East: Setting Priorities, Taking Action

The Obama Administration and the Middle East: Setting Priorities, Taking Action

Thomas Friedman, Martin Kramer, William Kristol, and David Makovsky

EDITED TRANSCRIPT

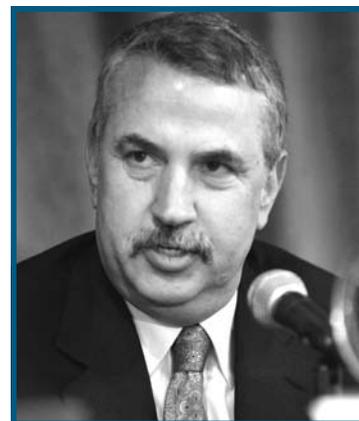
Robert Satloff, The Washington Institute: This is the closing event of the Institute's twenty-fifth anniversary celebration. It is, as they say, no coincidence that I am flanked by the two gentlemen who sit on my right and my left. [Laughter.] You got it.

No, actually, what I'm getting at is that Tom and Bill both played a very important role early in the life of this organization in many ways—in ways they may not even know. I'm truly grateful to both of them for having been early supporters of the idea that an organization like the Institute—one committed to scholarship, committed to analysis, committed to improving the quality of American policy by bringing people from all aspects of the policy debate together—had a role to play in Washington.

Tom, of course, was good friends with my predecessor, Martin Indyk. I first met Tom—I'm sure he doesn't recall—on one of the earliest Institute trips to the Middle East. Les Gelb was part of the trip, and I remember very well Tom showing up late one night to talk to Les, at what was then the Arum Hotel. I met Tom then; he was a foreign correspondent at the time. And ever since, I've been very fortunate to count him as a colleague and a friend, so I want to thank him for his support of this institution.

I want to thank Bill as well. In an earlier incarnation, Bill was the chief of staff to Vice President Dan Quayle. That was one of the early administrations during which our organization operated, and Dan Quayle was the first of what would become several vice presidents to address the Institute. I know that this was in no small part through Bill's intercession and his support of the idea of what we were doing.

So I want to thank both of you for being here, and of course thank my outstanding colleagues, Martin and David, for all the work they have done to help educate the American policy community and the broader media, diplomatic, academic, and scholarly communities on the realities and urgencies that we all face in the Middle East. With that, gentlemen, I'm now going to open up the discussion. First, I'd like to ask each of you, as you look at the Obama administration and its approach to the Middle East specifically, how wise do you think the president has been in defining



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American priorities vis-à-vis this region? And how effective do you think the administration has been in implementing the policies behind these priorities?

Thomas Friedman: You mean this is not a panel on climate change? [Laughter.] I'm in the wrong hotel. Well, Rob, thank you. It is a treat to be here. I was present at the creation of the Institute. I think it's made a real contribution over the years to the policy debate here, and I'm happy to be on this panel to congratulate you on your anniversary.

Let me start with a certain bias, which you can probably detect, for those of you who follow the arguments in my column. People ask me why I haven't really traveled very much, haven't actually written about the Middle East very much of late. And it's because I happen to believe that this story—what's going on in America today—is the greatest show on earth and that we are at a point in our country's history where I think the most important foreign policy decisions are the economic decisions we're making right now about the economic health of our country. And so I have to confess, that's really my preoccupation.

That said, if I look at the Middle East and the Obama administration, I would start with one macro point of view and then, under that, give them an “incomplete” in certain areas and a very high grade in other areas. The macro point I would make is this: it is just not a great time to be a secretary of state doing Middle East diplomacy.

Think back on how easy Henry Kissinger's life was. [Laughter.] Back in 1973, '74, when he forged the first disengagement agreements between Israel and Syria and Israel and Egypt, he had to deal with one Egyptian pharaoh named Anwar Sadat, one overwhelmingly powerful Syrian dictator named Hafiz al-Asad, and an Israeli prime minister—Golda Meir—who was so powerful, and her party so overwhelmingly dominant in the Knesset, that no one had even heard of the Likud back then. In other words, he basically had to get the approval of three people to forge what was then an historic and unprecedented breakthrough in Middle East diplomacy.

Fast-forward to today: Palestinians are divided between two governments in two different geographic areas— Hamas in Gaza, Fatah in the West Bank. Hamas itself is divided between a political and military wing, one of which appears to report to Damascus, the other to Tehran. Syria has an extremely weak government, always looking over its shoulder to Iran. And Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has a kitchen cabinet where there the kitchen is barely big enough to contain all the different parties he needs to consult in order to make any decision.

So there are moments and rhythms in the diplomacy of this region that are more or less conducive, where you have political actors who have the strength and conviction to deliver. And I just don't think this is one of them. So I would start there as a kind of macro view.

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Where I would give the administration high marks is in continuing, and continuing very effectively, two policies that were begun by the previous administration. Personally, I think these policies are extremely important because they concern an area that I am really focused on—namely, what’s happening on the ground.

The first policy is the initiative by Palestinian prime minister Salam Fayad and U.S. security coordinator Gen. Keith Dayton to train an effective Palestinian police force that can maintain security in the West Bank. This effort has achieved a level of maturity and competence, and I’ve been told by Israeli officials that these guys are for real. And as you think forward in terms of what would be necessary—though not sufficient—for any kind of Israeli-Palestinian breakthrough, you get nothing without a Palestinian security force that is effectively trained and disciplined, and that has the confidence and cooperation of the Israeli military. And this administration has been very aggressive in maintaining, fostering, and nurturing that force. We may not see it, but it’s actually very important. And we’ve got to get money for this effort and be supportive of it.

The second thing I would give the administration very high marks for—and this is the president’s doing—was making the vice president responsible for bringing Iraq across the finish line. Those of you who read my column know that I believe Iraq will be the single most important Middle East achievement of the Obama administration in its first term. I hope it will, and I actually believe it will—that three years from now President Obama will make a farewell first-term Middle East foreign policy tour and, under a banner that will read “Mission Actually Accomplished,” he will visit Baghdad and, I hope, be able to address a democratically elected Iraqi parliament.

I continue to believe that the biggest game-changing event in the region’s modern history was the decision to take out Saddam and replace his regime with a consensual political system, where Arabs would get the first chance in their modern history to write their own social contract and decide how they are ruled. In the past year, there have been a number of really critical moments in the Iraq story where the vice president, in conjunction with Gen. Ray Odierno and our ambassador there, has played a very important role in getting the Iraqis over the hump.

We’re still not out of the woods yet; a vote recount is now imminent. But I continue to believe and hope that Iraq will find its way to a different politics. And I believe that is the single most important achievement of American foreign policy in the Middle East. Ultimately, it will be a bipartisan one, but it was begun in the last administration, and the current administration has not dropped the ball.

On the Arab-Israeli front, there are better experts on that subject here in this room. But as I said before, I would definitely give the administration an “I” for incomplete there. I have many rules about Middle East politics, but one that is apropos here: the Middle East only puts a smile on

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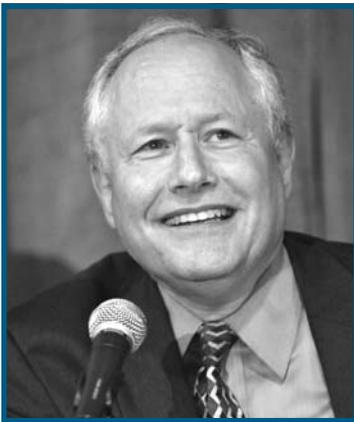
your face when it starts with them. That is, the Camp David peace treaty began with a secret meeting in Morocco between Moshe Dayan and an envoy of Anwar Sadat—it began with them. The Oslo peace process isn't called Oslo for nothing—it began in Norway, with Israelis and Palestinians mediated by Norwegians. The United States found out a year later. As for the Sunni Arab “awakening” in Iraq’s Anbar province—God bless the coalition surge, it was necessary, but the Sunnis’ awakening began with them. The surge came along at exactly the right time to enhance it and pull it across, but it began with them. Same with the equivalent but less widely reported Shiite awakening in Basra.

