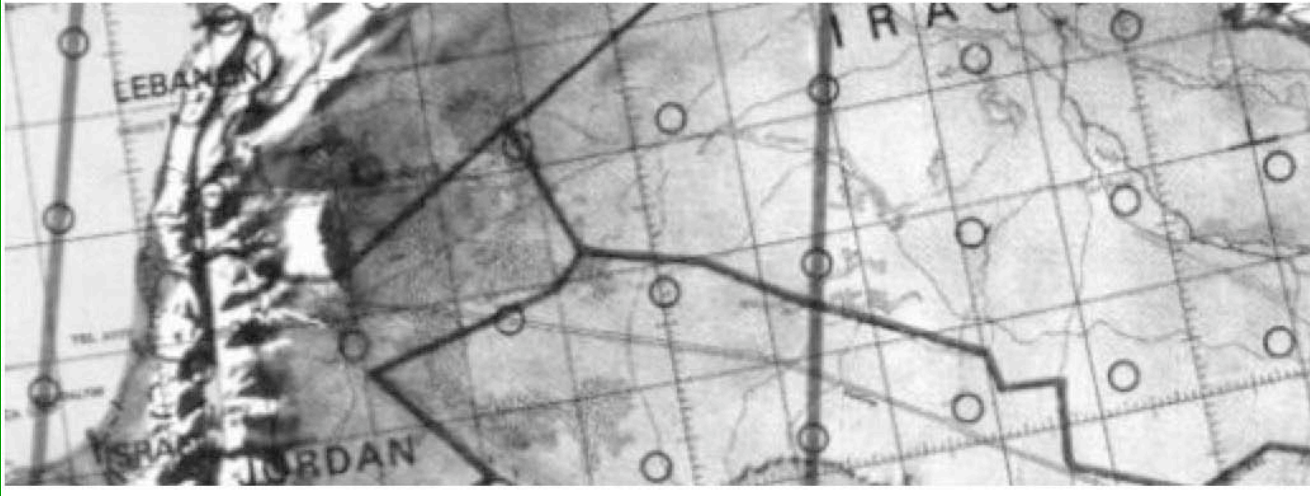


# MIDDLE EAST STRATEGY AT HARVARD

National Security Studies Program :: Weatherhead Center



## MESH Blog, 2007-2009

**This is the full blog of Middle East Strategy at Harvard (MESH) from inception in December 2007 through cessation in December 2009.**

MESH was conceptualized by Stephen Peter Rosen and Martin Kramer at Harvard's Olin Institute for Strategic Studies in 2007. MESH took the form of a group weblog, bringing together forty to fifty distinguished scholars and practitioners known for their expertise on the Middle East or U.S. policy. Not only did members author the 350 posts which appeared over two years; they and other experts wrote another 350 comments. (The blog was not open to comments by readers.) The result was a sustained and informed dialogue on key strategic and policy issues in the Middle East.

This pdf file includes the entire blog, comprised of posts and comments. Links that appeared in the blog are rendered as footnotes at the end of each post and comment. The post titles in the table of contents are clickable, as are the urls in footnotes.

In addition, MESH also published a series of occasional papers, *Middle East Papers*. These are available for download at the MESH website (which, at this moment in December 2009, is still readily accessible at <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh>).

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# Chapter 1

## 2007

### 1.1 December

**MESH is launched (2007-12-04 00:01)**

From [1]Stephen Peter Rosen and [2]Martin Kramer



Middle East Strategy at Harvard (MESH) is open for business. Why do we think there's a need for another weblog, and why at Harvard?

The Middle East today receives saturation coverage in the mainstream and alternative media, journals, and books. But we feel there's no such thing as too much informed debate over long-term U.S. strategy, because so much is at stake. More could be said that isn't being said, because it doesn't quite fit the format of the op-ed or article. As a result, some expert insights don't get captured and disseminated. Check the list of our [3]members. These are people who don't lack outlets for their longer work, but they haven't had a place to share pithy analyses and useful pointers. Now they do.

Why at Harvard? That's where we are, and that's where this project is based. And for reasons we won't elaborate, Harvard stands on privileged ground, so that all sorts of people are willing to cooperate under its banner—or, in this case, under its url.

Indeed, we have all sorts of people as members. Today we're pleased to unveil their [4]names, some forty in all. A few members are now at Harvard and some studied here. The majority are scattered throughout the country, in universities and think tanks. The established ones are already renowned for their contributions to our understanding of the dilemmas that confront the United States in the Middle East. We also have a cadre of talented and promising young people.

We believe that each of our members, at some point, will have something to say that's best said here. Our task is to show them those opportunities, and to exercise just enough editorial judgment to make sure the site works for them and for you.

Over the next month, we plan to offer our first original content, recruit additional members (we'd like more), and publicize our existence. We urge you to bookmark this website, subscribe to the feed, link to MESH from your own site, and send us your suggestions.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)
  2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)
  3. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/>
  4. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/>
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### Bin Laden's latest message in context (2007-12-06 15:11)

From [1]Raymond Ibrahim



Full of the same old complaints, threats of retaliation, and victim status role that have become mainstays of al-Qaeda propaganda, Osama bin Laden's [2]latest release would seem to offer nothing new. It dwells on the many "crimes" the West insists on visiting upon the Muslim world, simply because "their only sin is that they are Muslim"; it, once again, tries to justify the 9/11 strikes as acts of "reciprocation"; and it again informs the West that it has "no religion, morals, humanity or shame." When analyzed properly, however, this audio-taped communiqué also contains something of an encouraging revelation.

It first bears mentioning that this last message—like all of bin Laden's missives directed at the West—contains his duplicitous opening and closing sentence, "Peace to whoever follows guidance." Constant usage of this simple statement exemplifies bin Laden's ever shifting duality well, his unique ability to simultaneously touch upon the sentiments of two diametrically opposed audiences through one selfsame sentence. On the one hand, he evokes the word "peace," which he knows the West will assume can be achieved should they follow his supposed "guidance" (i.e., leaving the Islamic world alone); on the other hand, it is the same exact sentence with which the Muslim prophet Muhammad always initiated his messages when addressing the (mostly Christian) kings and rulers of the non-Muslim nations around Arabia.

Master manipulator bin Laden, however, wisely leaves out his prophet's follow-up sentence, which makes clear that the peace and guidance that Islam offers infidels has little to do with the notion of "live and let live." Said Muhammad: "Peace to whoever follows guidance. To the point, submit [to Islam] and have peace." So while the West assumes it's being offered an olive-branch, many Muslims the world over see in bin Laden only a bold and pious Muslim walking, quite literally, even in speech, in their prophet's path—his "Sunna," which all faithful Muslims must emulate.

That said, the two particular Western crimes occasioning this last message are 1) that the occupation of Afghanistan is a terrible travesty, since, according to bin Laden, "none" of the Afghani people had anything to do with 9/11; and 2) that, while occupying Afghanistan, the Western powers have "not observed

the ethics and protocol of warfare. Most of your victims—as a result of the bombing—are women and children, and intentionally so.”

As to bin Laden’s second point—that the West does not observe “the ethics and protocol of warfare”—this is amazing coming from the man who often boasts of orchestrating the 9/11 attacks, which killed thousands of innocents, including women and children. It is even more astounding to anyone acquainted with al-Qaeda’s legalistic writings and treatises. In these writings, al-Qaeda goes to great lengths to justify the killing of women and children; and they do a good job—all while, unfortunately, relying on the strict guidelines of Islamic jurisprudence. Aymin Zawahiri, often described as the “brains” behind bin Laden, has even produced a lengthy theological treatise (“Jihad, Martyrdom, and the Killing of Innocents”) dedicated in part to justifying the killing of women and children, so long as doing so empowers Islam.

They are aware of the fact that Muhammad himself justified the killing of women and children during the jihad. When a concerned Muslim questioned the legality of setting fire to the fortifications of the infidels at night, fearing that women and children might also perish, Muhammad assured him that “they [women and children] are from among them [infidels].” Moreover, Muhammad permitted the use of catapults—which do not differentiate women and children from males—in his siege of the town of Ta’if (a measure now invoked as a precedent for the indiscriminate use of WMDs). The inhabitants of Ta’if’s only crime was that they refused to submit to Islam—that they refused to make “peace” with Muhammad by adhering to his “guidance.”

As for bin Laden’s main grievance (this time around), since when has the occupation of Afghanistan been at the center of the West’s many crimes against Islam, requiring its very own communiqué? Here is where bin Laden belies his own precarious situation, revealing that the war in Afghanistan is not for naught. Usually, when Muslims, including al-Qaeda, evoke the West’s worst “crimes” vis-à-vis Islam, they point to Palestine and Iraq, the former considered the third holiest site in Islam, the latter a major oil producer, and home to the last Arab caliphate, Baghdad being the historic “seat of the caliphate,” as bin Laden often observes. Both are much more critical occupations in comparison to Afghanistan, from religious, symbolic, and strategic points of view.

Why, then, would bin Laden take it upon himself to release a special message about the relatively quiet situation in Afghanistan (“quiet” in comparison to the daily bloody headlines of Iraq and Palestine)? Obviously because it affects him, directly. In comparison to the Palestinian situation and the Iraqi occupation, non-Arab Afghanistan, situated on the periphery of the Islamic world, is hardly a rallying point for Muslims. This message would therefore seem to indicate that: 1) bin Laden or at least a significant portion of the al-Qaeda infrastructure is, in fact, still hiding somewhere in the badlands of Afghanistan; 2) Their position is becoming increasingly precarious most likely due to the military inroads made by the allied Western forces, and from disaffected Afghans who are weary of sheltering the trouble-making Arabs, receiving only grief for compensation.

And so, despite bin Laden’s “confessions”—“It was I who was responsible for 9/11, and I stress that all Afghans, both government [Taliban] and people, had no knowledge of those events”—it is clear that bin Laden, for whatever reason, is beginning to feel his own security threatened. Hence, the new message, the “advice” for Europeans to withdraw their forces.

Further supportive of this view is the cloying encomium to the Afghani people recited by bin Laden near the end of his message: “And for your information, the Afghani people are a courageous, defiant, zealous, honorable, and pious Muslim people who refuse humiliation and submission to invaders. Their history is replete with resolve and victories: they fought Britain in its glory days and defeated it—by the grace of Allah; they fought the Russians in their glory days and also defeated them—all grace to Allah....”

True to bin Laden's duplicitous nature, this obsequious tirade praising the steadfastness and eventual triumph of the Afghanis is meant to, not only defy the West but, more importantly, placate his hosts—a fawning attempt on bin Laden's part to magnify and ennoble the “courageous, defiant, zealous, honorable, and pious” Afghanis, lest, perhaps, they eject him from their midst?

At any rate, if bin Laden truly cared for the plight of the Afghani people, then perhaps he should've thought twice about bringing the wrath of the US upon them when he orchestrated 9/11—all while, incidentally, enjoying Afghani hospitality, shelter, and logistical aid. Were bin Laden truly the “altruistic” Muslim he always tries to appear—“It was I who was responsible for 9/11”—he, like the Afghanis he praises, could've also done the “courageous” and “honorable” thing: thank them for their hospitality and quit their land, rather than remain like a parasite, proving to be Afghanistan's bane. Instead, in the weeks following the strikes of 9/11, bin Laden dissembled his role behind the operations, and the Taliban fiercely protected him. So his supposed “self-sacrificing” honesty now—after his lies caused Afghanistan to be invaded—is too little too late to be of use to anyone, especially the Afghani people.

The ultimate lesson to be learned from al-Qaeda communiqués, then, is that, whenever they “advise” the peoples of the West against any particular course of action (“or else”), it is usually a sure sign that that course of action is, in fact, detrimental to al-Qaeda and its goals and if anything should be further supported by the West. An obvious example is al-Qaeda's constant attempts to demonize President Bush in an effort to sway US public opinion against him: could there be any better proof that Bush's policies against al-Qaeda are, in fact, effective? It is the US president that Islamists never complain about that should be a cause for concern.

Finally, what the West needs to comprehend once and for all is that, to al-Qaeda type Muslims, it is damned if it does, damned if it doesn't. According to sharia law, nothing short of total submission to Islam can ever reconcile the West to Islam—as was foretold by the Islamic prophet. In a recently translated essay that was meant for Muslim eyes only, bin Laden makes this clear: “There are only three choices in Islam: either submit [i.e., convert to Islam], or live under the suzerainty of Islam, or die. Such, then, is the basis and foundation of the relationship between the infidel and Muslim. Battle, animosity, and hatred—directed from the Muslim to the infidel—is the foundation of our religion.” This three-fold approach to infidels is in fact well grounded in sharia law and is not a “misinterpretation” on the part of al-Qaeda.

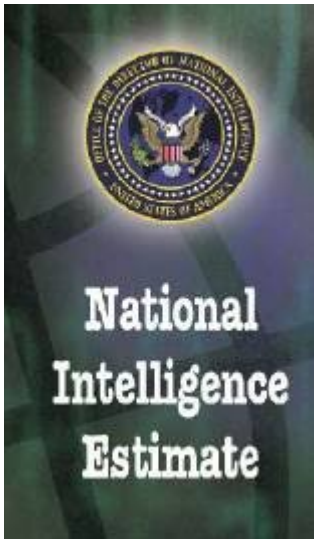
Thus the West should be ever cognizant that the ultimate requirement that can ever guarantee peace with “radical” Muslims is submission to Islam—not concessions to their ever morphing list of complaints. This is also why bin Laden's “subtle” threat concluding his message to the European nations in Afghanistan—“soon they [Americans] will return to their homeland beyond the Atlantic, leaving the neighbors to settle accounts with each other”—is idle. Terrorist attacks from al-Qaeda type groups are totally predicated on their capacity to realize them—not, as they would have the world think, the latter's compliancy to their political demands.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_ibrahim/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_ibrahim/)
2. [http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20071129/ts\\_nm/binladen\\_europe\\_dc\\_1](http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20071129/ts_nm/binladen_europe_dc_1)

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## Sanctions on track, despite (and thanks to) Iran NIE (2007-12-07 15:05)

From [1]Matthew Levitt



Conventional wisdom, if one reads the daily papers and the unnamed European officials quoted therein, is that a third UN Security Resolution targeting Iran is now highly unlikely in wake of the release of the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iran's nuclear intentions and capabilities. The assessment opened with the zinger that Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program in the fall of 2003. This was indeed startling, especially since it came just two days after officials announced in Paris that China signed on to a third UN resolution and that a text was being negotiated targeting Iranian banks.

But don't be confused by the ruminations of the fourth estate. In fact, the NIE has not undermined the new-found international consensus that another UN resolution targeting Iran is needed. Indeed, it was also this week that news broke of Chinese banks refusing Iranian clients lines of credit, in line with the recent finding of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) that Iran's lack of a comprehensive regime to prevent money laundering and terrorism financing "represents a significant vulnerability within the international financial system." (FATF is an intergovernmental body that works by consensus and includes China and Russia).

To be sure, there is much to discuss and debate about the NIE. But on the issue that serves as the threshold of the UN sanctions question the report is clear: even if it was suspended in 2003, Iran did have a clandestine nuclear weapons program that it has yet to fully disclose. For the parties involved in shaping the next package of political and economic sanctions, that is the key. These diplomats must also be pleased with the estimate's other—though less publicized—major finding: that the tool most likely to alter Iran's nuclear calculus is targeted political and economic pressure, not military action.

(Editor: More from Matthew Levitt on Iran sanctions [2]here, [3]here, and [4]here.)

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew\\_levitt/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew_levitt/)
2. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=1112>
3. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2673>
4. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC07.php?CID=333>

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## Iran NIE and a prediction (2007-12-07 15:58)

From [1]Stephen Peter Rosen

✖ For the most part, the arguments about the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iran have been and will be a debate, not about intelligence, but about Bush foreign policy. But the NIE also provides an

opportunity to assess our own ability to do assessments, by publicly stating what we think the consequences of the NIE will be, and why. We can then periodically check to see how well we did, and what we understood correctly, and if we made mistakes, to see what kind of mistakes we made. Being publicly wrong is not much fun, but this issue is serious, so I will go first.

In my view, the Iran program halted in 2003 because of the massive and initially successful American use of military power in Iraq. The United States offered no “carrots” to Iran, but only wielded an enormous stick. This increased the Iranians’ desire to minimize the risks to themselves, and so they halted programs that could unambiguously be identified as a nuclear weapons program. They were guarding themselves against the exposure of a weapons program by US or Israeli clandestine intelligence collection, and were not trying to signal the United States that they were looking to negotiate. They did not publicly announce this halt because if they did so, they would be perceived as weak within Iran, and within the region. By continuing the enrichment program, they kept the weapon option open.

If this is true, the Iranian government responds to imminent threats of force, not economic sanctions or diplomatic concessions. If that is the case, as the threat of US use of force goes down, the likelihood that Iran restarts its program goes up. Since the threat of US use of force went down in 2007, it is likely that the program restarted in that time frame. The threat of Israeli use of force, however, remained high, and went up after the attack on Syria. The NIE, however, ensured that there would be no US or Israeli use of force for the foreseeable future. So the prediction is that warhead production activity has restarted, and will produce a useable gun-type design quickly. Given observable uranium enrichment activity, enough uranium will be available for one bomb in one year. It does not make sense for a country to test its first and only weapon when it has none in reserve to deter attacks. So the first test is not likely before two years from now or late 2009.

What will Iranian behavior be after the first test? All countries, with the exception of India, that have developed their own nuclear weapon, have transferred that technology to other countries. The technology, not a weapon, is easy to transfer in a way that can be concealed, has high value, and can be traded for money or other goods. So Iran will transfer technology to its friends. Nuclear weapons can be used to intimidate non-nuclear countries, and new nuclear powers, including the United States, have overestimated the utility of such threats. The goal of Iran is to force the military departure of the US from the Persian Gulf. US military bases in the region are now in small Gulf states and Iraq. The prediction is that the Iranians will use nuclear carrots and sticks to induce Gulf states to ask the United States to withdraw from their current bases, sometime after 2009.

Finally, Iran appears to have a long tradition of manipulating perceptions of itself to make it look stronger than it is, so the prediction is that the test will be accompanied by exaggerated claims of nuclear weapons production.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)

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## Sinopec’s Iran deal (2007-12-10 13:51)

From [1]Jacqueline Newmyer



The Chinese national oil company Sinopec has signed a contract to develop Iran's Yadavaran oil field, according to articles in today's [2]Financial Times and [3]International Herald Tribune. From Iran's point of view, the deal is a triumph. It exposes the inability of the United States to build a global coalition to impose economic sanctions on Iran.

By the terms of the contract, Sinopec will have to subcontract with Iranian firms, which will as a consequence, at least in theory, acquire much-needed expertise. But the PRC's record in Africa and other areas of overseas investment suggests that the Chinese will be quicker to use Iranian firms for manual labor than for sophisticated processes that would involve technology transfer.

From China's point of view, the award constitutes another step in Beijing's effort to secure energy supplies from the ground up, supplies that the PRC is acquiring the means to protect en route to the mainland through its program of military modernization. The contract may also be seen as progress in China's campaign to secure influence in the Middle East at the expense of the United States. The deal, coming on the heels of last week's NIE downplaying the imminence of an Iranian nuclear weapon (see Steve Rosen's [4]post on the subject), promises to complicate U.S. efforts to secure Chinese support for economic sanctions should evidence emerge that the Iranians have re-started their weapons program.

Issues left outstanding in this initial contract need to be resolved, including the distribution of oil recovered in the second phase of production. The relationship between the Iranians and the Chinese could sour as Sinopec enters into development of Yadavaran. But at this point, the thought is small comfort.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jacqueline\\_newmyer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jacqueline_newmyer/)
2. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/3cf5d368-a69e-11dc-b1f5-0000779fd2ac.html>
3. <http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/12/10/business/chioil.php>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2007/12/iran\\_nie\\_a\\_prediction/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2007/12/iran_nie_a_prediction/)

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## Iran and nukes: common sense trumps 'intelligence' (2007-12-12 00:10)

From [1]Raymond Ibrahim



Much of the current debate surrounding Iran's nuclear aspirations is informed by the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) [2]report which "judge[s] with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program." While such reports tend to be accepted as authoritative—witness the ongoing political maelstrom caused by it—it is imperative to bear in mind that they are ultimately subjective, sometimes built atop the flimsiest evidence. Even the report is prefaced with the following caveat: "These assessments and judgments generally are based on collected information, which often is incomplete or fragmentary... In all cases, assessments and judgments are not intended to imply that we have 'proof' that shows something to be a fact or that definitively links two items or clauses."



And so the report relies on “estimative language,” with words like “probably,” “likely,” “might,” and “may,” predominating, and a continuum of predictions ranging from “remote” to “almost certainly.” Still, the report admits that, “A ‘high confidence’ judgment is not a fact or certainty, however, and such judgments still carry a risk of being wrong”—such as when NIE stated in 2005 (two years after “Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program”) that “[We] assess with high confidence that Iran currently is determined to develop nuclear weapons.”

All intelligence analyses aside, however, when it comes to the issue of whether Iran means to acquire nukes, a bit of common sense is all that’s requirement. Indeed, in certain situations, “intelligence” can be, if not superfluous, misleading.

Common sense, on the other hand, dictates that any nation—especially under-privileged, non-Western countries—would simply love to possess nuclear weapons. After all, once all the niceties and impotent talk at the UN fail, we still live in a world where military might is the ultimate deciding factor in all international affairs. And nuclear armaments are the ultimate expression of military might. Might is what allowed the US to invade Iraq (partially based, incidentally, on faulty intelligence), despite the lack of widespread support at the UN. That said, the international desire to acquire nuclear weapons is, quite ironically, most downplayed and misunderstood in the West, which itself is armed to the teeth with nukes.

This is not altogether surprising: whoever takes something for granted is often unaware of how eager others are to have it. And so, while a liberal and secular West may think that the ultimate answer to humanity’s problems revolves around ending poverty and respecting all religions and creeds alike (since none of them are true anyway), under-privileged nations still maintain the traditional approach: might makes right. Hence, the desire for nukes.

When it comes to Islamist regimes, such as Iran, the desire to acquire mankind’s ultimate expression of power should be even more obvious. Not only do they share the same “survival of the fittest” mentality of under-privileged nations—often coupled with feelings of cultural superiority and disdain for the “other,” which manifest as extreme nationalism and xenophobia—but Islamic texts only augment these traits by giving them divine sanctioning. In other words, if under-privileged nations would love nothing more than to acquire the ultimate expression of power—with all the accompanying security, prestige, and wealth—how much more can be expected from theocracies whose constitutions are based on a text that preaches nothing less than world dominance (see [3]Koran 9:5 and 9:29, for example, and the exegetical consensus surrounding them)?

An August [4]report by the Congressional Research Service highlights claims that “Ahmadinejad believes his mission is to prepare for the return of the 12th ‘Hidden’ Imam, whose return from occultation [i.e., “hiding”] would, according to Twelver Shi’ite doctrine, be accompanied by the establishment of Islam as the global religion.” In other words, Iran’s leadership is pushing for the apocalypse. Moreover, Ahmadinejad has made clear his intention of seeing Israel wiped off the map, in accordance with the eschatological (and canonical) hadith wherein Muhammad said “The Hour [Judgment Day] will not come until the Muslims fight the Jews and until the Jews hide behind the trees and rocks and the trees and rocks will say, ‘O Muslim, O Servant of God! Here are the Jews! Come and kill them!’”

So are we to ignore all this—ignore all common sense and insight into human nature, ignore religious conviction—and instead rely on a report which judges (with “high confidence”) that Tehran halted its nuclear program in 2003? As to Iran’s intentions, which are the real issue, the NIE report leaves the door wide open: “[W]e do not know whether it [Iran] currently intends to develop nuclear weapons.”

When it comes to the human realm, “objective” science cannot always help; the irrational is, and always will be, a predominant factor in human relations that cannot be quantified and analyzed. But a little cognizance of human nature—common sense—goes a long way.

Bottom line: Yes, Iran wants to acquire nuclear weapons.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_ibrahim/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_ibrahim/)
2. [http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/20071203\\_release.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20071203_release.pdf)
3. <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/k/koran/koran-idx?type=DIV0&byte=282392>
4. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL32048.pdf>

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## A dated division of Egypt (2007-12-12 12:59)

From [1]Michele Dunne



”Lines in the Sand” (Vanity Fair, January 2008, not online) describes an intellectual exercise in which four Middle East specialists (David Fromkin, Dennis Ross, Kenneth Pollack, and [2]Daniel Byman) are asked to redraw boundaries to reflect the region’s actual social and cultural landscape as opposed to the political borders set largely by European powers after World War One. Egypt is divided into two strips along the Nile (lower and upper) and a third ”Western tribal area” combining the Western desert, eastern Red Sea coast, and Sinai.

Admittedly the authors are not recommending an actual political redivision along these lines, but even suggesting that such divisions are as relevant in Egypt today as they might be in Iraq or elsewhere is misleading. It ignores, for example, the significant transfer of population that has taken place between the rural areas of Egypt and major cities such as Cairo and Alexandria, where now about half of Egyptians live. In any case, well over 90 percent (some sources say 99 percent) of Egyptians still live along the Nile. It is also rather strange that Sinai—where there are real problems between the local population and the Cairo-based authorities—is lumped in with tribal areas in the far west of the country where there have been no such problems. Overall, this exercise might be relevant to other places in the region, but for Egypt it is ancient history.

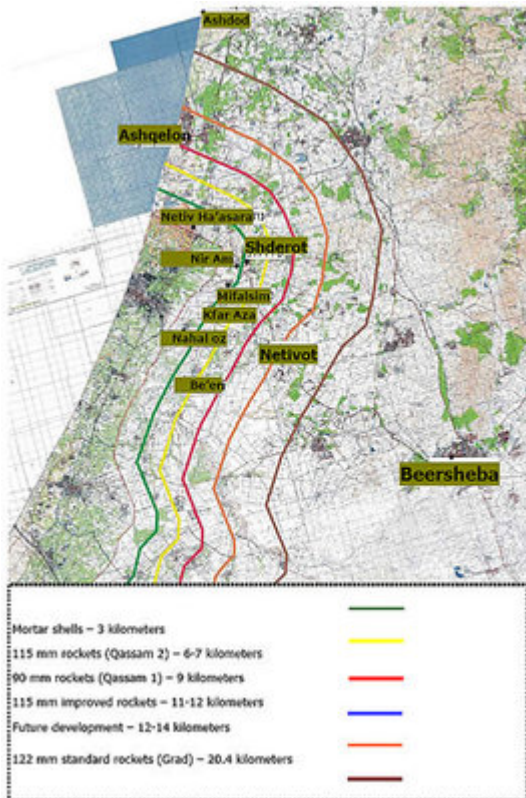
(Editor: See also [3]this critique of the treatment of Saudi Arabia in the Vanity Fair exercise, by Bernard Haykel.)

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele\\_dunne/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele_dunne/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel\\_byman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel_byman/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2007/12/saudis\\_united/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2007/12/saudis_united/)

## Israeli targets within range of Gaza (2007-12-15 00:54)

From MESH Admin

This map is from the December 2007 [1]report "Rocket Threat from the Gaza Strip, 2000-2007," by the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center (IICC).



The report notes:

The operational and technological trends clearly showed that the rockets have not begun to scratch the surface of the impact they can have on Israel. In the coming years the terrorist organizations can be expected to continue their efforts to introduce technological improvements which are liable to increase rocket ranges, the amount of explosives the warheads can carry and their degree of accuracy (following the Hezbollah model in Lebanon). There may be much more rocket fire, both as technological developments extend the rockets' shelf life and because following political developments, Hamas may join the organizations launching rockets. At the same time, there may be an increase in the organizations' arsenals of standard rockets which have a range of more than 20 kilometers (more than 12 miles), which would enable them to attack more settlements.

1. [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/eng/eng\\_n/rocket\\_threat\\_e.htm](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/eng/eng_n/rocket_threat_e.htm)

**Saudis united (2007-12-16 11:46)**

From [1]Bernard Haykel



"Lines in the Sand" (Vanity Fair, January 2008, not online) describes a parlor game undertaken by four Middle East specialists (Kenneth Pollack, [2]Daniel Byman, David Fromkin, and Dennis Ross), in which they imagine what the borders of the Middle East would look like if they were to reflect "underlying contours." In their map, Saudi Arabia is divided into a "Southern Tribal Area," including Riyadh and the inland areas, and the Hijaz. Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province is attached to southern Iraq in an Arab Shiite "Crescent," and the southern stretch of the kingdom's Red Sea coast is attached to Yemen under the rubric of "Arabia Felix."

The notion that Saudi Arabia is crossed by these "natural" borders ignores the internal developments of the last fifty years that have created a distinctive Saudi political and even cultural reality.

Such developments include population migrations to the three big metropolitan agglomerations of Jeddah, Riyadh and Dhahran-Dammam where a pure local identity is seen as a matter of folklore and past history. Today, Sunnis are a majority in the Eastern Province and even perhaps in Najran. More Hijazis live in Riyadh and Dammam than in Mecca and Medina. A new identity has coalesced around a distinctive Saudi dress, food and, increasingly, a standard national accent.

Economic and political factors solidify the demographic changes. A key element abetting the unity of Saudi Arabia is the fact that most of the oil is concentrated in the Eastern Province, and any division of the country would lead to the impoverishment of the regions cut off from it. The dissolution in Iraq has further confirmed to ordinary and elite Saudis the wisdom of clinging to the present system, convincing most people that no alternative exists to a unified Saudi Arabia.

This is not to deny the existence of regional differences. But these differences are not instrumentalized for political aims except by a small number of people who represent minority sects (some Shiites in the Eastern Province and Ismailis in Najran) or ancien régime urban elites in Jeddah. The bulk of the population is conservative, not concerned with such questions, and sees itself as having a big stake in the Saudi system. Even the one group that seeks to topple the regime, namely Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, has a membership drawn from all the country's social classes and all of its regions, which implies that one national political formation has coalesced.

Indeed, if an argument for redrawing boundaries were to be made, leading Saudis would probably claim that, far from dividing the existing country, there is much to be said for incorporating the city-state emirates of the Persian Gulf into the Saudi kingdom. And given that the future appears to involve an aggressive and assertive Islamic revolutionary regime in Iran, there is perhaps some merit in the argument that an even wealthier, bigger and more aggressive Sunni state on the western shore of the Gulf would be better equipped to stand up to Tehran.



## Is political Islam dying? (2007-12-20 14:36)

From [1]Hillel Fradkin

[2]Jon Alterman, in a [3]piece for the Center for Strategic and International Studies (also [4]here), addresses what he sees as a growing number of obituaries for political Islam. Alterman's judgment about this trend is sober and reasonable: It is far too soon to tell. Although Alterman does not cite by name those who anticipate the impending death of political Islam, he does report their evidence. It consists chiefly in the travails of certain organizations—the Moroccan Justice and Development Party (PJD), the Jordanian Islamic Action Front (IAF) and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood—during 2007. In the first two cases, Islamist parties failed to increase their electoral position in the Moroccan and Jordanian parliaments respectively. In the case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, the issuance of its new political program is regarded by him and others as a sign of internal disunity and thus an obstacle to the advance of their political fortunes.

As he might have said, this is far too short a period to reach a firm judgment about the future of these organizations, let alone the future of political or radical Islam. Indeed, since he cites the French scholar Olivier Roy, it is worth noting that he—as well as his French colleague Gilles Kepel—announced the death of political Islam more than 15 years ago in [5]several [6]publications. In this they proved to be extremely premature, and the same may well prove to be the case with current proponents of the demise of political Islam.

At all events there is much counter-evidence. As Alterman notes, whatever the organizational travails of the movement, the Muslim world is presently in the grip of a very powerful trend of a “return” to Islamic sensibility and practice. As he puts it, “A growing number of Muslims start from the proposition that Islam is relevant to all aspects of their daily lives, and not merely the province of theology or personal belief.” Alterman defines this tendency as “neo-traditionalism” rather than as “traditionalism” simply.

This is a fair and proper distinction but it leads to a more trenchant conclusion than Alterman is willing to draw. For the proposition he cites is none other than the one propounded by political or radical Islam in all its forms from its effective beginning with the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928. The fact that it is now widely embraced—its shorthand formula on the streets of the Muslim world is the slogan “Islam is the Solution”—demonstrates the enormous mass success that political or radical Islam has already achieved. It is true that various circumstances have contributed to the popularity of this view—for example the discrediting of various modern alternatives such as nationalism. But the embrace of this view would be inconceivable without the tireless work of political or radical Islam.

What are less clear are the issues surrounding the translation of political Islam's vision into actual political power and rule. There are, as Alterman notes, places where that has been accomplished and still exists—his examples are Iran, Gaza and Saudi Arabia. One might add Afghanistan under the Taliban, Sudan for a period, certain parts of Northern Nigeria, a near-triumph in Algeria in the 1990s and, for the moment, certain parts of Northwest Pakistan. Skeptics of the future of political Islam point to the unhappy experience of the inhabitants of countries and places now or recently under “Islamic” rule as a sign of the general incapacity of political Islam to provide “a coherent theory of governance.”

But that has not prevented several “Islamic regimes” from maintaining themselves in power. Nor has the experience of such regimes prevented people in other parts of the Muslim world from seeking to emulate them in some fashion or other. In the latter case, the failures of political Islam may often be attributed to the abiding power of autocratic regimes and their disinclination to surrender control to Islamist (or any other) alternative form of rule.

Indeed, the criteria—“tolerance,” “dealing with difference”—by which Alterman and others seek to define the deficiencies and weakness of contemporary political Islam belong to Western conceptions of the requirements of politics. The absence of these concerns may well be deficiencies. But that they will constitute a weakness for political Islam is less clear.

The most recent and clearest example of this ambiguity was provided by a case cited by Alterman: the program announced by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. According to unnamed observers, this program was evidence that the “group was beset by intellectual contradictions and infighting.” Exactly what they meant is not indicated. But one is entitled to guess that they are referring to the fact that the Brotherhood leadership rejected the desire of some members to put forward a more “liberal” vision of governance in Egypt and effectively affirmed its past positions, prescribing a government which would implement Sharia and place non-Muslim Egyptians in a somewhat inferior political status.