So again, the Middle East only puts a smile on your face when it starts with them. When it starts with us—when we try to create something from nothing—it goes nowhere. And right now, I think we’re really trying to create something out of nothing, frankly. And so I’d put a big “incomplete” there, but I’d give the administration a very high grade on certain issues that I think are real and important.

William Kristol: Thanks, Rob, it’s good to be here with many friends and colleagues from various stages of my life. Tom’s a little bit of an easier grader than I am, needless to say. But I don’t want to be a partisan hack here, God forbid. [Laughter.] I’ll just be a highfalutin partisan. No, I won’t be partisan at all.

I agree with Tom that this seems to be a particularly bad time to put much stake in an Israeli-Palestinian diplomatic breakthrough, and I therefore don’t understand why the Obama administration has put so much emphasis on it. And then they get annoyed that there’s not an Israeli-Palestinian diplomatic breakthrough, and then they take it out on the party that’s easier to take it out on—from their point of view, the Israelis. So we have a totally unnecessary mini-crisis in U.S.-Israeli relations that I think is just foolish and somewhat deplorable—it’s unjust in terms of who’s being blamed and foolish in terms of achieving other things in the Middle East.

On Iraq, I’m actually in agreement with Tom. The president deserves credit there, as he does on Afghanistan, for resisting elements in his own party, reversing some things he himself said and votes he cast as a senator and building on the success of the last two years of the Bush administration. And in the case of Afghanistan, he deserves credit for correcting a certain neglect—of the Bush administration and of the United States generally—during the past three or four years. And I also agree that winning in those two places is extremely important. Winning there doesn’t solve all the problems in the rest of the Middle East. But losing in either place greatly exacerbates the difficulties and dangers elsewhere in the region, from all the way east in Afghanistan and through Pakistan, to all the way west in Israel and even North Africa. So I agree that it was courageous of President Obama to keep Bush’s secretary of defense, Bush’s CENTCOM



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commander, and Bush's chief general in the field in Iraq. And I think they've all worked together well and done a good job.

And then, finally, there is this little problem of an Iranian regime that is racing to get nuclear weapons. And we've done nothing to stop them and virtually nothing to slow them in the past several years, under both the Bush and Obama administrations. And I think all other progress elsewhere in the region is put into question by an Iranian nuclear program. In fact, it would be a disaster for the current Iranian regime to obtain nuclear weapons. The notion of containing and deterring the regime is something of a fantasy. I've tried to think this through a little bit, since obviously we have at times had to use containment and deterrence even when we preferred not to. But if you really think through how it would unfold in this region, I believe it would not work well, if at all.

So far, the U.S. government has basically wasted a year in an engagement effort. If you want to be charitable, you can say, "Well, they had to try that first." But in any case, it certainly hasn't produced anything. In the middle of that effort, after Iran's June 2009 presidential election, we failed to do certain things we could have done to at least help those who wanted to take a shot at changing or overturning the regime. That prospect seems to have faded some now, and I think we'll be dealing with this regime for at least the near term.

We're now pursuing very mild sanctions in the United Nations. These will allegedly lead to somewhat less mild sanctions that the United States and Europe could impose a few months down the road, which would allegedly lead to slightly less mild and perhaps unilateral U.S. sanctions. And none of this will stop Iran from getting nuclear weapons.

Half the senior administration officials in the background spend most of their time taking the military option off the table, which is silly even if we're not going to use it. It is irresponsible to avoid seriously considering it or seriously planning on the possibility of having to use it, which I don't have the sense the White House is very interested in doing. The military tends to do its planning anyway, of course, so presumably some of that work has been done. But the truth is, if we wanted to use force to delay an Iranian nuclear plant, we certainly haven't laid the groundwork at home or, I suspect, in the region to do so. And there's a lot of work that should be done before one uses force.

We're drifting into a situation where the choice is going to be an Israeli strike against Iran or an Iran with nuclear weapons, both of which are inferior choices to a U.S. strike on Iran. And if there is to be an Israeli strike, we're drifting into a situation where we're not coordinating well at the highest levels with the Israelis. In other words, we're setting ourselves up for a very difficult situation if they choose to strike. And we're therefore spending a lot of time trying to deter them from striking, which may be tactically right in the short term. But our policy now has a slightly bizarre character—we seem to be spending more time and energy deterring Israel

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from stopping the Iranian nuclear program than from stopping the Iranian nuclear program.

Martin Kramer: I'm at a distinct advantage because I'm on a panel with partisan journalists, and I'm an academic. I'm entirely objective. [Laughter.] And I'm interested very much in ideas. You see, I don't have any sources whispering in my ear. I just have to read texts and what people say and reach my best understanding of them.

This has been an interesting conference because we've heard a lot of reassurances, especially from General Jones last night, that all of the administration's priorities are in proper alignment. And I don't want to question anyone's good faith, but the fact is there are a lot of mixed messages coming out of this administration. And no one really knows whether this mixing reflects a clever strategy or is just a sign of confusion.

President Obama himself does it. A good example was his visit to Israel during the presidential campaign back in mid-2008. While in Sderot, he said, "A nuclear Iran would be a game-changing situation, not just in the Middle East but around the world. Whatever remains of our nuclear non-proliferation framework I think would begin to disintegrate." That was a very powerful statement. And I call that "Obama 1.0." We heard echoes of it last night in General Jones's speech as well.

But then Obama, on the same trip, went off to Jordan and met with King Abdullah. And he came back and appeared on *Meet the Press*, where he said the following:

I think King Abdullah of Jordan is as savvy an analyst of the region and player in the region as there is. And one of the points he made and that I think a lot of people made is that we've got to have an overarching strategy recognizing that all these issues are connected.

If we can solve the Israeli-Palestinian process, then that will make it easier for Arab states and the Gulf states to support us when it comes to issues like Iraq and Afghanistan. It will also weaken Iran, which has been using Hamas and Hizballah as a way to stir up mischief in the region. If we've gotten an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal, maybe at the same time peeling Syria out of the Iranian orbit, that makes it easier to isolate Iran so that they have a tougher time developing a nuclear weapon.

Ladies and gentlemen, that is the Obama policy formulated then, down to the letter. And I call it "Obama 2.0" because look at the shift that took place. The game-changer in the Middle East is no longer Iranian nuclear capabilities, but the peace process. This shift is one in which Iran essentially becomes subordinate to the peace process.

To my knowledge, Obama has not repeated the phrase "game-changing" since he made it in 2008 to describe the effect of Iranian nuclear weapons. In 2008, he said it was an extraordinary priority to stop Iran. Last month, he said it's one of our highest priorities to make sure that Iran doesn't possess a nuclear weapon. And the other day, Adm. Mike Mullen said that



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Iran has been a priority of this administration from the outset. So stopping Iran has gone from being an extraordinary priority to one of our highest priorities to a priority.

And then Bill had a very interesting piece the other day—I see it in front of him—about Admiral Mullen saying the following: “Iran getting a nuclear weapon would be incredibly destabilizing. Attacking them would also create the same kind of outcome.” Now, obviously, if the outcome from doing something and from doing nothing is the same, that’s a pretty powerful argument for doing nothing. But of course, it isn’t the same outcome. I’ll leave it to Bill to explain, perhaps, why this is what he has called a false equivalence—unless you’ve decided that a nuclear Iran is not a game-changer, but instead just a really big hassle.