It is not at all clear that this decision bespeaks a weakness in the Brotherhood even if it was preceded by an internal debate. Still less is it a sign of intellectual contradictions. For the Brotherhood maintained the coherence of its ideology as first laid down by its founder Hasan al-Banna. And it is this vision, and what has followed from it, to which the Brotherhood attributes its success to date, and through which it apparently believes it will continue to progress towards its goals. It is not easy to say that the Brotherhood, rather than the skeptics, is wrong.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/hillel\\_fradkin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/hillel_fradkin/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon\\_alterman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon_alterman/)
3. [http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/1207\\_menc.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/1207_menc.pdf)
4. <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/article.aspx?id=1436>
5. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0674291417>
6. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0674010906>

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Jon Alterman (2008-01-02 17:40:19)

Thanks to Hillel for such a thoughtful post. One (but by no means the only) obituary for political Islam was written by my friend Khalil al-Anani, a talented and rising analyst in Egypt. You can read a version in English [1]here. What is, unfortunately, not available in English, but is on Khalil’s [2]Arabic site, is the transcript of his 2.5-hour live chat via Islam Online, run by the major Brotherhood figure (and al Jazeera personality) Sheikh Yousef al-Qaradawi, also available [3]here. What becomes clear from Khalil’s post and the questions he gets is the rich diversity within the Brotherhood, and the very real challenges to the old generation being waged by the new. I’d argue, in fact, that there are three fairly distinct generations at work in the Egyptian Brotherhood now—roughly the eighty-somethings, the forty-somethings, and the twenty-somethings. Each has a distinct approach. Going beyond Egypt, Brotherhood offshoots in the Levant, the Gulf and elsewhere all proclaim their basic fealty to Banna, but each has (at least one) distinctive take on his legacy. One can certainly select Brotherhood texts and point out their roots in the thinking of Hassan al-Banna in Ismailiya sixty years ago. After all, it is association with Banna’s work that gives today’s theoreticians and practitioners credibility and authenticity. However, arguing that the Brotherhood across space and time continues to maintain a coherent ideology is, it seems to me, a stretch. Successful political movements are dynamic and adaptive, as the Brotherhood has been. They also tend to run out of steam. It is not at all clear to me that the Brotherhood has done so, and much less that political Islam is on its last legs.

1. <http://islamists2day-e.blogspot.com/2007/10/islamist-spring-is-it-over.html>
2. <http://www.islamists2day-a.blogspot.com/>
3. <http://www.islamonline.net/livefatwa/arabic/Browse.asp?hGuestID=vGRve7>



**Iran: Did coercion work? (2007-12-21 06:11)**

From [1]Michael Rubin



Dilip Hiro, a London-based author who focuses on Iran and Iraq and a frequent commentator in *The Nation*, addresses the question “Why Iran Didn’t Cross the Nuclear Weapon Road” in a recent [2]essay (YaleGlobal Online, Dec. 11, 2007) he wrote for the Yale Center for the Study of Globalization.

The bulk of Hiro’s essay rehashes the timeline of Iran’s nuclear program beginning with the Shah and continuing with Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini’s decision to jump start the program during the Iran-Iraq War after the Iraqi military began utilizing chemical weapons and intermediate-range missiles against the Islamic Republic. On this issue, Hiro is on solid ground; he is the author of a short [3]book chronicling the Iran-Iraq War.

But this background section, although comprising the bulk of his essay, is immaterial to the question he poses: if the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) is accurate, why did Iran cease work on its nuclear weapons program in 2003? Hiro tackles the question in just four concluding paragraphs. His thesis: It was not President George W. Bush’s willingness to pre-empt perceived WMD threats which led to the Iranian leadership’s reversal, but rather the reports of the Iraq Survey Group, which did not find chemical or biological, let alone nuclear weapons stockpiles in Iraq. (That the Iraq Survey Group could only conduct its research because of Operation Iraqi Freedom is a paradox which Hiro ignores.)

Hiro bases his argument solely on the decision of Hasan Rowhani, Iran’s chief nuclear negotiator in 2003, to suspend temporarily Iran’s uranium enrichment.

To draw such broad conclusions from such scanty evidence is bizarre. Rowhani may have been a negotiator, but he was no decision-maker. That responsibility rests with the Office of the Supreme Leader and with the leaders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps who run Iran’s nuclear program. A lower-level’s politician’s assurance to European politicians means little, given the tendency of Iranian officials to [4]say one thing and do another. Add to this the fact that Iran’s commitment to its suspension pledge proved transitory. In retrospect, the temporary suspension was even less than met the eye, given that Iranian officials continued, if not to run centrifuges, then to upgrade their capacity to industrial levels in a facility able to accommodate 50,000 centrifuges.

A number of analysts have already questioned the NIE’s conclusions. Putting aside the politics behind its findings, the NIE falls flat in definitions. What is civilian and what is military when pursuing technology such as uranium enrichment that is decidedly dual-use? Indeed, if both the NIE and International Atomic Energy Agency reports are accurate, then what the Iranian leadership has done is alter the sequence of its program, rather than its content. Indigenous production of weapons-grade nuclear fuel is a more difficult problem than warhead construction. Hiro’s assumption that there has been a radical change in Iran’s nuclear posture is spurious.

So where does this leave Hiro’s essay? Animosity to U.S. foreign policy is epidemic within U.S. academic circles and among the bulk of Middle East policy commentariat. Evidence may be overwhelming that the Bush administration’s first-term policy coerced states—most notably Libya—to reverse its nuclear posture. And, even if the NIE does not suggest that Tehran altered its program to the degree of Tripoli’s about-face,



the NIE does suggest that Iranian policymakers changed their approach.

Honest academics weigh evidence and draw conclusions upon it; politicized authors cherry pick evidence, ignore context, and conduct intellectual somersaults to reach conclusions they wish to draw. In this case, Hiro's goal appears less to explain honestly Iran's strategy than to discredit—albeit unconvincingly—any notion that coercion works.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_rubin/)
2. <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=10082>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0415904072>
4. [http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.24854/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.24854/pub_detail.asp)

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## Learning from Hezbollah (2007-12-22 04:10)

From [1]Andrew Exum



A few weeks ago, I stood in front of a roomful of U.S. Marine Corps officers at Quantico and spoke at length about Hezbollah, the Shia militant group whose military successes against Israel have alternately inspired the Arab public and frightened the ruling Sunni regimes of the Arab world. The Marine Corps has a rather ugly history with Shia militants in Lebanon, dating back to the [2]1983 suicide attack that killed 241 U.S. servicemen and led former Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Armitage to declare that Hezbollah owed a “blood debt” to the United States.

In light of this history and my audience, I advanced a somewhat controversial proposition—one to which other contributors to this blog might take exception. As military professionals and analysts, we do not study Hezbollah's military operations, I argued, because Hezbollah is an enemy of the United States. Hezbollah's military wing is not a transnational threat in the way Sunni extremists have proven to be, and what political and military strength the organization enjoys is largely rooted in the some 1.4 million Lebanese Shia who comprise their constituency—and the geography of southern Lebanon that has enabled Hezbollah to mount, first, a successful guerrilla campaign against Israel and, in 2006, a successful conventional campaign. We study Hezbollah, rather, because long before the 2006 Lebanon War in which they were widely considered to have been the victors, Hezbollah has [3]served as a model for other guerrilla groups—groups which very well may meet the U.S. military in armed conflicts. Hezbollah's model of “resistance” (Arabic, *muqawama*) has led to a phenomenon journalist Ehud Ya'ari [4]describes as the “Muqawama Doctrine.”

From a policy perspective, the questions we Americans must ask about Hezbollah are much different than the questions asked by Israelis, for whom Hezbollah has proven to be a direct, capable and resilient military adversary. Amir Kulick's [5]analysis of Hezbollah's military posture before and after the 2006 Lebanon War is a good example of an Israeli seeking to understand an organization that is, for Israel, both a declared and actual adversary. The things about Hezbollah that worry us, as Americans, are different and perhaps more abstract. My own concerns, which I will outline below, fall into two categories: tactical and

strategic.

Tactically, Hezbollah's performance throughout the 1990s and in the 2006 war raises three red flags for U.S. military professionals. Unlike most other Arab armies since 1948, Hezbollah demonstrates a high proficiency in the maintenance and employment of its weapons systems, Hezbollah performs well in small-unit light infantry operations, and Hezbollah uses a decentralized command structure that allows its subordinate leaders to exercise a high degree of initiative on the battlefield.

This last characteristic is the most important—and directly related to Hezbollah's successes in small-unit combat. As [6]Ken Pollack and others have noted, in previous wars against Arab militaries, Israeli tactical leaders grew accustomed to platoon leaders and company commanders in, say, the Egyptian Army, who could be expected to react ponderously to rapidly changing battlefield dynamics due to the degree to which they operated in highly centralized command structures—organizations in which even the smallest tactical decisions required approval from above. This allowed Israeli tactical leaders to get inside their counterparts' "OODA Loops." The [7]OODA Loop—Orient, Observe, Decide, Act—is the process, coined by John Boyd, by which military leaders make decisions. The small-unit leader with a quicker decision-making process—or smaller OODA Loop—is at a competitive advantage against his opposite number. Because Hezbollah small-unit leaders, with freedom to make decisions quicker than their peers in the armies of Arab states, can make decisions at a speed roughly equivalent to their opposite numbers in IDF tactical units, they are a much more difficult adversary on the battlefield than Egyptian tank commanders or infantry platoon leaders in wars past.

Similarly, if other guerrilla groups successfully emulate Hezbollah's model, they too will be much more difficult adversaries on the battlefield for the U.S. military than the Iraqi Army in 1991 or 2003.

Strategically, Hezbollah presents different challenges. I take exception to Kulick's argument that Hezbollah engaged in a war of attrition against Israel prior to the 2006 war. Looking at the internal dynamics at work within Hezbollah, one is struck by what an achievement it has been to keep a large, ideologically diverse organization like Hezbollah together under one tent. I argue that in the years following Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, Hezbollah adopted a deterrent doctrine, seeking to discourage an Israeli adventure into southern Lebanon through Hezbollah military strength.

But how, then, can we explain the hundreds of rocket attacks against northern Israel after 2000? Or the numerous kidnapping attempts, the last of which ignited the destructive 33-day conflict in 2006? Here we must pay attention to the costs of Hezbollah remaining a cohesive organization—and note the way in which Hezbollah's internal dynamics lead to strategic incoherence.

There are several reasons making the fantasy that Hezbollah will ever give up its arms unlikely. The first—and the most understandable—is that the Shia who make up Hezbollah's constituency think giving up their arms means giving up the hard-won seat at Beirut's political table earned over the past three decades. The Shia of Lebanon are the country's historical underclass, and the Shia fear a return to the days when their concerns were largely forgotten by the central government. Without the arms of Hezbollah, they argue, no one in Beirut will care about the concerns of the Shia living in the south, the Bekaa Valley, and the suburbs of Beirut.

The second reason why Hezbollah cannot give up its arms, though, is because so many of the young men who join the organization join to fight. These young men are lured by the promise of fighting Israel, and Hezbollah must worry that if they were to abandon their military campaign against Israel, these young men would simply split from the organization in the same way that so many of the Amal militia's gunmen left for Hezbollah in the early 1980s. Thus, in order to keep these young men of arms under the same big tent as the

rest of the organization, it is necessary to continue some form of armed conflict against Israel. In this way, Hezbollah's cross-border raids and rocket attacks against Israel after the 2000 withdrawal—while necessary from an internal perspective—ultimately worked against Hezbollah's overall strategy of deterrence.

Normally keen observers of Israeli politics, Hezbollah misread the dynamics in Jerusalem following the kidnapping of Gilad Shalit in 2006 and attempted their own kidnappings just over the border near Ayta ash-Shab on July 12th. The kidnappings—unlike an attempt a few months earlier in the disputed city of Ghajjar—were successful, but the Israeli response was brutal and unexpected. (The ways in which Israel's decision-makers similarly misread the dynamics at work within Lebanon in 2006 will have to be the subject of a different post.) The very thing Hezbollah was trying to deter—a massive Israeli assault on Hezbollah and their Shia constituents—was provoked by an act of foolishness along the border.

A cult of resistance has developed within Hezbollah, one that makes it very difficult for the organization to ever be at peace. A similar cult of arms exists in the U.S. Marine Corps or the U.S. Army's light infantry units, of course, but should the U.S. ever be at peace, there is little worry the soldiers and Marines will revolt and form their own splinter organization. That is the worry within Hezbollah, and the way in which violence against Israel has become a necessary part of the organization's psyche is worrying not only for Israel but also for the Lebanese—both those aligned with Hezbollah and those opposed.

From the perspective of an American, the worry is that this cult of resistance will spread to other guerrilla groups in the region, making peace impossible. There are those within Hezbollah and organizations like Hamas who no doubt argue for a more peaceful track toward coexistence. But coexistence is impossible as long as the cult of resistance precludes it.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew\\_exum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew_exum/)
2. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1983\\_Beirut\\_barracks\\_bombing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1983_Beirut_barracks_bombing)
3. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/print.php?template=C05&CID=2566>
4. <http://www.thewashingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=991>
5. <http://www.inss.org.il/publications.php?cat=21&incat=&read=1383>
6. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0803237332>
7. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OODA\\_Loop](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OODA_Loop)

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## Fundamental flaw in the NIE (2007-12-22 11:49)

From [1]Mark T. Clark



The controversial National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iran's nuclear program raises more questions than it answers. Critics—and criticisms—are aplenty. These have focused on three levels: tactical (the kind of intelligence we have), strategic (understanding Iran's intentions) and political (the fallout on U.S. and international policies in curbing Iranian nuclear ambitions). Given the recent disastrous failures of intelligence, this reversal of previous estimates also does little to restore public confidence in the intelligence process.

There are other grounds for concern about this NIE, especially the timing of its public release and whether it has inadvertently signaled a “green light” to Iran to restart or continue its nuclear weapons development

program. At the very least, it will make it extremely difficult for the U.S. to reverse itself once again and muster a domestic and international consensus for diplomatic or military pressure against the Iranian program, should it be found again to have an active weapons component.

Central to the problem of this NIE is its assessment of the Iranian decision-making process. The NIE reports:

Our assessment that Iran halted the program in 2003 primarily in response to international pressure indicates Tehran’s decisions are guided by a cost-benefit approach rather than a rush to a weapon irrespective of the political, economic, and military costs [emphasis added].

That is to say, the Iranian leadership is a rational actor. Some combination of threats and inducements can and does alter its decision-making process in the development of its nuclear weapons program.

Raymond Ibrahim [2] points out correctly that common sense tells us Iran wants to acquire nuclear weapons and that it is very difficult for leaders in states that have nuclear weapons to understand the intense desire of non-nuclear states to acquire them. Why then this disparity between common sense and "intelligence"?

The problem may be with our understanding of "cost-benefit" analysis. While a rational actor approach may be useful for some theoretical approaches to international politics, it may actually mask or misstate the approach of human policy-makers. In fact, for the real world of decision-makers, a cost-benefit analysis oversimplifies the whole process. When it comes to acquiring nuclear weapons, it is not a simple either/or: either build or avoid building a nuclear weapon. The decisions may include how to build, whether to build on a civilian program, whether to deceive opponents in the process, and how to mask the deception.

The "cost-benefit" approach may also oversimplify nuclear deterrence. In my [3] case study of four small nuclear powers, including Israel, India, Pakistan and the Republic of South Africa, I showed how all pursued nuclear weapons despite international opprobrium and all displayed a nuanced appreciation of the conditions under which they might actually use them (see Figure 1: Nuclear Deterrence/Threat/Use Continuum, below).

Figure 1: Nuclear Deterrence/Threat/Use Continuum

	Pre-War Use		War-time Use				
	Covert capability	Overt capability	Threat to use/Provoke Intervention	Demonstration Shot	Tactical strikes	Counter-force strikes	Counter-value strikes
RSA	✓		✓	✓			
Israel	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Pakistan		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
India		✓			✓	✓	✓

There I quoted a Pakistani nuclear strategist who indicated that "mutual suicide" could be a rational choice for Pakistan if other options were closed, further shaking our confidence in the "cost-benefit" calculus of rationality.

There are related problems in a "cost-benefit" approach to analyzing Iranian decision-making in pursuit of a nuclear arsenal: the potential for self-deception as well as strategic deception by Iran.

The self-deception comes from “mirror-imaging” how our adversaries decide policy: that is, interpreting another’s decision-making process in light of our own. Such an approach ignores the intensity of the desire an opponent may have to acquire nuclear weapons and its strategic calculus in doing so. It pays to recall the lesson of the first Gulf War, after which one Indian general concluded: “Never fight the Americans without nuclear weapons.” It is likely that Iranian decision-makers have seen and understood the very different treatment North Korea and Iraq received from the U.S., attributing it to North Korea’s possession of a nuclear arsenal.