Now, I admired Obama 1.0 for what I thought was a very clear-sighted vision. A nuclear Iran does change the game for the Middle East and for the world, as he said. Obama 2.0 seems to me very confused about priorities. And that’s because an Israeli-Palestinian deal, for whatever merits it has and whatever limitations it’s obviously going to have, doesn’t change the game. It rearranges the pieces on the board, possibly to give one a slight advantage.

For example, the spat over housing in Jerusalem looks to me like something totally out of proportion. Excuse me for saying so, but the controversy over Ramat Shlomo—1,600 building units in Jerusalem—made Obama look like the captain of a ship rearranging 1,600 deck chairs on a vessel headed straight toward an iceberg. And that’s how I would describe the first year of the Obama administration. We’re on a ship. The iceberg is straight ahead. Everyone can see it. And the administration has been busy rearranging the deck chairs. [Applause.]

David Makovsky: Okay, being the last panelist, I don’t know if people remember the question. [Laughter.] But I’ll try to—

Friedman: It’s about climate change, David. [Laughter.]

Makovsky: What you’re hearing from the panel is a lot of agreement on things like fighting al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, responsibly withdrawing from Iraq, Predator strikes in Pakistan if need be, and so forth. I don’t think things like that are at all controversial among this panel. The real issue is how Obama has handled Iran and the Arab-Israeli issue. We all pretty much agree on listing those points as priorities—as I see it, a lot of the problems have centered on implementation.

On Iran, the stakes are clearly very high—“game-changer” does say it well. I don’t know if you’d call it “Obama 3.0,” but I do believe that much of what the administration is doing, they don’t talk about, which misleads people whose only knowledge is what they read in a newspaper. However great that newspaper may be, their information is probably going to



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be incomplete. For example, the administration is doing a lot of work on missile basing and missile defense all over the Persian Gulf, dealing with radars and similar issues. And you’d have to be an air traffic controller to keep up with the number of Israeli and American officials flying around for meetings on Iran. I’ve counted about a dozen senior-level meetings, and this is just in the first few months of 2010.

The Israelis are not exactly a shy bunch. If they weren’t coordinating, believe me, you and I would hear about it. And they’re telling me that the coordination so far has been excellent. Now, consultation doesn’t necessarily mean consensus, but when the head of the CIA, the head of Mossad, and other officials are going back and forth frequently, and the defense minister of Israel is here almost every month, they’re not talking about Fiji—they’re talking about Iran, what else?

Part of the problem, then, is that the administration hasn’t marketed what they’re doing. And if I would fault them on Iran, I would say they need to set a date certain for the Russians and the Chinese. They are furiously working behind the scenes, doing things like holding up a Treasury Department report on Chinese currency manipulation because they want to get Beijing’s vote on Iranian sanctions. They’re doing a lot of these sorts of things, but the people don’t know about it. It would be nice to see more sticks, such as releasing these reports or, if the Chinese don’t come through, saying the following: “If within the next X days, months, or whatever, we don’t have your support on the sanctions bill, we’re going to go with the Europeans. And you made such a big deal during the Bush administration that the Security Council should be a central forum on foreign affairs, well, we’re trying to work with you, but if you don’t want to work with us, we’ll work with the people who do, and that’s the Europeans.” And U.S.-European sanctions on Iran would be effective. Clearly, though, it would be better to get Russia and China onboard.

The United States has actually united the world on Iran in a way that has not been done before. But the current administration came in with an inheritance. I like sports analogies, so I say it’s like a coach who’s been brought in during the fourth quarter of a football game, but he’s already behind four touchdowns because of what happened during the first three quarters. So he has inherited a rough situation—there were no consequences for Iranian centrifuges, and the regime accumulated virtually a full nuclear weapon’s worth of low-enriched uranium. But this is the hand Obama was dealt. And we have to be clear to Russia and China that we’re not going to let them play out the clock in this game—we’ll work with the Europeans instead. So that would be my one critique of the administration—that they haven’t issued a deadline for Russia and China on the sanctions.

Some people say, “Well, it doesn’t matter, sanctions will never work.” But after what we went through in Iraq, does anyone believe that the American public or anybody else will go for a military strike if they don’t

see that the administration has tried other approaches? Clearly, then, we have to work through this. You know the administration is working hard when they say to you—or maybe they don't say to you—that the president held fifteen different sets of bilateral discussions at the nuclear summit. And it was all about Iran. But that's not made public.

So what does the public know? They think the worst. They think the president is spending time counting housing units in Jerusalem. I think it's idiotic to think that's what the administration is spending their time on. But that's the perception. And perception sometimes creates its own realities. So I would like to say the following: we all have criticisms of the Obama administration—I have a lot—but let's not caricature them. That's my point.

I do think they raised the bar too high on Jerusalem settlements in 2009 and this year; instead of limiting the gaps, they exacerbated them. But they are driven by a clear sense that this issue is important. And I guess I'll be the skunk at the garden party on this panel—it's not the first time [laughter]—by saying that the Arab-Israeli issue is important. Because what we've learned about it—and Tom and the others have been around the block a bunch of times—is that the quiet doesn't stay forever. And when things are violent, people say, “Well, there's violence, we're too weak to compromise now.” And if it's quiet: “We don't need to compromise now, the timing isn't right.” But we've got to acknowledge two things: one, there is a demographic challenge out there, and two, it's clear that if Mahmoud Abbas and Salam Fayad's contingent is discredited, the people waiting in the wings are Hamas, not the Hadassah Women of Brooklyn. And that's what's driving the administration. So let's not caricature people we don't agree with and say, “Well, he must be an anti-Semite,” or “His middle name is Hussein,” or this or that. Let's be grown-ups about it and have an honest, adult discussion. That's all. [Applause.]

Satloff: David, those Hadassah women can be pretty tough. [Laughter.]

Makovsky: But I checked with them. They're not opening an office in Ramallah. [Laughter.]

Satloff: Let me ask a few questions and then I'll open it up to your questions. Tom, we've heard from the president, from the secretary, and from Jim Jones last night that U.S. policy is to remain determined to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. And yet almost nobody believes them. Why is that? And what can the administration do to convince people that this really is their policy?

Friedman: Well, I think a lot of it does go to David's point—that a lot of what they're doing is covert. You could have made the exact same critique

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of the administration that was in power for the eight previous years while Iran developed its nuclear capability to the degree it has.

This is the problem from hell. If it had an easy answer, someone would have figured it out a long time ago. It is a really serious problem. And personally, I don't believe there's a diplomatic solution, even though we'll go through the sanctions thing. This is partly because there's a really weak, divided government in Iran, and there's actually no one there who can turn this off, so to speak.

I agree with the notion that the choice is a military operation or an Iranian bomb. But those are both really horrible outcomes. Some would say that the administration is just afraid of a military solution, as if everything would work fine if they just had the guts to decide on such a course. According to this view, it's a matter of just deciding; once we do, we can just wipe out the nuclear program and that's the end of the story. Whoa, wait a minute—this would be an incredibly complicated, high-risk operation that would have enormous implications for the global economy, which is in a really fragile state, including our own. So cut them a little bit of slack if they're saying, "Let's think this through."

Now, when it comes to the military question, I would argue that the core difference between the United States and Israel comes down to another rule I have about the Middle East: namely, that all politics of importance happens "the morning after the morning after." We know what happens the morning after a U.S. or Israeli military strike on Iran. The Muslim world is aflame, American embassies are besieged, Jewish sites are attacked. If it was Israel, everyone says, "You're crazy, you're stupid, you did exactly the wrong thing, you're going to pay a huge price for it."