Strategic deception is also possible. As in the case of the four small nuclear powers, all masked their weapons programs or hid them behind civilian nuclear energy programs. All of these states actively sought to discourage U.S. and international discovery of their weapons programs. The Soviet Union was famous for its efforts at strategic deception and perceptions management. Even tactically, we can be surprised. Indian scientists bragged at being able to spoof U.S. satellites at Pokhran the day of the first overt nuclear weapons detonations in May 1998.

The NIE has raised eyebrows for a number of reasons. But the approach it takes to understanding the decision-making calculus of Iran may be the most fundamental flaw of the estimate, one that has led to all the other problems. When professors get it wrong, little or no harm is done. But it is a completely different matter when our best intelligence officials err. Everyone is liable to suffer.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_t\\_clark/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_t_clark/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2007/12/iran\\_nukes\\_common\\_sense/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2007/12/iran_nukes_common_sense/)
3. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?PubID=585>

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## Anarchism and Al Qaeda (2007-12-23 04:07)

From [1]Walter Laqueur

In a recent [2]address, UCLA historian James Gelvin compares Al Qaeda with historical anarchism (1880-1920) and, like some other recent writers, finds great significance in their common features. Such exercises are seldom wholly in vain, but how helpful are they for a better understanding of at least one of the sides in the comparison?

Gelvin dismisses the Islamofascism label as mere propaganda, and [3]I do not think much of it either. But while comparisons between the jihadists on one hand and Nazi Germany and fascist Italy are indeed of little use, there are astonishing similarities between jihadists and some of the smaller fascist groups such as, for instance, the Romanian Legion of the Archangel Michael (also called the Iron Guard, Garda de Fier). This group, quite powerful at one time, was deeply religious in inspiration, populist and anti-capitalist in its politics, propagated a cult of death and suicide terrorism, and was second to none in denouncing corruption and the liberal West. If they still existed, they would be intensely anti-globalist. An in-depth study of the similarities between this group and the jihadists would be very illuminating and should be undertaken.

In the same way, similarities between Al Qaeda and certain anarchist factions could be found. A leading anarchist about to be executed announced that “there are no innocents,” just as the well-known Al Jazeera TV sheikh has done. Bakunin (and after him Nietzsche—not a card-carrying anarchist) declared that the passion for destruction was a creative passion.

However, on the whole, such comparisons do not take us very far, for two reasons.

First, anarchism was anything but monolithic. There were basic differences not only between anarchists at various times and places but also within each group. Some believed in terrorism, others were pacifists. There were extremists among them but they were not a majority.

Second, anarchists were not “nihilists” (an unfortunate term made popular by Turgenev’s famous novel). They did not negate all values but deeply believed in freedom. Whatever the fundamental beliefs and aims of the jihadists (who are not nihilists either), the struggle for the realm of freedom on earth is not among them. In view of such a basic difference in outlook, how much new light can be shed by comparisons between them and the anarchists?

There are two related distinctions which deserve to be explored. Gelvin comes close but does not pursue them. He believes that both anarchism and jihadism were essentially defensive in character. Territories formerly under Muslim rule, now lost as the result of a Western assault, had to be regained. If this were the sum of jihadist ideology, the obvious parallel would be with the Brezhnev doctrine. From the 1960s, it proclaimed that countries under communist rule must not be surrendered on any account, and that any retreat from this political order must be resisted by military force. By this time, the Soviet Union had given up dreams of world revolution, and its strategy was therefore “defensive.” Have jihadists really given up their hope that their beliefs will eventually prevail all over the globe, and their conviction that they are duty-bound to promote this aim? Their strategy seems to be rather more ambitious than the Brezhnev doctrine—but this certainly warrants further exploration.

There is a second crucial distinction. Nineteenth-century anarchism and terrorism adhered to a certain code of honor. There was a code of chivalry (*treuga dei* and *pax dei*) in European medieval warfare (and also in medieval Islam), not to attack and harm monks, women, children, elderly people and the poor in general. The targets of terrorist attacks were leading figures such as kings, ministers, generals, and police chiefs considered personally responsible for repression and crimes. Great care was taken not to hurt the innocent; if a Russian Grand Duke appeared unexpectedly together with his family, the attackers would abstain from throwing their bombs even if, by acting so, they endangered their own lives. More often than not, the attackers considered themselves sinners for taking a human life; it was unthinkable that they would boast of dancing on the graves of their victims or express the wish to drink their blood. There are no known cases of sadism among nineteenth-century anarchists. The indiscriminate murder which has become the rule in our days did occur but was rare and mostly unplanned.

In contrast, incidents of sadism have been frequently reported in our time—for instance, in the Algerian civil war, or in the case of Zarqawi, who was upbraided by some of his followers for cutting throats too quickly. The enemy not only has to be destroyed, he (or she) also has to suffer torment. The barbarisation of terrorism has not been limited to the jihadists, but they have been its most frequent practitioners by far. How do we account for these changes in the theory and practice of terrorism compared with the age of the anarchist militants? This seems to me a central issue which has yet to be addressed.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_laqueur/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_laqueur/)
2. <http://www.international.ucla.edu/lms/files/JamesGelvin.pdf>
3. [http://blog.oup.com/2006/10/the\\_origins\\_of\\_2/](http://blog.oup.com/2006/10/the_origins_of_2/)

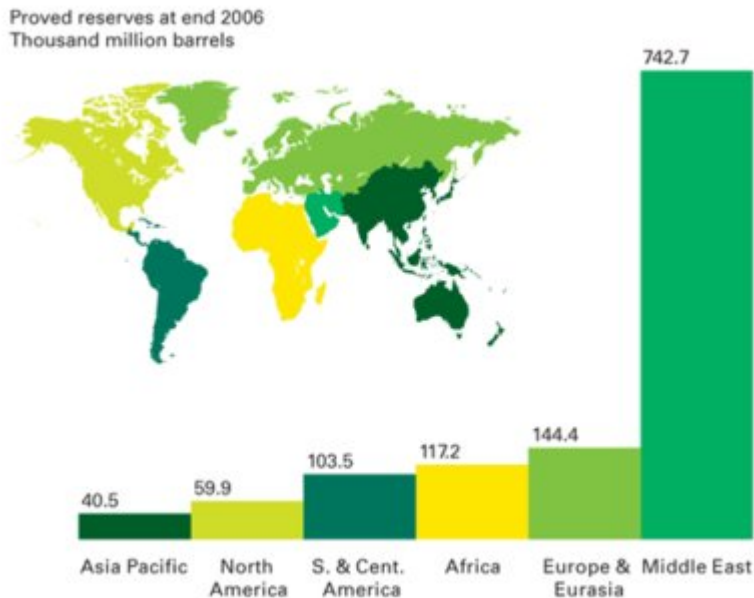
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## Who has the oil? (2007-12-26 04:57)

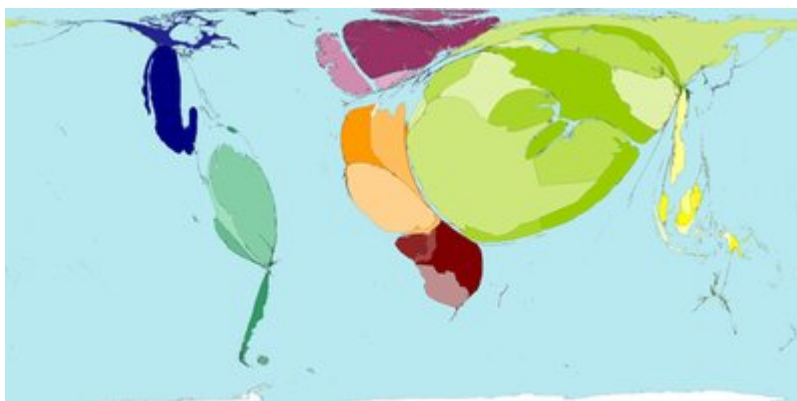
From MESH Admin

What is the most effective way to represent the strategic significance of the Persian Gulf? One alternative is to emphasize its dominance of world oil reserves and exports, via a graph or map. Here are three approaches—the first one, conventional; the other two, innovative and even dramatic.

The first, prepared by British Petroleum (BP), is a straightforward map of proved reserves, with an accompanying graph.



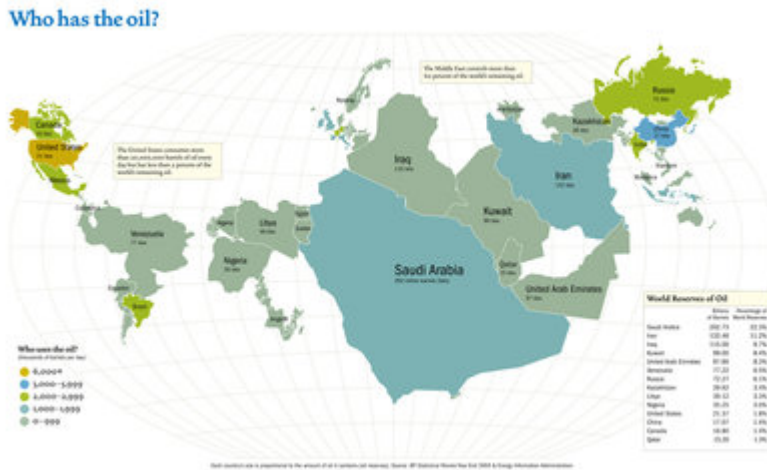
The second is a proportional map of crude petroleum exports, prepared by [1]Worldmapper. In this projection, the size of each region and country reflects its proportion of worldwide net exports of crude petroleum. (When imports are larger than exports, the territory is not shown at all.)



[2]

(Click on this map to enlarge it; click [3]here to download a .pdf poster of the map and accompanying statistics.)

Finally, there is this proportional map of oil reserves, sourced from BP. This approach makes it easier to disaggregate countries. (The map isn't legible at this size, so click on it to enlarge it.)



[4]

1. <http://www.worldmapper.org/>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2007/12/75.png>
3. [http://www.worldmapper.org/posters/worldmapper\\_map75\\_ver5.pdf](http://www.worldmapper.org/posters/worldmapper_map75_ver5.pdf)
4. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2007/12/oilmap.jpg>

## Pakistan's military tested (2007-12-28 03:34)

From [1]Stephen Peter Rosen

The possibility that widespread social unrest in Pakistan might have implications for the security of Pakistani nuclear weapons has always been discounted by those who point, correctly, to the highly professional character of the Pakistani Army. In a set of interviews released late this fall, General Musharraf tried to reassure Americans about the safety of Pakistani nuclear weapons. The weapons were safe, he argued, as a result of cooperation with the United States government to set up special security forces, the personnel of which were carefully screened to exclude soldiers with extreme Islamist sympathies. This reassurance presupposed that the military chain of command remained intact in Pakistan, even if the civilian government was in disarray.

But no army can be entirely separated from the sympathies and ties that are generated within the host society from which it comes. The American military has a long and strong tradition of professionalism, but American soldiers of African-American origin fighting in the Vietnam War were distressed by the urban rioting in the United States in the late 1960s, according to Charles Moskos. PLA soldiers from western China, of non-Han origin, were reportedly brought in to suppress the Tiananmen Square political movement, presumably because local troops might not have obeyed orders violently to suppress the movement.

If the rioting sparked by the assassination of Benazir Bhutto persists and grows more widespread, will Pakistani troops be brought in to quell the riots? If they are brought in, will they obey orders to use force? And, if they do not, what conclusions about the overall reliability of the Pakistani Army should be drawn by India? By the United States? And by countries that could be affected by a breakdown of control over the soldiers that guard the nuclear weapons of Pakistan?

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)



**Bhutto's murder: prelude to... (2007-12-30 08:00)**

From [1]Martin Kramer

An [2]editorial in the Wall Street Journal on Friday, entitled "Target: Pakistan," mourned Benazir Bhutto, whom it described as "the highest profile scalp the jihadists can claim since their assassination of Egypt's Anwar Sadat in 1981." The editorial then offered this analysis:

With the jihadists losing in Iraq and having a hard time hitting the West, their strategy seems to be to make vulnerable Pakistan their principal target, and its nuclear arsenal their principal prize.

This take is problematic. The jihadists claimed a major scalp after Sadat: two days before 9/11, two Arab suicide bombers posing as journalists assassinated the anti-Taliban leader of the Northern Alliance, Ahmad Shah Massoud. Famous as the "Lion of Panjshir," Massoud helped to drive the Soviets from Afghanistan, and then resisted the Talibanization that swept the country. The CIA [3]worked sporadically with Massoud, but never made the most of him. In April 2001, Massoud addressed the European Parliament in Strasbourg, and told a reporter: "If President Bush doesn't help us, then these terrorists will damage the United States and Europe very soon—and it will be too late."

Massoud's assassination turned out to be the opening act for the 9/11 attacks two days later. So we must be grateful to the French writer Bernard-Henri Lévy, author of a [4]book on the murder of Daniel Pearl, for this [5]passage in today's Wall Street Journal:

Benazir Bhutto is dead, and mindful of Sept. 9, 2001, the day Massoud was assassinated, I cannot help wondering what gruesome scenario her assassins might have planned. I cannot help wondering what this major event, this thunderbolt, might be the prelude to.

In other words, it would be a mistake to assume that Bhutto's assassination means the terrorists have made Pakistan their "principal target." Al Qaeda is perfectly capable of attacking targets on more than one front. Bhutto's assassination isn't just a reminder that the terrorists are still out there on the other side of the world. It's precisely the kind of success that has always emboldened Al Qaeda to reach still further. The United States remains as much a target as Pakistan. Indeed, in the wake of Bhutto's murder, Al Qaeda's sights may be fixed squarely on us.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)
2. <http://www.opinionjournal.com/editorial/feature.html?id=110011053>
3. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A62889-2004Feb22.html>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0971865949>
5. <http://www.opinionjournal.com/editorial/feature.html?id=110011059>

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**Charlie Wilson's War: fairy tale comedy (2007-12-31 11:59)**

From a member

(A MESH member who prefers to remain anonymous submits the following comment on the film [1]Charlie

Wilson's War.)



This is a movie made by a highly sophisticated political and artistic mind, someone—the director—who knows all the arguments and charges and nuances of what this important episode has come to mean to various interpreters. I came away feeling that the film is aimed at four different audiences, the last of the four being the most important.

The first and most inconsequential audience is people like us, who know a lot about all of the doings covered in the story and who, like me, will find the movie to be a rather charming bad-boy fairy tale comedy involving some preposterous assertions.

The second audience, I imagine (I'm hardly knowledgeable about the cinema "industry") is the famous 18 to 29 demographic. They will like the sex scenes and proliferation of the F word. They also will delight in the parodies of Washington authority-figures. The battle scenes in Afghanistan will also be attractive to them as almost as good as video games, and about as meaningful. The geopolitics of it all will be utterly lost on them, as they wouldn't be able to tell you what a "Soviet" was anyway.

The third audience would be those in East Texas and elsewhere across "real" America, where the story will seem to be a delightfully stirring tale of how a Good Ole Boy from Nagadoches took on the effeminate Washington establishment bureaucracy and whupped those Commies.

The fourth audience is the one that really matters to those who produced and directed the movie. That would be people like themselves: well-to-do, highly educated, politically active "Progressives" who proclaimed in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 that "We (America) brought it on ourselves." To them, the underlying story is that the U.S. supply of weapons to the Afghan Mujahedin virtually created the movement which would later emerge as the Taliban, would energize Al Qaeda by proving that holy warriors could win a world-historical victory over a powerful industrialized imperial power, and would launch the religiously-driven terrorist war against America.

Finally, as an example of the sophisticated fine touch of the makers of this film, there is the vignette early on when Congressman Wilson in the corridor of the House is told that The Speaker wants to put him on the Ethics Committee looking into the charges against John Murtha. Wilson snaps back, saying that the charges against Murtha are baseless. Only those closely following the 2006 anti-Iraq War movement, in which Congressman Murtha's calls for the United States to pull the troops out in acceptance of defeat were central, would recognize that the film makers here are trying to refute the re-emerged criticism of Murtha for being involved in the "Abscam" scandal of the time in which the movie is set. In Charlie Wilson's War every little scene has a meaning all its own.

1. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlie\\_Wilson's\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlie_Wilson's_War)



# Chapter 2

## 2008

### 2.1 January

#### Can the Middle East sustain democracy? (2008-01-02 13:32)

[1]Charles Issawi (1916-2000) was a leading economic historian of the Middle East and an astute commentator on history, politics, and human nature. In 1956 he published an [2]article on the foundations of democracy and their absence from the Middle East. Below, we reproduce a key passage from that article (in green, beneath Issawi's photograph). In response to our invitation, MESH member Adam Garfinkle offers a half-century retrospective on Issawi's views. In the [3]comments to this post, MESH members Joshua Muravchik, Jon Alterman, Michele Dunne, J. Scott Carpenter, and Tamara Cofman Wittes weigh in.

[issawi.jpg] "In the Middle East the economic and social soil is still not deep enough to enable political democracy to strike root and flourish. What is needed is not merely constitutional or administrative reforms, not just a change in government machinery and personnel. It is not even the adjustment of an obsolete political structure to bring it in line with a new balance of forces reflecting changing relations between various social classes, as was achieved by the Reform Bills in 19th-century England. What is required is a great economic and social transformation which will strengthen society and make it capable of bearing the weight of the modern State. Such a development is a necessary, if not a sufficient, condition for the establishment of genuine democracy in the region. For, in politics as in religion, a Reformation must be preceded by a Renaissance.

"What should be done in the meantime? Clearly, while it is futile to lament the absence of democracy in a region still unprepared for it, it is absolutely necessary to set in motion the forces which will transform Middle Eastern society in the desired manner. Great efforts must be made to improve means of communication, multiply schools, and, so far as possible, bring about a cultural and spiritual unity which will bridge the chasms separating the linguistic groups and religious sects. Great efforts must also be made to develop the economy of the

different countries in order to raise the general level and to create opportunities which will allow the individual to emancipate himself from the grip of the family, tribe, and village."

Charles Issawi, "Economic and Social Foundations of Democracy in the Middle East," *International Affairs*, 1956.

From [4]Adam Garfinkle

Charles Issawi's is a remarkable quote, prescient to a stunning degree. Issawi managed to say a great deal in a short space; were that I was as talented.

It seems to me that Issawi makes four basic points, which I will list deliberately out of order for a reason to be made clear, hopefully, below.

First, the Arab Middle East lacks the prerequisites for democracy.

Second, those prerequisites entail not only political-legal adjustments but deep social and cultural ones, not least of them being the strengthening of the state (a very prescient observation for its time).

Fourth, in the meantime great effort should be placed in readying the prerequisites for democracy, including economic growth, wider social communication and better education.

Third is his enigmatic comment that "in politics as in religion, a Reformation must be preceded by a Renaissance."

As to what has changed, the first point stands: The region is still not ready, and the reason many Westerners don't see this is that they don't understand the origins of their own political culture. So I argued in print ("[5]The Impossible Imperative? Conjuring Arab Democracy," *The National Interest*, Fall 2002) before President Bush's February 2003 American Enterprise Institute [6]speech, before the invasion of Iraq, before his November 2003 National Endowment for Democracy [7]speech and before his second inaugural [8]address, because I could feel in my bones what was coming and I wanted to do whatever I could to stop it.

When it comes to the second point, nothing has changed either—but more on this critical matter below.

When it comes to the fourth point, a lot has changed since 1956. As Fatima Mernissi was among the first to insist, there is a new openness in the region, a new kind of conversation (*jadaliyya*, she called it). There is more communication, there is better if still very inadequate education, and the economies are more modern in many respects if still foundering in others. Much of this change came over several decades in a push-pull sort of way. The weakness of the post-independence Middle Eastern state amid the attentions brought by the Cold War made them prey to outside blandishments and enticements at the same time that weak local elites sought leverage to get or keep themselves in power. The nearly complete penetration of the region by global business, especially over the past 15 years, has helped accelerate the communications revolution and the "creative destruction" that has gone with it.

This very unsettling process has riven most Middle Eastern societies into three parts: salafis who

use religion to fight the threat to corporate identity they see; assimilationists who accept the Western secularist route to one degree or another; and those who seek a flexible, living Islamic tradition in order to find a culturally integral route to modernization. I think the third force will win out, even if it takes three or four generations; at least I hope so.

Third, we come head-on to the politics/religion, Renaissance/Reformation nexus. It can be argued that the humanism of the Renaissance stimulated significant reform impulses in the Catholic Church in the fifteenth century, and that initial Protestant rebellion in the early sixteenth century, from the far less advanced regions of Germany rather than northern Italy, was in essence a reactionary rejection of that more liberal, humanist direction. The vast changes attending the last gasps of European feudalism soon overtook the reactionary character of early Protestantism and drove it along as it did everything else in its path, but the sketch is interesting. Applied analogically to the modern Middle East, the salafis are the early Protestants shaking up a febrile religious establishment, stimulating them, one may hope, into re-creating a vibrant living tradition in tune with modern times, as Max Weber famously suggested happened to Protestant Europe and, in time, even to Catholic Europe.

And now we come back to the problem of the state. A Reformed religion, to work as Weber saw, has to be contained by the state. But the state system of the modern Middle East is under siege thanks to the onslaught of globalization. Unless a revived centrist traditionalism contributes to the strengthening of the state, all of the communications, education and hoped-for economic reform will be unavailing. How will this go? Well, different experts have taken different views on this question. I don't know which ones are right. I wish Issawi, and Elie Kedourie and Ernest Gellner, were still alive. They would know.

Comments are limited to MESH members.

1. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C07E7DE1539F93BA25751C1A9669C8B63>
2. [http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0020-5850\(195601\)32%3A1%3C27%3AEASFOD%3E2.0.CO%3B2-7](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0020-5850(195601)32%3A1%3C27%3AEASFOD%3E2.0.CO%3B2-7)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/middle\\_east\\_sustain\\_democracy/#comments](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/middle_east_sustain_democracy/#comments)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)
5. [http://www.thefreelibrary.com/\\_/print/PrintArticle.aspx?id=92042432](http://www.thefreelibrary.com/_/print/PrintArticle.aspx?id=92042432)
6. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030226-11.html>
7. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html>
8. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/01/20050120-1.html>

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Jon Alterman (2008-01-08 16:29:25)

To my mind, Tammy is right about the inefficiency of today's Arab regimes, but she's wrong about the inevitability of reform. For almost a century, outside observers of the region have predicted a Malthusian crisis that hasn't come and a whole series of other changes that would shake the region to its core. Instead, regimes have not only implanted themselves, but become more firmly embedded. Consider the fact that there has not been a system-changing coup in the Arab world since the Libyan revolution of 1969, after two decades of rather dramatic change. I join Tammy and Scott and Josh in very much hoping to see more transparency and rule of law in the Middle East, the growth of meritocracy, and economic and political advances that raise the standard of living and overall happiness in the region. But wanting to see it is different from saying it's inevitable. Such a change would harm an immense number of people who currently hold power in the region, and their principal interest is holding power, not maximizing the economic efficiency of their economies or burnishing their approval ratings. If all they want to do is hold onto power and are willing to pay the other costs, I don't see why that's not sustainable. Equally, what I see among publics is a keen desire for better outcomes, not necessarily a desire for greater voice. Technology is helping promote freer speech, anyway (both by empowering information producers and crippling censors), but I see people fundamentally disaffected by politics rather than clamoring to run for office. Assuming leaders and publics in the Middle East want the same things we want (and even more narrowly, what academics in Washington think tanks want) doesn't guide

us to good policy. I look forward to reading Tammy's book and being persuaded otherwise.

Joshua Muravchik (2008-01-02 15:42:10)

In 1956, when Charles Issawi wrote this, there were only a few dozen countries in the world in which the government had been elected by the citizens. Today, there are 123 such governments, according to the rigorous count by Freedom House. The majority of the additional democracies are in countries that were not in 1956, and probably are not today, ready for democracy, according to Issawi's criteria. And yet they do it. To be sure, more than a quarter of the democratically elected governments are only "partly free" according to the Freedom House survey, meaning they lack some important features of mature or consolidated democracy, or what some call liberal democracy. Nonetheless, the performance of the elected governments is superior to that of non-elected ones across the spectrum of government performance issues, i.e., peace, economic development, social welfare, corruption, etc.

Jon Alterman (2008-01-02 16:19:40)

I'm not so confident that the "state system of the modern Middle East is under siege." Certainly, the boom in oil prices in the last five years has given states lots of walking-around money with which they can co-opt potential oppositions. But even before the oil boom, the expansion of the modern Middle Eastern state into economies, associational life, spiritual life and elsewhere made it hard for any force to arise that could truly challenge the state's dominance. Authoritarian systems in the region have not only proven remarkably durable, but they have been remarkably adaptive. They have adapted to the death of censorship, and they have adapted to the rise of political Islam. More importantly, they have *learned*, both from their own experience and that of their neighbors. It is not an accident that monarchies in the Arab world are beginning to look more like republics, and republics are looking more like monarchies. Parliaments are rarely meaningful, and executives have tremendous control over the allocation of economic resources. What strikes me as notable in the half-century since Issawi wrote his words is that many of the tasks he calls for have been done, they have been done by states, and the states have used these tasks to reinforce their prerogatives. National unity, stronger economies, stronger educational systems—all done. But without pledging fealty to the state and its apparatchiks, any individual's accomplishments are for naught. I'd be happy to go back and forth with Josh about the reasons that the seeds of democracy fall fallow in the Middle East, but that's a discussion for another time.

Michele Dunne (2008-01-03 02:27:18)

While Issawi's analysis of why democracy was not spreading in the Arab countries in 1956 had merit, to apply the same analysis to 2008 misses several critical factors. First, whatever Arabs' economic and educational status—which, while still lacking, is much better in many countries now than fifty years ago—do they want democratic governments or not? According to [1]World Values Survey polling done in 2000 in Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, and Jordan—as well as much other evidence—they do, in increasing numbers and across the political spectrum. Second, isn't it terribly convenient—and misleading—to factor out of this socioeconomic analysis the role the United States and other outside powers have played in the region? Even in 1956 such an approach strained credulity. Driven by the imperatives of beating back Soviet influence, maintaining an unfettered flow of petroleum, and protecting the security of Israel, the United States took over the role of the European colonial powers in supporting cooperative Arab autocrats. Each of those imperatives was important and valid, but they involved costs, including looking the other way while Arab governments perpetrated human rights abuses and failed to develop their economies and societies. The Bush administration began the difficult process of trying to disentangle various U.S. interests and figure out whether the United States can maintain the flow of petroleum, protect Israel, and promote the gradual growth of democracy in the region all at the same time, but abandoned the work when it became overwhelmed by problems in Iraq and Palestine. So, what should the next U.S. administration do? Much current thinking points in the same direction Issawi suggested in the 1950s (promoting economic growth and education as prerequisites for the spread of democracy) while Adam Garfinkle suggests strengthening the state, by which he seems to mean institutional reform. While economic, educational, and institutional reform are good in themselves, anyone under the illusion that such efforts alone can lead to eventual democratization should read Thomas Carothers' article, "[2]The Sequencing Fallacy," in the January 2007 issue of the *Journal of Democracy*. In short, with the exception of a visionary few (notably lacking in the Middle East at present), autocratic leaders have no motivation to carry out reforms that will expose their excesses and eventually limit their power. Only the pressure that comes from political opposition can compel them to compromise. There is also a practical problem with such approaches. Unless the United States concurrently presses Arab governments to open

political space and improve respect for human and civil rights, the recipients of our well-intentioned efforts to improve economic and educational capacities will certainly face repression at the hands of their own governments—producing immediate problems that will be difficult for the next administration to ignore, even if it chooses to duck the larger question of how to balance competing U.S. interests.

1. <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>

2. <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=18957&prog=zgp&proj=zdr1>

J. Scott Carpenter (2008-01-03 04:34:36)

Two alternate things struck me as I read Issawi's article. First was its contemporary feel: the argument he advances to deny Arabs are ready for democracy—they need an economic and social transformation first—have changed little in fifty-plus years. Second was its dated feel: the idea that society has to be made ready for the modern state evokes a definitive post-war fascination with the modern state, epitomized to many at the time by the specifically Soviet state which was only a year away from Sputnik when Issawi wrote. Rather than being represented by the State, society should instead be made “capable to bear the weight” of it. Not a thoroughly democratic concept and not one that finds much resonance in modern ears, I suppose. But it is Issawi's first broad generalization that is most relevant to me. Are economic and social transformations required before democracy can take root in the Arab world? And does economic transformation automatically lead to individual emancipation? Not according to the facts as they've unfolded over the past five decades. Looking at individual Arab countries tells a story that sweeping assertions miss. Generally, economic growth over the past fifty years has not corresponded with the expansion of human liberty. The Gulf as a whole is proof of that. Oil has proved a curse to aspiring democrats everywhere—Libya, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, among others. The only country in the Gulf that has evolved broad-based democratic practice is, ironically, Yemen, which had adopted democracy as a way of coping with deep societal divides. It is, of course, a very poor country and corruption remains endemic, but according to Freedom House, Yemen is “partly free” and has a robust civil society, multiple political parties and a fairly free press. Since the 1950s the United Arab Emirates has evolved from a group of sand dunes to one of the most highly industrialized countries in the world with one of the highest per capita GDPs, but human freedoms remain tentative at best. Or take my favorite example, Tunisia. Tunisia today is a homogenous country in ethnicity and religion, with a largish, secular and educated middle class, a functioning economy in which the vast majority own their own homes. Tunisian women have many rights that are protected both in law and in practice. If any country should have made the transition to democracy in fifty-plus years it should be Tunisia, right? And yet, Tunisia remains one of the most repressive regimes in the region with one of the worst human rights record. And that has an impact on broader society. On my last visit to Tunis I felt it to be the least dynamic city of any in the entire region now alive with dynamism. If it were not for the huge transfers from Europe, I'm not sure the “Tunisian Model” would be sustainable. So what excuse would Issawi offer for Tunisia? Do Tunisians have to wait for some other hurdle to be passed before they are allowed a truly free press, for example? Or have someone other than Ben Ali to vote for? In Arab Mauritania, a fed-up military finally answered a similar question to the delight of the Mauritanian people. Since a bloodless coup 19 months ago, desperately poor Mauritania has exchanged its strongman government for a democratically elected one under a new constitution. Mauritania have elected not only the President for the first time in history but have also had free elections for parliament and localities as well. President Abdallahi and Mauritanian democracy seem to be doing fine. So, why when economic growth and social transformation have taken place to one degree or the other has the Arab world remained a democratic exception? It did not start as a problem of religion (though this has now become a premier problem). Instead it's been a failure of the regimes to progressively give greater freedom to their people. As was pointed out in the 2002 Arab Human Development Report and in every subsequent year, the states of the Arab world in every measurable parameter of human development have failed their people. Their economies (apart from those in the Gulf) are sclerotic at best; their education system belies the name; their ability to deliver services is practically non-existent; their political systems are moribund. The only service they have proved capable of delivering is security, which is the only thing that preserves them (that and the seemingly endless patience of their long-suffering people). To countless Egyptians, Moroccans, Jordanians and others from this part of the world, i.e. Arabs, this failure has everything to do with the lack of personal freedom, and yes, democracy. Issawi's passage ends by noting that “while it is futile to lament the



absence of democracy in a region still unprepared for it, it is absolutely necessary to set in motion the forces which will transform Middle Eastern society in the desired manner.” But that was over fifty years ago and the states have failed to deliver. After so much wasted time, it’s high-time to reverse Issawi’s prescription: governments in the region should give people more freedom and see how they transform their societies from within. More economic freedom, more press freedom, more political freedom. Everything else has been tried and failed disastrously: Pan-Arabism, Socialism, Ba’athism and now the threat of Islamism looms. It’s true as Jon wrote that Arab governments have had remarkable staying power, but what they may have accomplished in the past fifty years is not nearly enough to sustain them for another fifty. Given the huge youth bulges in countries like Egypt and Algeria and elsewhere, unless dramatic economic growth is somehow achieved these regimes will be consumed by grievance—which will not be in our national interest. Despite the challenges of the past few years, it is now more important than ever to give freedom a chance. Not all at once as some envision but deliberately, with vision and purpose. By creating a path to a proliferation of parties, a truly free press, a thriving civil society and a growing middle class many of these countries will unlock their potential and, given time, defeat the Islamist threat from within as well. Economies and societies will be transformed as a result.