That's what happens the morning after: the whole world is united against us, or Israel, or both. I think the real debate centers on what happens the morning after the morning after. The Israeli view, I think, is that they'll get hit with some rockets; there will be attacks on Jewish sites, Israeli targets, and the United States; the global economy will go into a temporary tailspin. But you know what? The morning after the morning after, Iran will still have to sell oil, and they will still have to face our counterdeterrent. And the morning after the morning after, the Iranian people may turn to their leadership and say, "Look what a mess you've got us into."

Maybe a military strike would only set the Iranians back a year. But Rob made a very good point the other night: that's what people said when Israel knocked out Iraq's nuclear program, that the delay would only last a year. Well, thirty years later it's still gone. So buying a year or two in the Middle East, that's a lot. So the Israeli view on the morning after the morning after is "*Yihyeh beseder*, we can get through it."

The American view of the morning after the morning after is apocalyptic. We have 150,000 troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the belief is that they would be more exposed than ever, and that the global war on terrorism would be more difficult than ever. Iran's government, now

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weak and divided, would enjoy the united support of all its people. They would redouble their efforts to get a nuclear weapon, and there'd be no stopping them because we would have very little global support. And they may indeed—I've heard this from administration officials—proliferate nuclear material to a terrorist group. That is their view of the morning after the morning after.

And so the prospect of military action against Iran is one filled with foreboding, as is the prospect of Iran getting a nuclear weapon. But we need to respect just how complicated either scenario is, and that's why I think the administration is a little frozen. So I would say the core unresolved difference centers on the question of what happens the morning after the morning after.

Satloff: The very interesting presumption of your fascinating answer is that our current stated policy—which is a combination of sanctions, economic coercion, international isolation, and diplomacy—won't work. Does anybody on this panel think differently? Does anyone believe that this policy package can convince the Iranians to change their approach?

Friedman: Just a very quick follow-up—I've always believed that the people who hold the cards with Iran are Russia and China. And if you had real sanctions out of Russia and China—if you actually had a Chinese delegation go to Tehran and say, "If you do not stop this program, we will shift our oil and gas purchases to Saudi Arabia"—then the nuclear issue would end. But the fact is the people who have the power in Russia and China won't do it. And therefore, any sanctions they support, in my view, are by definition too weak to have an impact.

Satloff: Does anybody disagree with this analysis? Because it has very important implications for the nature of our existing policy. David?

Makovsky: Obviously, as Tom and I have said, having Russia and China onboard would be optimal. But it could be that the price of getting them onboard involves weakening the sanctions so much that whatever they sign on to isn't that great. The point here is the sort of double-decker bus arrangement currently being discussed—UN action is the platform for the second tier of sanctions, which the Europeans say they will support above the Security Council tier because they know that's only going to be a baseline. A lot of European officials have said they want to do much more, but they would like to have the Security Council's stamp of approval first because it's important for their publics.

But clearly, I think we'll only know how much further the Europeans go with us if we try it. Iran is more isolated today than in the past, and fissures are visible among the elites themselves.

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So of course I’m a skeptic that it’s going to succeed. But we have to try it because we have no other choice, and we shouldn’t be so fatalistic about it because it might even work if the right mix is there.

Satloff: Any alternative views? Okay, thank you. Very important analytical point.

Depending on whom and when you ask, and whether you’re in a four-eyes conversation or a roomful of three hundred people, some will say that the U.S.-Israeli relationship is great, and others will say it’s in crisis. We are now facing a typical moment in U.S.-Israeli relations. All of you have been observers of this relationship for many years—in and out of government, as journalists, and as scholars. How would you characterize this moment in this wider context?

Kristol: I think, on the whole, people worry too much about whether the U.S.-Israeli relationship is good or bad, friendly or unfriendly. This has always been my gripe with the pro-Israeli community here in the United States, which is excessively concerned about how nice everyone is being. They’re not concerned enough about actual results of real policies—whether these policies are making the Middle East a safer place where moderates are supported and rewarded, or a place where the dominant message is that extremism pays. So the Iran discussion we’ve been having is key to what happens on the ground there, and that’s much more important than whether President Obama personally likes or dislikes Prime Minister Netanyahu and that sort of thing. I don’t want to minimize the issue, I just think that when you compare the question of what’s happening on the ground in terms of the region’s real challenges, versus the question of whether people are having nice or unpleasant visits to the White House—for me, the first question is much more important.

Now, obviously, the answer to the second question is a tip-off, you might say, to where people are on the first. And as Tom said, there seems to be a pretty fundamental analytical difference between the Obama and Netanyahu administrations about the morning after the morning after a military strike on Iran, on the one hand, or Iran getting nuclear weapons, on the other—the likelihood of successful containment and deterrence versus the likelihood of failure. Assuming that’s correct, when you have such a degree of analytical difference about the most important question facing the two countries, you’re not going to have a very good relationship.

I think there’s actually a bigger difference than the discussion so far has elucidated between an American strike on Iran and an Israeli strike on Iran in terms of the morning after the morning after. I’m not an—thank God—Israeli policymaker; I might still decide that an Israeli strike was worth the risk. But clearly there are much greater limitations on—and consequences to—their actions.

One never wants to seem cavalier; obviously, the use of force never works out the way you think it will. But the nonuse of force doesn't work out the way you think it will either, so there are very great variable outcomes on both sides. If you think through the likely effect of American use of force in Iran, I don't believe it's as daunting as some people think. I totally disagree with David that this is such an incredibly hard thing to convince the American people of—that if we don't spend two or three years getting that fourth Security Council resolution and showing that we're bending over backward, there'll be a big uproar in the United States if Obama launched campaigns against Iranian nuclear sites. But this is an analytical question, and I think David is correctly capturing the view even of those in the Obama administration who do want to keep the military option on the table.

But we shouldn't kid ourselves. And this is not caricaturing the administration, and no one is accusing them of bad motives or of being anti-Semitic or anything. But the fact is, a year ago I would have said that President Obama would keep a serious military option on the table, and that he might actually use force. Because I don't think any American president wants to see Iran go nuclear for obvious reasons—reasons that various American administrations have articulated, and that the world community has articulated in Security Council resolutions and elsewhere. But I have now lost confidence that the Obama administration, at the end of the day, would be willing to use military force even after going through the serious thought process that Tom has called for and I certainly endorse, and even after going the extra mile in terms of engagement and sanctions.

And if that's what I think after reading the newspaper, maybe some of us are too naive and we don't know all the clever things they're doing behind the scenes. But I would just say that if you talk to people in the region, they don't have confidence in the Obama administration's seriousness either. And that is an extremely dangerous situation.

Satloff: I'll just add two brief comments. One, on this analytical question, I do hope everybody takes a moment when they get back to their computers to access an Institute study by Patrick Clawson and Michael Eisenstadt titled *The Last Resort: Consequences of Preventive Military Action against Iran*. I can quite proudly say that it is the most sober, detached analysis of the likely range of responses and possible reactions.

Second, I don't think we know where the administration will end up, for one very simple political reason: no American president wants to be a failure. And having so publicly and personally embraced the concept of prevention, it seems to me that this president will be judged on the success or failure of that more than anything else in terms of foreign policy. Now, I may be wrong; maybe we'll have short memories. But I think that consideration would be a very important determinant of what the United States ends up doing. I just don't think we know.

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“If the administration really believed a nuclear Iran was unacceptable, we would not be seeing the kind of rhetoric we’re seeing now.”