Tamara Cofman Wittes (2008-01-08 15:18:12)

Issawi (and Adam) are a bit too focused on state strength, in my view. Most states of the region have, as Jon noted, done a good job of strengthening themselves over the last fifty years relative to those disparate social forces Adam fears so much. The corporatist model they developed, bolstered by oil and strategic rents, girded in the armor of Arabist ideology, and backed by force when necessary, served them very well. [1]Greg Gause did some great work a bunch of years ago showing how the Arab states of the Gulf used these resources to bind their citizens closely to the state, protecting themselves from the potentially destabilizing impact of the Iranian revolution. The state is still viewed by most Arabs as the primary source and allocator of social goods, and the primary repository of the national patrimony. The question today is whether these corporatist strategies are *still* functional in a changed environment, in which economic and cultural globalization, along with indigenous demographic and social changes, have created a different set of expectations and demands on the state while hampering the state’s ability to continue employing its old strategies of cooptation and control. A secondary question is what is to be done about those places in the region where states are *not* strong, indeed are failing: Iraq, Lebanon, and the (nonstate) Palestinian territories. I argue in my forthcoming book (*Freedom’s Unsteady March*, coming out in April) that the Arab states’ ability to employ rents, ideology, and repressive capacity to sustain themselves as the central repository and distributor of social and economic goods is challenged today by a combination of factors. The “youth bulge” presents challenges not only in economic terms (employment, credit, and housing) but also in terms of the social expectations young people have of their government, especially when they are more aware of global trends and the gap between their status and that of their cohort elsewhere in the world. Oil prices may be high right now, but income inequality is skyrocketing as well—suggesting that this new wealth is not being invested in binding citizens closer to the state (as happened in the 1970s) but instead is going into the pockets of political and business elites. I’ve heard anecdotal evidence of similar phenomena in Egypt, where major economic reforms by the government have resulted in overall economic growth and capital inflows—but the gains have largely been pocketed by the business community, rather than being invested in future growth or in new private sector jobs. The resulting disconnect between the macroeconomic picture and the life experiences of the average Egyptian is producing outrage in the form of a remarkable number of protests over the past year on issues such as wages, rents, and subsidies. Many people cite the UAE as evidence to the contrary, with its astonishing levels of investment in education and other forms of social capital, but I think it’s more of an exception that proves the rule. The challenges presented to Arabist ideology by Islamist alternatives have been the subject of long discussion so I won’t go into that here. And in an era of cell-phone cameras, bloggers, and international human rights NGOs, repression is just more costly and harder to employ than in previous times as a tool for state control. Arab regimes have worked to [2]respond to these challenges, but their piecemeal reforms fail as often as they succeed, and do not, in my view, add up to a successful new model for sustainable governance. I agree fully with Michele and Scott’s point that economic development is not a pathway to democratization. Those who advocate a policy of promoting economic liberalization “first” should acknowledge that it is far more likely to be a substitute for, rather than a means to, democracy. They must also confront the now-well-documented fact that even less-than-perfect democracies outperform nondemocracies in basic economic and social development. If a U.S. policy of promoting Arab economic development is not an effective means to other forms of liberalization, if it may not even succeed on its own terms because of the concern Arab autocrats have with preserving the economic perquisites of their ruling coalitions (the subject of Tom Carothers’ [3]excellent essay), and if it may not even help to improve the welfare of Arab citizens

because of those autocrats' twisted incentives, then why is this a worthy policy prescription? What does it get us, exactly? If the answer is more reliable economic trading partners, one could easily make the case that global capital markets and global trading regimes are more effective at doing that, at a lower cost, than a U.S. government push for economic liberalization. Let the global market handle economic liberalization. Given the above, why should the U.S. still act to promote democracy in the Middle East? Because the reigning corporatist model of Arab states is no longer functional, and social forces in those states are rising that, in the absence of democratization, could prove destabilizing and detrimental to U.S. interests. There is real pressure for change in the region—but what form that change will take is yet to be determined, and the Arab regimes have less ability to control that outcome than the strong-state-advocates like Jon might wish. The possibilities for change that are *not* in U.S. interests are real, growing, and very unpleasant: even if states maintain control it may be in a form we can't easily cooperate with. In the long term, regional stability, Arab prosperity and U.S.-Arab strategic cooperation all require democratic reform in the region. I think wise-minded Arabs and Americans both know that, they just don't know how to get from here to there and they're paralyzed by the risks. Yes, democratization could also produce destabilizing effects, and outcomes that are detrimental to U.S. interests. But I think that the balance of harms is on the side of democratization, for reasons I go into in my book. I also think that the risks of negative outcomes for the United States can, to some degree, be managed through a wiser strategy of democracy promotion than that followed by President Bush (sorry, Scott). Bush pushed hardest for democracy in the weakest states of the region, rather than the strongest. He also focused on political process over political rights, and did not match his democracy assistance programs with robust diplomacy. The result was an exacerbation of conflict in places like Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine, gains for regional radicals, a failure to give Arab leaders sufficient incentive to reform, and a resulting hardening of Arab autocrats on questions of domestic politics overall. I think the core focus for American democracy promotion should be advocating for the expansion of basic political rights: freedom of speech (especially in the media), assembly, and association. Our attention should be focused on the region's strong states (who also happen to be our closest allies): Saudi Arabia and Egypt, as well as Jordan and Morocco. In supporting political rights, we would be helping to give voice to the existing tensions within Arab society whose democratic role, Issawi noted, is crucial; we would be supporting the aspirations of Arab youth and citizenry at large for greater choice in their lives; we would be supporting the habits of civil discourse that are developed by all mature democracies; and we would be helping to illuminate and raise the scrutiny of the catch-all claims made by the Islamist opposition movements, deflating their current role as empty vessel for the hopes and fears of frustrated and weary Arab citizens. And then, of course, we need to help the basket cases of the region—but not with democratization, with state-building.

1. [http://www.uvm.edu/~polisci/faculty/gause\\_bio.html](http://www.uvm.edu/~polisci/faculty/gause_bio.html)
2. <http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2007/10arabworld.aspx>
3. <http://journalofdemocracy.org/articles/gratis/Carothers-18-1.pdf>

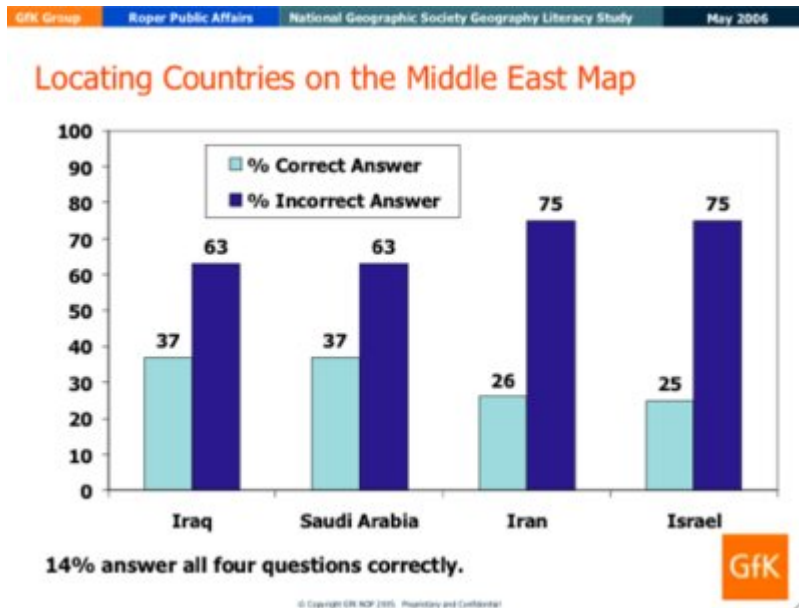
Adam Garfinkle (2008-01-16 10:55:56)

Just a clarification, which looks to be needed after reading the various interesting comments on Issawi. My point about the state is simple: There can't be a sustainable democracy, especially in a heterogeneous social environment, when state structures are weak. In such circumstances, the exercise of democratic forms will drive matters away from pluralism and back toward tribalism, because the legitimacy of state authority is what matters. When I say a strong state, as Michele Dunne understands, I don't mean a state that can knock down doors and drag people away at 4 in the morning. A *mukhabarat* state is *not* a strong state; the fact that it thinks, probably correctly, that it needs to do such things to survive is testimony to the exact reverse. These states are weak states, and the fact that they have become masters of survival does not change that, does not mean that most of them have absorbed or subdued other foci of authority in their respective societies. What I mean by a strong state is one in which the authority of the state is accepted matter-of-factly by most citizens as the highest authority in the social realm, and which can deliver basic services in a way that justifies at least a rudimentary social contract, implicit or otherwise. So when Issawi spoke of the pull of tribe, village and mosque as retrograde, he was exactly right.

## Survey: Americans lost on the map (2008-01-06 05:59)

From MESH Admin

The 2006 National Geographic-Roper Survey of Geographic Literacy surveyed geographic knowledge of 18- to 24-year-olds across the United States. (The full report is [1]here.) Respondents were shown a blank political map of the Middle East and asked to identify four countries: Israel, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Iran. These were the results:



The report comments:

On average, young Americans can find one (1.3) of these four countries. Fourteen percent can point out all four countries correctly, while 44 % cannot find any of them.

After three years of war in Iraq, only 37 % of young Americans can find Iraq; 63 % cannot. As many can—and cannot—identify Saudi Arabia. The result is even worse for Iran and Israel. Only one in four can find Iran (26 %) or Israel (25 %). Three-quarters cannot find these two countries. Overall, up to one in five say they "don't know" where these four countries are located (ranging from 16 % for Iraq to 20 % for Iran).

Education makes a difference in young adults' ability to locate these four countries in the headlines: young Americans with college experience (1.6 correct answers on average) are more likely than those with up to a high school education (0.9 correct) to locate these countries. That said, even the more educated group fares relatively poorly, with less than a quarter of those with a college education able to find all four countries (23 %, 6 % of those with up to a high school diploma).

1. <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/roper2006/findings.html>

## Learning from Israel's mistakes (2008-01-08 12:00)

From [1]Andrew Exum



If there is but one article readers of this blog should take the time to read in the next few days, it is most certainly Matt Matthews's [2]interview with Israeli general Shimon Naveh on the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel. Since I wrote [3]my study of Hezbollah's performance during the 2006 war, almost immediately following the conflict, I have been deeply impressed by the efforts taken by the U.S. military to learn from the IDF's successes and failures, even as lessons learned stream in from the U.S. military's own conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. This coming week, for example, the U.S. Army War College will host an event on the 2006 war and the new media that should be excellent. Matt Matthews, meanwhile, is hard at work on what is sure to be an instructive study of the war for the U.S. Army.

But first, Gen. Naveh. Aside from his refreshingly nuanced view of Hezbollah and some choice remarks for his fellow officers—he calls the then-chief of staff Gen. Dan Halutz "an idiot"—and says one brigade commander should have been executed for cowardice—Gen. Naveh indicts the whole IDF for not being prepared to fight the kind of war they found themselves fighting in July 2006:

Basically I think that the IDF was totally unprepared for this kind of operation, both conceptually, operationally and tactically—mainly conceptually and practically. The point is that the IDF fell in love with what it was doing with the Palestinians. In fact, it became addictive. When you fight a war against a rival who's by all means inferior to you, you may lose a guy here or there, but you're in total control. It's nice. You can pretend that you fight the war and yet it's not really a dangerous war. This kind of thing served as an instrument corrupting the IDF.

Herein lie important lessons for U.S. policy-makers and military professionals. Some will say the lesson in Israel's 2006 war is that the U.S. military can go "soft" by spending too much time on counterinsurgency in places like Afghanistan and Iraq, forgetting the kind of combined arms skills that come in handy in major combat operations. This would seem to be the opinion of the current Commandant of the Marine Corps, among others. Counterinsurgency theorists would say this is ridiculous. John Nagl describes counterinsurgency as "graduate-level warfare," and it follows that just as a PhD candidate in mathematics would not forget how to solve basic algebra equations, it is unlikely a junior officer in the U.S. Army will necessarily forget basic infantry battle drills while sipping tea with sheiks in Anbar Province. (And besides, until the U.S. military truly learns counterinsurgency, it is unlikely to "overlearn" counterinsurgency.)

It is true, though, that much of the blame for the IDF's poor performance in the 2006 war must fall upon the IDF's officer corps (and Israeli politicians for slashing the IDF's training budget). Complacency is the enemy of any good military, and it certainly seems as if the IDF grew too accustomed to the kind of missions they performed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories after the 2000 withdrawal from southern Lebanon. In the same way, the U.S. military officer corps in Iraq and Afghanistan is perhaps the most combat-proven officer corps in our nation's history. But operational commanders must work hard to ensure that the overall culture within the officer corps is not overrun by complacency. This is their job, as officers, commanders, and custodians of the nation's military.

I believe the way in which the U.S. Army and Marine Corps rotate between Iraq and Afghanistan works

against complacency. Having fought and led combat units in both environments, I can attest that the differing physical and cultural environments force officers to remain intellectually flexible and alert. That's just one of the reasons why the Marine Corps's [4]proposal to make Afghanistan a solely Marine mission is such a bad one.

At the same time, the job of being a U.S. Army or Marine Corps officer just got, incredibly, even tougher. Not only must Marine Corps and Army units be proficient in counterinsurgency operations—the most likely combat environment for present and future conflicts—they must also be prepared to execute combined arms efforts as part of major combat operations along the lines of the 2003 invasion of Iraq and destruction of Iraq's army. As difficult as this may be, I do not feel this is an unreasonable expectation of our officer corps. It is, after all, what the nation requires.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew\\_exum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew_exum/)
2. <http://www.smallwarsjournal.com/documents/mattmatthews.pdf>
3. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=260>
4. [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/11/washington/11military.html?\\_r=1&hp&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/11/washington/11military.html?_r=1&hp&oref=slogin)

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## Bush in the Levant (2008-01-09 09:27)

From [1]Jon Alterman

The Bush administration has been mugged by reality. After vowing to transform the Middle East, the administration is submitting to it, resorting to the sort of process-driven incremental diplomacy that previous administrations had pursued and that this administration had disdained. Five years ago, there was a sense that things couldn't get any worse in the Middle East and we should push for change whatever the consequences. Now, there is a keen appreciation of how many ways things could actually get much worse, and how much better off we are working with people we know and with whom we share at least some interests.

President Bush is spending several days in Israel and the West Bank, where I expect him to preside over some sort of agreement, whether it's principally economic (having to do with the movement of people and goods both within the West Bank and between the West Bank and other places) or whether it has to do more with settlements. There is going to be something that will stand as the Bush administration's agreement on this trip.

But it seems to me that none of what he will achieve is anything like a game changer. He can merely suggest that things are in play, which is really what the parties most want. I'm very skeptical of broader progress on Palestinian-Israeli issues because it seems to me that neither the Israeli side nor the Palestinian side has any consensus on what it's trying to achieve or how it plans on achieving it, what measure of diplomacy and violence will have to be used in the coming months and years. I understand all of the arguments that it's leaders who forge consensus through their leadership and so on, but it seems to me that a lot more has to be in place before final-status negotiations begin for them to possibly be successful. There is certainly much to negotiate in the interim, but that's not really a job for presidents. The fact is, whatever high-water mark President Bush tries to set on this trip, he will only draw attention to how much lower that mark is than when he took office in 2001.

I think it's interesting that the president isn't planning on going to Jordan, because the Jordanians have been such important U.S. partners in both Arab-Israeli peacemaking issues as well as Iraq issues. I suspect the king calculated that a trip would hurt more than it would help and this represents shrewd triangulation by the Jordanians rather than a snub by the Americans.

Overall, I expect President Bush to come in for a fair bit of criticism on this trip and to be on the receiving end of a fair number of lectures. Most leaders in the region with whom I've spoken seem to consider him both naïve and callous, and they'll use the home-court advantage to sensitize him to their perceptions of reality.

To sum up, President Bush is no longer trying to transform the Middle East from afar; he's trying to manage it in incremental ways by arm-twisting and jawboning leaders in intimate, private sessions. There will be small successes along the way, but all of the Middle East's problems are far too immense, complex, and diverse to be solved on this trip. Analytically, I think the president is in the same place that he's been for years, and he deeply believes that the Middle East will pose a continual threat to U.S. interests until it is more democratic. On this score, he differs with his father. But President Bush has also come to realize that the pursuit of vital U.S. interests requires a deeper sense of partnership than many allies have found in this administration.

Writing in *Foreign Affairs* eight years ago, former Bush Vulcan and current World Bank president Robert Zoellick wrote, "effective coalition leadership requires clear-eyed judgments about priorities, an appreciation of others' interests, constant consultations among partners and a willingness to compromise on some points, but remain focused on core objectives." That's what we will see on this trip, and it is a return to Bush administration first principles—not Bush 43, but Bush 41.

Comments are limited to MESH members.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon\\_alterman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon_alterman/)

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David Schenker (2008-01-09 14:30:48)

I agree with Jon's assessment that the Bush Administration has scaled back ambitious plans to transform the region and that the president's Middle East trip will likely result in only marginal accomplishments. But I would like to quibble with the posting's explanation as to why Jordan was not on Bush's Mideast itinerary. Jon suggests it's because the King thought a trip would "hurt more than it would help." It's my understanding that in fact, the Jordanians lobbied for a Bush stopover. In Jordan, the trip no doubt would have been well received by Palestinians, who are pleased that the Administration has seemingly decided to reengage on the peace process. A Presidential trip also would have been popular with East Banker elites. Besides, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert met in Jordan with King Abdullah only last week, a visit that was [1]highly publicized by the monarchy in the government-controlled press. Jordan's Islamists, led by the Islamic Action Front (IAF), leveled quite a bit of criticism at the King for meeting with Olmert. Likewise, today, the IAF [2]parroted the Hamas statement that Bush's trip to the region was "nothing more than tourism." But it seems to me that the King believed this kind of criticism to be an acceptable price to pay, especially given how poorly the IAF performed in parliamentary elections a few months ago. Indeed, for a number of reasons, IAF popularity in Jordan has plummeted, and the party—the most vocal local critic of the close U.S.-Jordanian relationship—is in complete disarray. In any event, Jordan's King Abdullah visits the United States, on average, twice a year, and is welcomed in the Oval Office at least once a year. The King will likely meet with President Bush in Washington this spring. And if King Abdullah gets his way, the President will visit Jordan on his final trip to the region, this May.

1. [http://www.alrai.com/index.php?archive\\_date=2008-1-4](http://www.alrai.com/index.php?archive_date=2008-1-4)

2. <http://www.jabha.net/body0.asp?field=beanat2003&id=1>

## Clashing civilizations revisited (2008-01-10 04:55)

From [1]Josef Joffe

[2] [300px-Huntington\_Clash\_of\_Civilizations\_chart.gif] Last Sunday's New York Times Book Review ran an [3]essay by Fouad Ajami, in which he doubts his own 1993 [4]critique of Samuel Huntington's [5]Clash of Civilizations. Prompted by that reflection, we invited MESH member Josef Joffe to revisit Huntington's thesis.

Civilizational conflicts will supersede ideological conflicts. This is the key idea in Samuel Huntington's Clash of Civilizations. I did not share this idea then, and I do not believe in it today.

For civilizational clashes to become virulent, said Huntington, a core state within a particular culture must turn into its avant-garde—that is, drape itself in the civilizational mantle to magnify its power in the pursuit of classic state interests. This introduces a potent qualifier that drastically limits the universe of clashes. Take the two risers, Russia and China. Russia resurgent uses energy, not Orthodoxy as "force multiplier." China does not use "Sinism" to expand its influence; it is doing quite well with its sheer size and mass, with its monetary reserves and its vast market. In the past, European would-be hegemonies like Charles V might have invoked Catholicism, but as we know, Habsburg had no compunctions to conspire with the Ottoman Porte against France, or Catholic France with Lutheran Sweden against the "Holy Roman Empire."

So how far does the theory carry? There is only one contemporary case that fits the bill: Islam, which clashes with the West abroad (e.g., Hezbollah vs. Israel) and within (homegrown terrorism in Britain, Holland, or Spain). But I would like to add another qualifier. It is not Islam as such, though its realm is shot through with seething rage against the West. Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, the "Gulfies" are allies of the United States, and not only in name, because that bond serves their security interests. Turkey, though turning away from secular Kemalism, remains a member of NATO and wants to join the European Union. True, its fealty to the United States is declining, the most dramatic instance being its denial of a northern invasion route to the U.S. in the 2003 Iraq war. But it is not at all clear that this decision had Islamic roots. It is better explained in terms of state interest, such as not letting the U.S. operate freely in a neighborhood where Turkey has fish to fry against PKK extremists.

So it is hard to pin the clash on Islam as such. Its virulence derives from an old acquaintance: state ambitions. The problem of the U.S. and the West is with Iran first, and with Islam second. It is Iran that is using the civilizational cudgel as mobilizer, legitimizer and force multiplier. And it does so in the service of classic state purposes, which antedate the Khomeinist Revolution and might even be traced all the way back to the Persian kings of antiquity, who in their day sought to impose their hegemony on the Middle East all the way to Greece. Darius and the lot were not Muslims, but great-power mongers.

Iran's nuclear program was started by Mohammad Reza Shah, the great secularizer. It was the Shah who manipulated the rise in oil prices in the 1970s. And it was the Shah who dabbled in regional imperialism when he imposed harsh border treaties on Iraq—for which payback came when Saddam Hussein attacked what he thought was a sorely weakened post-revolutionary Iran in 1980.

It is Iran and its outriggers like Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza that energize the Clash. We don't worry (or not excessively so) about cruelty and repression in the name of the Prophet Muhammad when it occurs in Saudi Arabia, an ally of sorts. But we do worry about shahids, more commonly known as suicide bombers, who serve state or sub-state purposes when they attack the World Trade Center or cafés in Tel Aviv. To repeat, on the state level, our problem is not Islam, but Iran and its regional ambitions.

It is the green flag of the Prophet in the service of a state that turns civilizational rage into a threat to the West. This insight has not only withstood the passage of time since the appearance of the Foreign Affairs article. It has also become more relevant, given the rise of Iran's ambitions as flanked by its nuclear weapons program.

Two additional key ideas, however, are in need of scrutiny. One is "the West against the rest." How would we test this? When we think about clashes across the globe, we don't think first, or even second, about civilizational ones. The West's conflict with China should better be described as a competitive relationship for resources and trade advantage. There is also an unarticulated power struggle between the reigning superpower, the United States, and the would-be superpower China. But this arena harbors many players. There is Japan, arrayed on the side of the United States. There are the lesser states of East Asia that are happy to huddle under a "Made in U.S.A." strategic umbrella. The conflict is not a civilizational one, nor one of the "West against the rest." For there are too many non-Western actors on that particular stage, cooperating with the United States.

Is the West besieged by Africa or Latin America? Mugabe of Rhodesia comes to mind, but he is an enemy of his own people first and foremost. Hugo Chavez? He has stepped into the shoes of Fidel Castro. But it is not "Latinism" that animates him, but bad old ideology and hunger for power. So the idea of a globe-encircling anti-Western alliance does not mesh with the facts. It did not do so in the 1990s, and it does not do so now.

The third key idea is that "Islam has bloody borders." It was true then, and it is true now. Most violent clashes have an Islamic component: Sudan, Chechnya, Israel/Palestine, Iran. But look again: aren't most of the clashes internal to Islam?

The worst post-World War Two war was fought between Iraq and Iran—for eight bloody years. One of the worst and longest civil wars erupted in Lebanon, where the Muslim-Maronite conflict was but one dimension, and where a whole slew of Islamic denominations battled against each other. Palestinians may want to eradicate Israel from the map, but their worst threat was directed against two fellow Muslim states: Jordan in 1970, and Lebanon until the early 1980s (when Israel decimated the PLO). More recently, it has been Syria which is killing Lebanese politicians in order to uphold dominance over its neighbor. Egypt has intervened in Yemen and skirmished repeatedly with Libya. Algeria is the arena of an endless civil war between a Muslim government and more rigorously faithful rebels. Wahhabis repress fellow Muslims in Saudi Arabia. Syria's Alawites lord it over the rest of the country—and, when need be, raze much of a city, Hamah, that used to be the stronghold of the Muslim Brotherhood. In Saddam's days, a Sunni minority oppressed the Shia minority; now both are fighting for turf and control. Pakistan is an explosion waiting to happen, and Afghanistan is a hellhole of intra-civilizational strife, a battle that is barely contained by NATO forces.

Niall Ferguson has [6]made the point very succinctly by reversing Huntington: Islam is a civilization of clashes. The victims of Islamists have numbered in the hundreds in Europe (Madrid, London) and in the thousands in New York. But as horrifying as that slaughter was, it does not measure up to the murder and mayhem Muslims have inflicted on one another since decolonization. They hate the West, but they mainly kill each other. The toll of the Iran-Iraq war from 1980 to 1988 is thought to be one million.

Finally, there is a fourth idea, only indirectly related to the Clash as propounded by Huntington: that modernization can proceed without Westernization. Japan comes to mind, and so do China and Russia. In his critique of the Foreign Affairs article, Fouad Ajami took the opposite tack: "The things and ways that the West took to the 'rest'," he wrote, "have become the ways of the world." Which ones? "The secular



idea, the state system and the balance of power, pop culture jumping tariff walls and barriers, the state as instrument of welfare....”

Well, yes and no. As modernization expands, so has resistance to this quintessentially Western gift, and not just in the Muslim world. Multiculturalism with its anti-Western bias (“Eurocentrism,” “Orientalism”) has found a comfortable place in the Western academy and media. Today, we are less confident that secularization is the way the world goes. Nonetheless, what is almost an aside in Huntington’s Clash, raises the most fascinating questions for the future. What is the relationship between religion, culture and modernity? As they say in the academy: “More research and funds are needed.” In this case, the need, though self-serving, is blatantly obvious.

Perhaps this aside about modernization without Westernization is the grandest insight Sam Huntington has contributed. Let’s test it—and thus honor the greatest political scientist of his generation. The exercise will pose a more powerful intellectual challenge than many a rational-choice model so much favored by political science today.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef\\_joffe/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef_joffe/)
2. [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/33/Huntington\\_Clash\\_of\\_Civilizations\\_chart.gif](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/33/Huntington_Clash_of_Civilizations_chart.gif)
3. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/06/books/review/Ajami-t.html?ref=review>
4. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/19930901FACOMMENT5194-faarticles/fouad-ajami/the-summoning.html>
5. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0684844419>
6. [http://uniset.ca/terr/news/lat\\_huntingtonclash.html](http://uniset.ca/terr/news/lat_huntingtonclash.html)

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## The fate of fanaticism (2008-01-14 04:36)

From [1]Walter Laqueur

[fanatiques.png]

Detail from Eugène Delacroix, *The Fanatics of Tangier*, 1837-38.

It is not “the West against the rest.” Throughout human history, civilizations have coexisted and competed, and there is no good reason to assume that this will change in the foreseeable future. True, there is still considerable resistance to accepting such obvious facts as, for instance, the shrinking importance of Europe—demographically, economically, politically—even though the rise and decline of civilizations is a phenomenon as old as the hills. The position of America in the world without a strong Europe will certainly be weakened.

But looking ahead, the present threat is not really a “clash of civilizations,” but fanaticism and aggression, which are of particular importance in an age of weapons of mass destruction. There is no need to spell out where fanaticism is most rampant and dangerous at the present time. But it is less clear how durable fanaticism is, how long its intensity will last.

History seems to show that it is largely (albeit not entirely) a generational phenomenon. It seldom lasts longer than two or three generations, if that. How little time passed from the desert austerity of early Islam to the luxury of the Abbasid court in Baghdad! The impetus which led to the the Crusades petered out in

several decades. More recently, in the age of secular religions such as Communism, fanaticism (even enthusiasm) evaporated even more quickly. The pulse of history is quickening in our time, everywhere on the globe.

All of which leads to the question: what undermines and weakens fanaticism, aggression and expansion—and what follows it? (In some respects this resembles the debate prompted by Leon Festinger a few decades ago: what follows if and when prophecy fails?) The importance of economic factors in this context has been exaggerated (with certain exceptions); the impact of culture (in the widest sense) has been underrated.

It is a phenomenon that can perhaps best be observed among the Muslim communities in Europe. On one hand, there has been palpable radicalization with the emergence of a new underclass, the failure in the educational process, the sense of discrimination, the search for identity and pride. There seems to have been the emergence of what was called in nineteenth-century France *les classes dangereuses*. But even in these social strata, it is becoming more difficult to keep the fold in line. As a leading Berlin imam put it, the road to the (fundamentalist) mosque is long, the temptations are many and "we are likely to lose about half of the young on the way." It is a process which virtually all religions have experienced, and Islam seems to be no exception. The importance of the street gang (as yet insufficiently studied) could be as great as that of religion or ideology.

There is the contempt for Western decadence as expressed for instance in the growth of pornography denounced by Muslim preachers. Pornography has a very long history. It is a term often used loosely and arbitrarily; views and attitudes have radically changed in time and not only in Western culture. Kleist's *Marquise of 'O*, a novella published two hundred years ago, was dismissed as pornography at the time. Today it is deemed a jewel of world literature and no one would consider it particularly erotic. For centuries, there has been an erotic strain in Islamic literature, and greater experts than I have written about it. Salafis now regard it as pornography, which is haram because it is *fahsha* (obscenity, abomination, fornication) as stated in the Quran.

But the preachers seem not to have been too successful. The list of the countries with the most frequent surfers on the Internet looking for "sex" is headed by Pakistan, followed by India, Egypt, Turkey, Algeria, Morocco, Indonesia and even Iran. As Oscar Wilde sagely noted, he could resist anything but temptation—or as the New Testament puts it, the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

In brief, there is a tremendous difference between the holy writs and their exegesis and the reality in matters sexual. And this is true for many aspects of modern mass culture. After the Iron Curtain had come down and the cold war had ended, some astute Soviet observers noted that the Beatles had played a role in the breakdown of the Soviet empire. *I'm in Love* and *Good Day, Sunshine* probably did not play a decisive political role in the fall of the Soviet Union, but they were part of an underground culture which spread and contributed to the gradual subversion of the official secular religion to which everyone paid lip service.

Sexual issues and mass culture have been mentioned as a mere examples; many other factors contribute to the dissolution and breakdown of fanaticism. The point is that the fanatical impulse does not last forever, and it may peter out more quickly than we tend to think today.

But this should not lead to a feeling of great relief—the assumption that the danger has passed and that all we have to do is to sit patiently and wait. It could still be a process of a few generations, and the question arises whether that much time is left to humankind to avert a disaster (or disasters). For the first time in history, small groups of people will have the potential to cause millions of deaths and unimaginable damage; no great armies will be needed for this purpose. It is a race against time.

Comments are limited to MESH members.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_laqueur/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_laqueur/)

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Barry Rubin (2008-01-14 09:59:09)

As always Walter Laqueur brings a long-term wisdom—a commodity in rare supply today—to current issues. Let it be noted that Walter originated the idea and practice of contemporary history which was the forerunner of the methodology and mindset of research centers today. There are several important points worth underlining in his post: 1. Competition between ideologies and worldviews is a constant fact of history. The current one is less a clash between civilizations than a struggle against extremism that seeks to expand itself. It is roughly comparable with the previous rounds with Communism and fascism. Both of those phenomenon drew on the host country's "civilization" (Russia; Germany, Italy, Hungary) but were not pure products of it. Obviously, Islamist radicalism is closer to the root of the places where it flourishes, but the sum total of its history is far more than just Islam and certainly than this particular version of Islam. Indeed, the current struggle also draws heavily on combating its immediate rival, Arab nationalism, which is also a product of the local civilization. These ideas and struggles are long-term but not permanent phenomena. They arise in considerable part due to the failure of other ideas and systems but when they fail themselves—or do not win quick success—they bring forward new ideas and competing movements. Public opinion in Iran is a good indicator of how Islamist rule breeds rejection of that system. 2. On the Western side can basically be found Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and much of Asia, too, so that "Western civilization" has been transmuted into modernism which transcends its original geographic region. 3. Walter is very correct in pointing out that the factor of assimilation or cultural influence has been widely underestimated in the West (though not among the Islamists themselves). Despite the undermining of assimilationism and acculturation due to misguided multiculturalism (pluralism is the proper approach but that is the subject for a different essay), they remain powerful. Won't the majority of Muslim immigrants become largely like their neighbors eventually, though it might take until the third generation? How much are the Muslim-majority societies changing despite the Islamists' efforts? The Islamists feel themselves on the defensive and might well be fighting a rearguard action, as was true of reactionary forces in Europe. That does not mean, though that they cannot inflict tremendous damage as European history shows. Incidentally, it should never be forgotten that Islamist forces are pretty much everywhere—except in Iran, Sudan, the Gaza Strip, and Malaysia—the opposition. In the Arabic-speaking world, Arab nationalism still governs in most places. Islamism may be a rising tide but it is far from hegemonic and has a long way to go to achieve such a victory. 4. Finally, Walter is also the parent of terrorism studies and correctly notes the tremendous danger that this strategy's leverage brings during the interim period. This is an important contribution that points the way for several new and different perspectives on our era's most important, and misunderstood, issues.

Walter Reich (2008-01-19 23:08:16)

Walter Laqueur's contribution is synoptic in its learning and illuminating in showing us, incisively, the big picture. But in pointing out that there's also a small picture, his analysis, while in many ways reassuring, is ultimately troubling. The big picture Walter offers is that the problem we face in the Muslim world is one of fanaticism more than it is one of ideology or religion, and that the current episode of Muslim fanaticism, which threatens the world with terror, will eventually recede, much as other world-threatening episodes of fanaticism have receded in history. The small picture Walter offers is that such recessions tend to take generations. And this is troubling because, as he points out, horrendous damage can be wreaked in so short a span of time. Walter is quite specific. "For the first time in history," he points out, "small groups of people will have the potential to cause millions of deaths and unimaginable damage." In saying this he's reminding us, of course, that Islamist terrorist groups could use weapons of mass destruction against their targets—and that they could do that very soon, well before Islamism recedes as a fanatic force. And there are numerous ways in which they could do that. They could produce chemical weapons themselves. They could probably also produce biological weapons themselves, or get them from state sponsors or other sources. And, from one source or another, and in one way or another, nuclear materials that could cause mass casualties may well become available to them. These could be obtained as "loose nukes" (or, more likely, loose fissile materials) they might be able to buy from purloined, poorly-controlled Russian stockpiles; finished nuclear weapons they might be able to get from sympathetic

or criminal sources in a destabilized Pakistan; or nuclear materials they might be able to get from still other sources, such as North Korea or, in a few years, Iran. They could also obtain, through illicit sources, fissile materials used in research and power reactors. Al Qaeda has long expressed an interest in obtaining such materials and in using them—and it, or another Islamist group, may well do so long before Islamist fanaticism recedes. So is there a silver lining in Walter’s analysis? There isn’t, but there is a wise warning. Walter makes clear that the targets of today’s most dangerous fanaticism can’t just “sit patiently and wait.” He’s a fine historian but also a fine analyst of the current moment. And the current moment, with its possibilities of mass casualties, requires that we defend ourselves, even as we recognize that the world isn’t necessarily fated to contend with Islamist fanaticism forever. In the West we’ve only begun to do so; we’ve made damaging mistakes, we’ve left open large holes of vulnerability, and we have yet to learn how to balance civil liberties against actions we take in our “war on terror.” But we seem to be finding our way. No doubt, as time passes following 9/11, the tendency to grow lax will increase. Alas, it may take another 9/11—or multiple attacks that are smaller, or one or more attacks that are bigger—to mobilize us in this multigenerational, and potentially very lethal, struggle.