Kristol: It’s nice that you think he’s so publicly embraced this as a guiding principle and landmark by which his administration is willing to be judged. But I would say that the number of times he’s mentioned this compared to about eighty-six other things he’s more willing to be judged by is what strikes me. The president has said that an Iranian nuclear weapons program is absolutely unacceptable. But it seems like we say such things precisely when we are about to accept something. That’s what Raymond Aron, the great French thinker, wrote about his country’s rhetoric leading up to World War II. The French prime minister had called Hitler’s incursion into the Rhineland unacceptable. As Aron said twenty years later, this should have helped the whole world quickly understand that the French and the British were going to accept it.

I think there’s a little bit of that phenomenon happening today. If the administration really believed a nuclear Iran was unacceptable, we would not be seeing the kind of rhetoric we’re seeing now. Obviously, no one knows. But I hope as much as anyone that deep down, they have different thoughts, or they’re going to change their mind, or they’ll be bugged by reality and wake up. I think I know how an administration would be talking if it were serious, if it saw the issue as an absolute priority and believed that it had to get this country and the world ready for the possibility of a military strike. I think that administration would be behaving in certain ways—it wouldn’t be going around the Gulf talking about missile defense. Why would you need missile defense? Missile defense is containment and deterrence. Missile defense isn’t prevention.

So I am really doubtful. Rob, I think you’re too charitable or too optimistic, but maybe you’re right. But I think the administration believes what Admiral Mullen said: six of one; half a dozen of another. A military strike is horrible, the Iranian nuclear weapons program is horrible. If you believe that, you are going to do nothing.

Satloff: David, briefly?

Makovsky: If Iran gets a nuclear weapon, I think it is clear that this would be such a severe blow to American prestige in the Middle East that no presidency could recover—

Kristol: First of all, how would you know if they get a nuclear weapon? If they test, maybe—

Makovsky: Okay, weapons capability aside, I’m saying I agree with Rob that there’s no issue that has been reaffirmed more often by not just this president or his predecessor, but by every American government spokesman. If the United States allowed this to happen, it would destroy the prestige of any president on whose watch this occurred—it would end his presidency in the Middle East. You could say that Middle Eastern people don’t vote. But I think it would be devastating nonetheless.

I can't say I know what the United States is going to do. I don't think that missile defense efforts mean we're not going to do anything, because if you're going to strike Iran, you have to assume a retaliatory strike; you've got jittery allies, and the issue is more complicated than it might seem. I also don't think you have to wait necessarily three years, but you do have to try the nonmilitary options first.

As for Rob's U.S.-Israel question, there's definitely tension in the relationship. We could dance around definitions—it's a crisis, it's not a crisis—but I don't think that's the point. The point is that there's tension in the relationship. I'm concerned about it not because the fundamentals of the bilateral relationship are going to be tossed out the window or anything like that; that's not the case. There's no rupture here. But, if the people at the top of the pyramid cannot find a way to deal with each other on these issues, you've got to worry—despite all the best coordination and consultation on Iran—what this means. Their conceptual differences on the issue of the Palestinians are wide. And that's what makes me nervous—they don't share a vision, they don't share a sense of urgency, they have different views on the idea of timing and the role of a political base in supporting any policy decision. And when you add those things together, you've got different conceptual outlooks.

Satloff: Thank you. Martin, did you want to say anything on this or should I go ahead?

Kramer: Maybe just on what has been called the analytical difference. The Iranian issue has also brought a very fundamental analogical difference to the fore. When Americans look at Iran, they look for examples that can give them a frame of reference for the problem. In the case of Russia and China, the combination of deterrence and containment worked. China is often invoked because it is an Asiatic power that acquired nuclear weapons; early on, many people thought that the United States should perhaps take these weapons out. The United States did nothing, and lo and behold, we have what we have.

The Israeli analogical framework is completely different. They remember the 1930s. They see an Iranian regime that openly declares itself determined to see Israel eliminated—by whom, they never make quite clear, but the implication is self-evident. As mentioned before, they also remember the reaction to the Osiraq strike: “We did it in Iraq, we were criticized for it, but the day after the day after, people thanked us for it.”

These are two completely separate analogical frameworks. They do not overlap at all. You can't say that one is valid and the other isn't—they both reflect lived experience. And that's why I think as we move down the road, these two templates are increasingly going to take Israel and the United States in different directions.

“The people at the top...don't share a vision, they don't share a sense of urgency, they have different views on the idea of timing and the role of a political base in supporting any policy decision.”

“Every president since Richard Nixon has called for energy independence, and every president has been thwarted in that effort by a Congress that isn’t ready to go down that path.”

Satloff: Okay, last question before I open it up to the floor. Over the years and in your public writings, a number of you have been associated with important initiatives that you’ve called on successive presidents to pursue in the Middle East, which for various reasons this administration is not pursuing. Since this panel is partially titled “Setting Priorities,” I wanted to ask you about the priorities that aren’t being set, or at least not yet, and whether you hope they will be, and what signs you see thereof.

Tom, you’ve often been associated with the issue of energy; you know, the one-liner about funding both sides of terrorism. Bill, you’ve often been associated with the issue of promoting democracy abroad. And Martin, you’re often associated with the idea of how best to counter Islamic extremism, a term that has sort of disappeared from the political lexicon. Are these issues going to find their way back into the administration’s policy or priorities before long?

Friedman: Well, it’s an auspicious time to ask that question, Rob, since Monday we will see an energy bill put on the table—a bipartisan effort in the Senate, sponsored by Senators Kerry, Lieberman, and Lindsey Graham. But every president since Richard Nixon has called for energy independence, and every president has been thwarted in that effort by a Congress that isn’t ready to go down that path. And so it’s still really indeterminate whether we’re going to have a serious energy policy in this country with a price on carbon.

I think that’s a really sad thing because, as you went down the list of things that Bill and Martin are associated with, they’re actually all one story to me. I got interested in energy policy because I covered OPEC when I was in Beirut. But post–September 11, what really motivated me was a sense that this was the trifecta, basically—that bringing down the price of oil was the most effective way to dry up the sources of funds for radical Islam and promote change within the Arab world that would bring about more consensual politics. Because people do not change when you tell them they should. They change when they tell themselves they must.

So in my head, they have always been one policy—that having a gasoline tax and a price on carbon is precisely what weakens Iran, strengthens the dollar, takes money away from regimes that have drawn a bull’s-eye on our back, promotes innovation in alternative fuels (which is going to be the next great global industry), enhances our global respect, and, by the way, mitigates climate change. That’s not win-win. That’s win-win-win-win-win.

And the fact that not one out of 535 members of Congress will support a gasoline tax—I mean, you’d think at least one would just take a flyer, say, “What the heck—I’m leaving, I’m losing.” The fact that it’s somehow off the table right now primarily but not exclusively because of Republican opposition—people who I would think would want these

policies—is vexing and deeply disturbing for me, and we will pay a huge, huge price for this.

Kristol: The democracy agenda remains right and correct and in the U.S. interest and in the interest of the peoples of the Middle East. It’s not simple, and perhaps it was pursued in a somewhat too simple way. Certainly it was caricatured quickly as simple-minded, and I suppose the administration and maybe some of us played into that caricature occasionally. But I would much prefer to err on that side than on the traditional side of not caring at all about human rights in the Arab world or accommodating dictators unquestioningly and paying the price for that.

Regarding Iraq, I agree with Tom. Its importance is underrated, including its importance in Iran. I’m not so sure the June 12 protest movement happens in Iran without the example next door of Iraq. So that remains extremely important. And I think things are going pretty well there, and so I’m hopeful about that and believe it will continue to have an effect. Leaders in the region can see what’s happening next door even if we don’t talk much about it, and even if they don’t permit it to be talked about much in their own countries.

I remain worried about the assumption that we’re going to be standing with the wonderful House of Saud and the terrifically stable government in Egypt to somehow defend our interests in the Middle East and contain Iran. I’m not against making the accommodations we have to make in the short term in terms of working with the governments that are in place. But the Obama administration, in its horror at anything associated with the Bush administration and doctrine, has backed off too much from just commonsense democracy promotion in the Middle East. And this is typical—the Bush administration had an excessive horror about everything associated with the Clinton administration when they came in.

Here also there’s a slight difference between the U.S. and Israeli point of view. I’m more on the U.S. side, if you want to caricature the two. I remember in 2002 or 2003, I’d become somewhat associated with the democracy promotion point of view in the Middle East. And I was having breakfast with a very senior Israeli official at the Mayflower right near our office. And he said, “So what’s all this democracy stuff? I mean, come on. In the Arab world? Are you kidding?” And I said, “I really think it’s important, and I don’t think it’s as impossible as you do. And I’m no expert, but friends of mine who really follow it, Reuel Gerech and others, think it’s more doable than you do. And anyway, what choice do we have?” This was after the new Asad had taken over in Syria, I believe, so I asked, “Are we really sitting here and saying that twenty-five years from now, having gotten along more or less with the House of Saud for God knows how many years, and having gotten along with Mubarak for decades, and having dealt with Asad for decades—are you seriously telling me that twenty-five years from now we’re going to be dealing with the next generation of the

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House of Saud, and literally the next Assad, and literally the next Mubarak? Is that really a plausible future for the Middle East?” And he looked at me and said, “Why not?” [Laughter.]

So there’s a certain amount of wisdom there, perhaps—a certain kind of hardheaded Israeli cynicism, which they have earned the right to have by the behavior of their neighbors. But I still think it’s a little hard to sustain that as a medium- and long-term policy expectation.

Kramer: Well, I as much as anyone else admire the missionary impulse of Americans when it comes to some of these issues in the Middle East. It has led many in this administration to adopt the view that within every extremist there is a moderate waiting to be born. [Laughter.] And we have to of course give it the good missionary try. And the best way to start that is first of all not to call them “radical Muslims,” but to send out feelers to find out what their grievances are and somehow begin redressing or addressing them.

I’ve always thought of this as a bit patronizing. We have a vision of where the world should be. We have great plans. We have overarching strategies, whereas our adversaries have a few grievances—say, a list of one through ten. And maybe if we can knock off the first two or three or the middle five or six, we can turn them around. I think this view very much misconstrues their vision, their commitment, and their determination. And at some point, when various engagements have been tried and failed, the administration will probably come around to a view that won’t be much different from others who’ve faced this challenge—namely, that there are some people who you just have to fight and perhaps kill because they’re determined to do just that to you.

Satloff: Okay. Um, thank you. [Laughter.] He was looking at me when he said that. [Laughter.]

Kristol: Martin always sugarcoats things. [Laughter.]

Satloff: All right, friends, if I can please ask people to pose their questions to a particular member of the panel.

Michael Gelman, The Washington Institute: Tom, you talked about the day after the day after an attack by Israel or the United States. What happens the day after the day after Iran acquires nuclear weapons? Whether or not they use these weapons, how will they influence the Middle East by having them?

Friedman: That’s a good question, Michael. I’m looking forward to reading the piece that Rob referred to, to see what they say. I think the morning after the morning after Iran acquires a nuclear weapon, Saudi Arabia

gets one; Egypt gets one, probably; Turkey has got one reserved in Pakistan; maybe Jordan. I think you have a nuclear Middle East. My view on this issue has always been very simple: Sunni Arabs never cared that the Israelis had a bomb. They're Jews; they'll never use it. [Laughter.] The idea that Shiite Muslims would have a bomb and Sunni Arabs wouldn't? Not a chance.

So this is the nightmare scenario—the morning after the morning after, you have a nuclear Middle East, and the world is dependent for its primary oil and gas reserves on a region of nuclear powers. And then I think it's the end of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. That's why it's so serious, because once you've got a breakout there, it's the end of the entire nuclear nonproliferation regime—maybe not overnight, but eventually. So it's a horrific scenario that would have enormously destabilizing consequences.

Kristol: I agree with everything Tom said. People underestimate how scary the world would become if the nonproliferation regime—which has held up surprisingly well despite some obvious breaches—were to collapse. I would even go back one step—just before that nice arms race gets going, with all these wonderfully stable Sunni Arab regimes in the neighborhood getting nuclear weapons and trading them among themselves and buying them from the Pakistanis, all through God knows what intermediaries. Leaving that scenario aside, what does the world look like just with Iran acquiring nuclear weapons and Israel presumably having a nuclear capability? How stable is that situation? I'm not criticizing Tom, just adding to his point. In my view, that is a permanent Cuban Missile Crisis.

What was the chief characteristic of the Cuban Missile Crisis? Suddenly, Russian missiles were close by, so we didn't have any kind of warning or any confidence in what was going on, and we didn't know whether the Soviets were planning a first-strike capability. So what would be the Iran regime's attitude—let's be fair to each side on this—as it builds up its nuclear stocks in the face of an Israel that has said many, many times, "This is an existential threat"? And what attitude would the Israeli government have toward an Iranian regime—which wants to destroy Israel, wipe the state out—as it builds up its nuclear weapons? I think the result would be permanent hair-trigger alert between these two countries.

And then you have Hizballah and Hamas sitting there, and Iran dealing with both. And God knows if a feint by Hizballah is the beginning of a nuclear exchange. So it would actually be much worse than the U.S.-Soviet Cold War writ large—it would be more like the Cuban Missile Crisis, not for thirteen days but for the foreseeable future. Is that really sustainable?

Makovsky: It's worse than the Cuban Missile Crisis. [Laughter.] There you had NATO, you had communication between the two countries, you had embassies, you had baselines throughout the Cold War. You don't have any of those baselines between Iran and Israel. And we

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know how close we came to a miscalculation even then, when we had communication. Imagine when we don't—the chances of miscalculation go way up.

Tulin Daloglu, Haberturk: Regarding the analytical difference on Iran, the Turkish foreign minister and prime minister were here not long ago, and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said that there is only one solution to the Iranian dilemma and that is diplomacy, diplomacy, diplomacy. The Turkish prime minister emphasizes that he doesn't want to vote yes for a possible sanctions resolution at the Security Council, and he doesn't want to see a military action against Iran. How do you see the Turkish role in that regard? Or how would you characterize their role in, hopefully, preventing Iran from having the bomb?

Makovsky: Look, we had a saying during the 2004 U.S. presidential election: "They were for it before they were against it." And there was an effort in Geneva and Vienna to give the Iranians a compromise proposal on the Tehran Research Reactor, which was controversial domestically at the time but basically enabled us to reset the clock. We weren't yet in the fourth quarter of a football game—I don't know if that translates in Turkey [laughter]—but we were at halftime, and there was an effort. And the Iranians accepted it, and then they reneged.

So your foreign minister might want to look at the fact that this effort was made on Iran's behalf, and they reneged on the agreement. And this is the view of all five permanent members of the Security Council. So we are where we are because Iran spurned diplomacy. It wasn't because we didn't give diplomacy a chance.

Satloff: Any other comment on the larger question being asked here, which is perhaps a shift in Turkey's regional role? Turkey now seems to be talking more publicly about defending Iran or at least understanding Iran, and how we have to work with Iran to resolve this.

Friedman: I'm a big Turkey fan and think it's played historically a very important role in the Middle East. But I've found its role of late disappointing, frankly, and not particularly constructive because you get this feeling of Turkey trying to be the lawyer for some really bad people—like Mahmoud Ahmadinezhad, who has just killed democracy demonstrators on the streets of Tehran. Turkey is a proud democracy, and thank goodness for that. But defending Bashar al-Asad, whose regime was allegedly complicit in the murder of the prime minister next door?

So I'm all for Turkey making points about Gaza, Hizballah, Lebanon—those are all legitimate points—but there is a sense that it's playing to a domestic trend that is not very helpful. And I think it's an illusion on the part of some Turks that this trend is helpful.

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James Breslauer, The Washington Institute: Perception equals reality. And Tom, you talked about the perception of what happens with Iran. I think the world's perception of the United States is that it's a paper tiger on this issue, that we're not going to do a first strike, et cetera. How do we change that perception?

Friedman: I agree with a point Bill raised, which is that if you want a diplomatic solution, you've got to make people understand that a military option is credibly on the table—we came up to this issue with the Iraq war. I've written this in my column—we shouldn't be taking it off the table. I certainly don't think we should be quoting anyone saying we're restraining that option; frankly, the United States should want people to understand that they can't out-crazy us in the Middle East.

Maybe the way out of all of this excruciatingly difficult decision-making—and certainly the option I was hoping for, though it has been quashed—would be a Green Movement revolution succeeding in Iran. When you look at the neighborhood, you see that Turkey has a bomb, India has a bomb, Israel has a bomb. The one historically great civilization that doesn't have a bomb is Iran. There is something of a geopolitical determinism here—the notion that even if the shah were still in power today, Iran would still be seeking a nuclear weapon in that neighborhood. Not necessarily this year or next year, but if you look out over the next twenty years, you'd have to suggest that, in an era when the Hindu, Muslim, and Jewish civilizations all have a bomb, this great Persian civilization is going to acquire one as well. Obviously, I'd feel a lot more comfortable with that scenario if a Green revolution had any prospect of succeeding in the near term, just as I've never lost a wink of sleep that India has a bomb. Although a nuclear-armed, Green-led Iran wouldn't be the perfect outcome, I think it would be a lot better.

Just to add to the very good analogy that Bill started: a near-term Iranian breakout would be the Cuban Missile Crisis with no hotline. And that's a very scary idea. I believe there's a hotline even between Islamabad and New Delhi—they have some kind of communication. But in Iran and Israel's case, we would have a nuclear standoff where one country has called for wiping the other off the face of the earth, but with no direct communication as a medium in case of crisis. That's why it's the problem from hell.

Satloff: Tom just raised a very important question that I'd like to bring out for the rest of the panelists: the prospects for political change inside Iran. Is there something the Obama administration can and should do to advance those prospects within the context of its wider regional priorities?

Friedman: I would say just one quick thing on this, and it gets to the difference between Martin and Bill over democracy promotion, and the story that Bill told about the Israeli official kind of disputing that approach. I

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“You cannot take on radical Islam until nonradical Muslims feel they have the space to take it on themselves. And that only comes with democracy.”

think it’s true, Martin, that there are really bad people, and ultimately you have to fight them—ultimately. But I think the question of who fights them is crucial.

We are where we are in Iraq today—namely, in an unprecedented and very important situation—because it was Sunni Muslims in the heart of Anbar province who took on al-Qaeda. And the Shiites did the same in Basra. We helped them, and we played a critical role, but the legitimacy and long-term impact that comes from them taking on their own radicals is hugely important. And that’s why my reason for supporting the Iraq war was very simple. From day one, people asked me, “How will we know when we’ve won?” And I always had a simple answer: we will have won in Iraq when Salman Rushdie can give a lecture in Baghdad. This may never happen in my lifetime—I have no illusions about that. But you cannot take on radical Islam until nonradical Muslims feel they have the space to take it on themselves. And that only comes with democracy. And so Iraq for me was never a problem of WMD; it was always a problem of PMD—people of mass destruction. [Applause.] And that is why I am a believer that the democracy agenda is every bit as strategic as it is idealistic.

Satloff: I think you drew applause because The Washington Institute actually took that idea and has been running with it for the past several years. We established a very important initiative called Project Fikra. “Fikra” is the Arabic word for “idea.” And the basic concept behind the project is precisely as you just said—trying to empower antiextremist Muslims to compete with and defeat extremism within their own societies. So I wanted to underscore that. Martin, you wanted to say a word?

Kramer: I agree with Tom—ideally, Muslims should be the ones who combat Muslim extremism. It happened, finally, in Iraq and elsewhere when al-Qaeda and those extremists began killing other Muslims in a manner as random as their attacks on the West, if not more so. But in certain cases there just isn’t enough time to wait for that to coalesce. And we’re always on a timeline, and the timeline is always shorter than we hope.

This brings me to the other question Rob asked about Iran. There is probably a great deal more the United States could do to encourage internal change in Iran. But that’s on one timeline. We’ve got another timeline that is very pressing—the nuclear issue. And that brings me to the question about what we can do to give America more credibility and dissipate the image of a paper tiger. The answer? Close ranks with Israel.

Some people said that the confrontation with Netanyahu was Obama’s “Khrushchev moment.” He was a young, untested president, and he stood up to a foreign leader. Well, it’s a completely bogus analogy. Israel is an ally, not the mortal enemy of the United States. Hammering on Israel was actually a display of weakness by the

administration. I'm sure that's how the Iranians read it. And far from improving the U.S. situation vis-à-vis Iran, I think it eroded our footing. Iran would be much more impressed if it faced what seemed to be a united U.S.-Israeli front.

Kristol: Regarding the Green Movement question, I just moderated a panel with two recent Iranian dissidents and exiles. Of course, they may overestimate what can be done; exiles often do so when speaking of their own countries. Yet, although I'm no expert on this, it's pretty clear that the administration is not doing everything it could—and Congress isn't pushing the administration as much as they could—to help the Green Movement. If you just talk to the dissidents, there are all kinds of practical things we could do in terms of preventing the jamming of communications, turning the whole country into a Wi-Fi zone so there would be free internet, and so on, none of which we have done. Apparently, one reason the regime was able to shut down the demonstrations a couple months ago was that they did a very good job of shutting down internet communications within the country. I gather that's something we could do much more about, if we're willing to spend some money and work with some providers, people who know how to do this sort of thing through satellites and otherwise. And these are just very practical steps we could take, leaving aside the possibility of fancier kinds of covert action.

Consider the example of Solidarity rising up in Poland during the Cold War. Although they were soon crushed, there was a bipartisan effort throughout the Reagan years aimed at helping them—as well as others in Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union itself—to stay in touch with the outside world, to stay in touch with each other, to organize, to find occasions to educate others in their country, to let them know they're not alone, et cetera. The labor movement and many Democrats in Congress were very much a part of this effort.

It didn't lead to any immediate change—as you know, we went through some pretty dicey years of showdowns and tough relations with the Soviet Union afterward. And then we got lucky, I suppose—or perhaps it was partly a product of President Reagan's policies and partly a product of Mikhail Gorbachev coming to power—and things went in a much better direction. Who knows what the odds are of repeating that with Iran? But we're not even trying.

This is one of my beefs with the Obama administration. After all, they're the ones who believe in soft power, or smart power. So leave aside all the dumb, hard power people like me—from their point of view, they should be doing much more. Isn't this what they know about? Isn't this their claim, that the stupid Bush administration just went around fighting wars, but they're subtle and clever and understand all these cultural trends and communications and the internet? That they know how to use BlackBerrys, unlike Senator McCain? That was a big issue in the campaign. So why aren't they

“We're always on a timeline, and the timeline is always shorter than we hope.”

doing more, really? They're not doing what they could be doing, and that's a mistake.

The timelines, as Martin says, are problematic. But if there's a military strike, or if Iran has misadventures with its nuclear program, the timelines do come together. That is to say, at some point we do really want a transformation of that regime. I totally agree with Tom. If a different regime is in place, it just changes the whole nature of their program, even if they were to continue the program. And if the United States or Israelis do launch a strike, it would set back the nuclear program for years, and then the timelines start to come together.

So regardless of whether we're going to use force, it's crazy not to do everything we can to help the Green Movement. There's almost no downside—in the worst case, we'll have wasted some money. This isn't a case of us, as in Europe in 1956, encouraging people to do something and then watching them get killed and bearing some moral responsibility for not stepping up. The Iranian people have stepped up, and we didn't encourage them much when they did so. And I feel it's just foolish, leaving aside the fact that it's not very honorable for us to be doing so little to help them.

Makovsky: I don't think you'll hear any disagreement here—no one's saying we should just tell people to rise up. We saw what happened to the Iraqi Shiites in 1991 when Bush said rise up, and they were all mowed down, and we didn't lift a finger. No one's saying we should repeat that scenario. But short of that, there's a lot we can do, and we all think that needs to happen. At the same time, we can't put all our eggs in that basket, because there's not a lot of time here. Iran's leaders have lost their people, but they haven't lost power. And there could be a ten-year gap before any real change of that sort takes effect. But again, we should try everything we can.

Also, regarding the Bush administration on democracy: I think there's too much of a pendulum effect in Washington, and it swings to both sides. For example, we shouldn't say, "Well, it didn't work then because we tried democracy and got Hamas, so therefore, we should do nothing." But doing nothing is not good for America or the Middle East. I think Project Fikra and the work we and others are doing for reform is valuable if it's focused on institutions, judicial reform, media reform, women's rights, and so forth. These sorts of efforts may or may not culminate in elections—the point is we need to have some sort of institution building, and we haven't heard enough on the subject from this administration.

Satloff: I have one last question for the group, in the context of our twenty-fifth anniversary. Since we have such great human capital on this panel, let me ask you for a piece of advice. Is there one piece of research—one question—that you think deserves rigorous analysis and sound scholarship that could help strengthen American policy in the Middle East? Give

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us your suggestion. What should The Washington Institute be doing that either we're not doing or that we ought to be doing more of?

Makovsky: It's risky for someone who works at the Institute to say. [Laughter.] We do so many good things, you know. And I hope we keep doing what we're doing. But we didn't discuss something that I'm very concerned about, and that is Gen. David Petraeus's recent remarks regarding what fans the flames of anti-Americanism in the region. It's a complicated issue, and I do think the Arab-Israeli issue is evocative. But I would argue that there are probably nineteen layers of anti-Americanism, and even if we resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, we'll still be left with eighteen layers of anti-Americanism. And so we've got to be very careful about people who try to establish some sort of linkage. That's why Dennis Ross and I wrote our book, which we hope you read. But I think we need to do more.

We've worked on anti-Americanism in the region and we've got to keep at it, because as long as America is involved in Middle Eastern conflicts, this issue of linkage is going to come up, and the sources of anti-Americanism are going to be questioned. And we've got to keep drilling down. We've started to do so, and we've done more than others, but we've got to keep going.

Friedman: I know you guys have studied this, but I truly believe that the single most important and underutilized weapon—and it's one that every person in this audience can have an effect on, not just the Institute—is breaking our addiction to oil. [Applause.] Because if you just look at the Middle East, it isn't really complicated. Which was the first Arab Gulf state to discover oil? It was Bahrain. Which was the first Arab Gulf state to start running out of oil? It was Bahrain. Which was the first Arab Gulf state to hold a free and fair election where women could both run and vote? Bahrain. Which was the first Arab Gulf state to sign a free trade agreement with the United States? Bahrain. Which was the first Arab Gulf state to hire McKinsey to overhaul its labor laws because everyone was going to have to work? Bahrain. That's not an accident, friends, any more than it's an accident that Lebanon—the one Arab state that's been a democracy from its inception, albeit a flawed one, but one near and dear to my heart—is one of the very few regional states that has never had a drop of oil or gas directly fueling its economy.

So I'm a huge believer that you're going to get a chance to register your vote and your opinion beginning Monday. We're going to have a climate energy bill on the table. It ain't perfect. It's not one I would have written. But it is the first serious attempt at a bipartisan effort to give us scaled change in a way that can diminish our use of fossil fuels and ultimately affect global use. And I think that is the single most important thing you can do to advance not only American interests, but a more peaceful and democratic Middle East.

“I truly believe that the single most important and underutilized weapon...is breaking our addiction to oil.”

“The degree to which things can change quickly is sometimes underrated—and precisely by the people who know the most, and who can give you twenty reasons why things can’t change so suddenly, except sometimes they do.”

Kristol: I have enough trouble editing a magazine, let alone setting the Institute’s research agenda [laughter], but I’m happy to publish people from the Institute. I guess I would point out that this area’s been studied for a long time, and that a certain war-weariness tends to set in when one has seen this stuff come and go for a long time. And I think it sometimes leads specialists in the area—and I say this as probably the least knowledgeable person on this panel and maybe in the room when it comes to the details of what’s going on in the Middle East—to develop a kind of ingrained belief that things can’t change, or can’t change radically. This definitely happened in the case of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

And I just wonder whether that belief will actually hold true in the coming years. After all, surprises happen—“surprising surprises,” to paraphrase Donald Rumsfeld. I don’t normally quote Rumsfeld because I wasn’t a big fan of his tenure as secretary of defense, but as he said, there are both anticipatable surprises and then really surprising surprises. Such surprises could happen in the Middle East, as they’ve happened elsewhere in the world. And when they do, things can change very quickly.

World politics do not typically unfold in an incremental manner—instead, you get to tipping points. This happened with India, a country that Tom and I both care a lot about. India seemed to be going in one direction for quite some time, and suddenly, around 1991, it went in a very different direction. And now we have a future in which India is very prominent and important—a development that was not predicted by a lot of Southeast Asia specialists in past decades.

So I would say that the Institute should remain alert to the possibility of some sort of radical and dramatic change, whether for the better or for the worse. We’ve already seen such a transformation in, for example, the Arab-Israeli conflict, which was supposed to be immutable. Today, however, it has mostly been resolved, at least in a certain classical sense. We now have an Islamic-Israeli conflict, which is both more and less dangerous than the Arab-Israeli conflict of past decades. That is, people tend to romanticize the past and forget how dangerous things were in 1956, 1967, and 1973, when the attacks on Israel were fueled more by a kind of Arab nationalism than by moderate Islamic revanchism.

So I think the degree to which things can change quickly is sometimes underrated—and precisely by the people who know the most, and who can give you twenty reasons why things can’t change so suddenly, except sometimes they do.

Kramer: I certainly have no more powers of prediction than anyone else, but I can make one safe prediction about the Middle East over the next twenty years or so. All of the countries in the region have seen their populations more or less double since the Institute was founded. And their populations will double again by the time the Institute celebrates its fiftieth anniversary—and that includes the populations of the West Bank and

Gaza, the latter of which is already described by some as the most densely populated place on earth.

What does that mean for regional politics? Will it stabilize things, perhaps bringing to the fore moderate voices that seek practical solutions? Or will it destabilize the region, empowering extremists? What will it mean for the map of the Middle East? Because even though the region seems politically stable, it is undergoing constant demographic change. Now, these are long-term research projects at the moment, but they could very easily become salient from a policy point of view.

Satloff: Gentlemen, this is fascinating. I want to thank all of you for helping us celebrate our twenty-fifth anniversary. [Applause.]

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