## The American footprint (2008-01-16 02:25)

From MESH Admin



When President Bush set out for the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, he might have been briefed on the U.S. military footprint in the region. A useful inventory is provided in a November [1]paper by [2]James A. Russell, a Gulf analyst and senior lecturer in the Department of National Security Affairs, Naval Postgraduate School. Russell notes that the U.S. infrastructure in the 1990s included these familiar elements:

- Central Command Naval Component, or NAV- CENT, in Manama, Bahrain.
- Air Force Central Command Component, first at Eskan Village in Saudi Arabia before moving to Prince Sultan Air Base and then to Al Udeid in Qatar in August 2003.
- Army Central Command Component, Kuwait.
- Heavy Brigade sets of ground equipment in Qatar and Kuwait, and afloat.
- Harvest Falcon Air Force equipment at Seeb in Oman.
- Aerial refueling detachment at Al Dhafra in the United Arab Emirates.

Since the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, the infrastructure has grown into what Russell calls “a veritable alphabet soup of new command elements, organizations, and operational nodes.” His expanded inventory list

(drawing on the CENTCOM [3]2006 posture statement) includes:

- Combined Forces Command Afghanistan (CFC-A) in Kabul that works with NATO's International Security Assistance Force.
- Also in Afghanistan, the Combined Joint Task Force 76 that directs combat operations throughout Afghanistan.
- Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa in Djibouti (CJTF-HOA), which is assisting countries in the region to build indigenous counterterrorist capabilities.
- Combined Joint Task Force 150, a coalition maritime naval assemblage commanded by a revolving series of multinational officers out of Manama that includes nine ships from seven countries performing maritime security in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.
- Combined Forces Air Component Command's Combined Air Operations Center at Al Udeid, Qatar. This constitutes the Air Force's Central Command forward-deployed theater component.
- Central Command Forward Headquarters (CENTCOM-CFC), Camp As Sayliyah, Qatar, serving as the leading edge of headquarters elements based at Central Command's headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida.
- Central Command Special Operations Headquarters (SOCCENT), Qatar, which coordinates special operations in theater.
- Multi-National Forces Iraq (MNF-I), overseeing all combat operations in Iraq.
- Multi-National Security Training Command (MNSTC-I) that coordinates the program to train and equip Iraqi forces.
- NATO Training Mission that focuses on developing the Iraqi officer corps.
- Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC), Kuwait, constituting the Army's Central Command component that coordinates Army activity throughout the Central Command area of responsibility. CFLCC also maintains an area support group, or ASG, at Camp As Sayliyah in Qatar.
- Central Command Deployment and Distribution Center (CDDOC), Kuwait, that supports theater-wide logistics and information distribution.
- Information, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance launch and recovery facility at Al Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates. This facility provides the Air Force Central Command Component with an operational and logistics hub to support theater-wide intelligence surveillance and collection with a variety of collection platforms.

Russell also makes reference to the following base "upgrades":

- In October 2004, as part of supplemental appropriations to fund ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Congress earmarked \$63 million in military construction funds for improvements at the Al Dhafra airfield in the United Arab Emirates, which accommodated a U.S. Air Force aerial refueling detachment during the 1990s and now hosts an information, surveillance, and reconnaissance launch and recovery facility. The same bill contained \$60 million to fund additional enhancements to the Al Udeid airfield in Qatar.

- In Afghanistan, the United States is spending \$83 million to upgrade its two main bases at Bagram Air Base (north of Kabul) and Kandahar Air Field to the south. The funding will be used to expand runways and other improvements to provide new billeting facilities for U.S. military personnel.
- The expansion of the facilities infrastructure in Afghanistan has been mirrored by the development of facilities and solidified politico-military partnerships in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan.
- In early 2006, Congress approved \$413.4 million for Army military construction projects in Iraq and Afghanistan through 2010. The same bill funded \$36 million for Air Force construction projects in these countries.
- In Iraq, the United States so far has spent an estimated \$240 million on construction at the Balad base (north of Baghdad), the main air transportation and supply hub; \$46.3 million at Al Asad, the largest military air center and major supply base for troops in Al Anbar; and \$121 million at Tallil air base (southern Iraq). Other projects include \$49.6 million for Camp Taji located just 20 miles northwest of Baghdad; \$165 million to build an Iraqi Army base near the southern town of Numaiy; and \$150 million for the Iraqi Army Al Kasik base north of Mosul.

1. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/Pubs/Display.Cfm?pubID=814>

2. <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/people/russell.asp>

3. <http://www2.centcom.mil/sites/uscentcom1/General%20Abizaid%20Statements/PostureStatement2006.htm>

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## Bush stops in Egypt (2008-01-16 12:09)

From [1]Michele Dunne

✖ President Bush's January 16 stop in Egypt was so short that the press kept forgetting to mention it in discussing the schedule for his Middle East trip, noting that he would spend the last two days in Saudi Arabia. President Mubarak found an opportunity to zing Bush early in their joint [2]press conference, interjecting in reply to Bush's compliment about the beauty of Sharm el-Sheikh that "you need much more days." Bush laughed and acknowledged that Mubarak "wants me back"—but did not immediately accept the invitation, as the President did on the spot when the Israelis invited him to return in May.

Bush seemed to try to compensate for the shortness of his stop with the fullness of his public statement, a virtual tour d'horizon of the U.S.-Egyptian relationship. Repeatedly highlighting the strength of U.S.-Egyptian friendship and American respect for Egyptian history and culture, Bush thanked Mubarak for cooperation on counterterrorism, Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, and Lebanon. He then transitioned rather gracefully to nudging on democracy issues, noting "Egypt's role in the world," "vibrant civil society," and the important role played by women. Bush praised the roles played by Egyptian "pioneering journalists," bloggers, and "judges insisting on independence," and voiced hope that the Egyptian government would "give the people of this proud nation a greater voice in your future." Politely phrased, but the message undoubtedly got through.

Both the brevity of Bush's stop and the content of his statement reflect the malaise that has afflicted U.S.-Egyptian relations for nearly a decade now, going back to the end of the Clinton administration, when Egypt received its share of the blame for the failed peace process. Mubarak has increasingly disliked the U.S. approach to the region since then, and U.S. leaders—in the Congress as well as the White House—have come to see Mubarak as an aging leader who is only minimally helpful on regional issues and a laggard when it comes to reform in his own country. The 30-year old U.S.-Egyptian partnership has always had two legs:

strategic and diplomatic cooperation in the region, and U.S. support for liberalization (first economic, later political) inside Egypt. While the two countries' regional goals are still reasonably in sync, the partnership will continue to suffer until there is better mutual agreement on where Egypt's reform process is going and how the United States can support it.

On the broader issue of Bush's apparent effort during this trip to revive his freedom agenda (on life support since mid-2006), the Egypt statement is the best he has done. His January 13 [3]speech in Abu Dhabi had some bright spots—the new pairing of freedom and justice as central concepts is positive, though coming too late in this administration to do much good—but the UAE venue made it hard to take the speech seriously. Not only did Bush not breathe a word publicly in Saudi Arabia about the freedom agenda, but he made the mistake of praising Bahraini King Hamad for being "on the forefront of providing hope for people through democracy" and holding "two free elections since 2006." One can imagine how the Bahraini liberals, cheated out of their parliamentary victories in the totally unmonitored 2006 elections, felt hearing that. Bush could certainly have praised Bahraini military cooperation while gently mentioning the importance of equal rights for citizens and a level political playing field. Even omitting the issue altogether would have been better than offering unqualified praise, which made the United States look either clueless or cynical about what goes on in Bahrain.

Comments by MESH invitation only.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele\\_dunne/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele_dunne/)
2. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/01/20080116-2.html>
3. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/01/20080113-1.html>

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Dan Kurtzer (2008-01-16 14:41:22)

Michele Dunne has put her finger on two critical issues, one symbolic and one substantive. President Bush is the latest in a long line of American officials who have treated their visits to Egypt as afterthoughts, as brief whistle-stops. Despite knowing how sensitive Mubarak is on this question—he constantly implores visitors to extend their stays—U.S. officials have passed through the country in hours. More substantively, President Bush's words about the strength of U.S.-Egyptian relations will do little to calm the bilateral waters unless he accompanied those words with a private commitment to try to restore the full amount of military aid which Congress wants to reduce. Is Egypt still "worth the money?" This requires a more thoughtful discussion than a few lines of comment, but the short answer for now is "yes." With such angst in the region about U.S. policy over the past few years, this is the wrong time to dump an old friend overboard. *Dan Kurtzer served as U.S. ambassador to Egypt from 1997 to 2001.*

Emad Shahin (2008-01-17 13:46:13)

For many in the region, President Bush's latest visit to the Middle East did not amount to more than a public relations tour. His public statements on Palestine, Iran, and democracy were viewed as dated, unhelpful, or untenable, reflecting policies out of sync with the expectations of the people of the region. Bush's statement on a Palestinian state was not new, and was mitigated by his urging the Palestinians to accept geopolitical fait accomplis (the Separation Wall and illegal settlements) and compensation for the refugees. Instead of enlisting regional support for a multilateral solution and an honorable U.S. exit from Iraq, the President focused on Iran as a regional threat. In this, he failed to enlist the support of the Gulf states, including the United States' strongest allies, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Bush's visit to Egypt was yet another clear mishandling of the historic and strategic relationship between the two countries. It was seen as signaling the diminished strategic importance of Egypt to U.S. policies in the region. In the President's first visit to the region in the seven years of his administration, he dedicated only five hours to Egypt, compared to two days in Saudi Arabia (where he appeared on Arab TV screens as "Bush of Arabia," wearing the *abaya*—the traditional Saudi garment—and dancing the *arda*, a Saudi folkloric sword dance). Bush's talk about furthering freedom and reform in Egypt was reminiscent of his strong 2005 stand on democracy, which Michele Dunne

rightly sees to be “on life support.” The sudden revival of the reform agenda is viewed with suspicion, as a way to squeeze concessions from the Egyptian regime on regional issues. Strains in the relationship are likely to continue until a new administration enters the White House. *Emad Shahin is visiting associate professor in the Department of Government, Harvard University.*

## Bush begs the Saudis (2008-01-16 15:32)

From [1]Gal Luft



President Bush’s appeal to the Saudis to increase oil production is more pitiful than understandable. At \$100 a barrel, the United States bleeds over a billion dollars per day in order to finance its petroleum import needs. The result: ballooning trade deficits, growing unemployment, a weakened dollar and crumbling financial institutions like Citigroup and Merrill Lynch now forced to beg Persian Gulf monarchies for cash infusions. At current oil prices, the U.S. economy is melting faster than the ice caps.

But despite the president’s sweet-talk, his ridiculous appearance in a traditional Arab robe, his hand-holding with the Saudi monarchs, and even his gift of 900 precision-guided bombs, the Saudis were quick to respond with a slap in the face. Within one hour, the kingdom’s oil minister announced that oil prices would remain tied to market forces and the Saudis would not open the spigot.

This is hardly a surprise to me. The Saudis—despite their claims that oil high prices are the doing of Wall Street speculators and American SUV-driving soccer moms—are the first to blame for the current oil crisis. Their reluctance to invest in new production, their lack of transparency on reserve data and their anti-market practices, which prevent international oil companies from operating in their midst in any meaningful way, are the real reason for the quadrupling of prices in the past six years.

The Saudis are also the prime reason for the failure of the Iraqi oil industry to take off. Exactly four years ago I [2]warned that the United States was turning a blind eye to the Saudi failure to seal its border with Iraq. This led to a migration of thousands of Saudi jihadists into Iraq, a fact that contributed to the



[3]terror campaign against Iraq's oil industry. If not for the attacks, Iraq today could have been producing at least five million barrels per day. Instead it does less than three. Of course no one has ever held the Saudis accountable for the loss of two million barrels per day—an amount of oil that, were it in the market today, would have dropped prices by at least \$30 a barrel. We'd rather beg than blame.

The truth is that the Saudis feel quite cozy at \$100 oil. The world economy hasn't come down (yet), the American public is docile, and oil-exporting countries—the recipients of a transfer on a scale the world has never known—are having a jolly time. Furthermore, the Saudis feel they have already met their obligation to the American economy by standing steadfast against other OPEC members like Iran and Venezuela, which are pushing for an OPEC decision to dump the dollar as the currency used for oil trades. Such a step could send the dollar down like a rocket.

So much of this is our own doing. Two years ago President Bush committed a major blunder, allowing Saudi Arabia's admission to the World Trade Organization. By dint of Saudi Arabia's leadership of the OPEC cartel, no other country is more responsible for violating free trade. Yet, its admission was not contingent on any behavioral change. Thus the Saudis enjoy the benefits of free trade while continuing to manipulate the price of the world's most important traded commodity.

Furthermore, the United States has its own mechanisms to bring down oil prices. It owns 770 million barrels in strategic reserves. OECD countries have between them 4 billion barrels in stock. Yet, not a drop of oil has been released. Now that the Iowa caucuses are over, the United States could remove the 54-cent tariff on imported ethanol and bring billions of gallons of alternative fuel into the country almost overnight. This alone could drive down gasoline prices by at least 50 cents per gallon. And there are more strategic solutions which could remove the yoke of our oil dependence, like providing fuel choice and electrifying our transportation system. (We no longer produce electricity from oil.)

The spectacle of American presidents kowtowing to the Saudis is as old as U.S. involvement in the Middle East. Six decades ago FDR had to steal a cigarette in a stairwell of the USS Quincy in order not to smoke in King Abdulaziz's presence. (Winston Churchill, on the other hand, had a smoke and a drink!) With growing dependence on the Saudis, our sovereignty and freedom of action have been steadily eroded. Barring some serious action, no matter who the next president is, he or she will have to ride a lot of camels and wear a lot of robes to keep the oil barrels rolling.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal\\_luft/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal_luft/)
2. <http://www.iags.org/n0121042.htm>
3. <http://www.iags.org/iraqpipelinewatch.htm>

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## GAO misleads on Iran sanctions (2008-01-17 17:21)

From [1]Matthew Levitt

There are [2]no foolproof metrics by which to measure the impact of sanctions, whether related to proliferation, terrorism or other issues. On that discreet point the recent [3]GAO report on the impact of Iran sanctions gets it right, and its recommendation that more be done to assess the impact of sanctions is constructive.

Given the nature of the targets in question (terrorist networks, rogue regimes), assessing the impact of sanctions will never be easy. Open source financial data isn't enough. Intelligence is needed to isolate the impact of each specific sanction. The effect of sanctions is often felt over an extended period of time, making

the impact of any particular sanction difficult to isolate from the impact of other efforts aimed at the same targets over the same (or overlapping) periods of time. Ideally, we would want to know which financial measure led to which specific impact. For example, we would want to know the relative impact of denying illicit actors access to the U.S. financial system, or forcing them to conduct transactions in softer currencies or via inefficient transfer mechanisms. Unfortunately, tasking the intelligence community to focus its collection on these issues and make impact assessments is a tall order, coming at a time when it is stretched thin to support wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and track nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea.

But on the specific question of the impact and utility of sanctions targeting Iran today, the GAO report simply misses the point. Its findings and recommendations would have been much more useful had it separated analysis into pre-2006 sanctions and post-2006 targeted financial measures. Instead, the report lumps analysis of Iran's economy into one block of time, ignoring the complete tactical shift in sanctions that took place in 2006.

It's not news that the country-wide "shotgun sanctions" of the kind slapped on Iraq in the 1990s were largely ineffective. An analysis of those sanctions programs led the Treasury Department and others to develop a graduated and carefully targeted sanctions program, aimed not at entire countries but at specific illicit actors and focused on deterring illicit behavior. These are not your grandfather's sanctions. To reflect that reality, they usually are not even called "sanctions," but are described as targeted financial measures.

The GAO report does note, almost in passing, that new sanctions have been put in place, but focuses only on the multilateral U.N. resolutions passed in December 2006 (UNSCR 1737) and March 2007 (UNSCR 1747). It does not assess the impact of U.S. unilateral sanctions (although it lists some of them) or the impact of U.S. [4]efforts to leverage market forces against illicit actors, including Iran. Such efforts have yielded results. Indeed, just this week Bahrain's Ahli United Bank, the kingdom's largest lender by market value, [5]suspended business with Iran, and came under pressure to freeze the Iranian operations of its affiliate, Future Bank (which Ahli United established as a joint venture with two Iranian banks in 2004).

Nor does the report account for the impact these and other unilateral efforts have had in leading to other multilateral actions. For example, U.S. designation of Bank Sepah led to its inclusion in UNSCR 1747. U.S. efforts also [6]led to the determination by the Financial Action Task Force (an intergovernmental body that works by consensus and includes China and Russia) that Iran's lack of a comprehensive regime to prevent money laundering and terrorism financing "represents a significant vulnerability within the international financial system."

Where the GAO does have data, its metrics sometimes raise more questions than they answer. For example, a major U.S. aim of pre-2006 sanctions has been to deprive Iran of oil and gas export revenue. The GAO questions the efficacy of these sanctions, identifying a total of \$13,561 million in binding contracts (Appendix IV). But the sanctions were never aimed at Iran's investment in petrochemical plants or refineries and gas processing plants for domestic consumption. (If Iran wants to consume more oil and gas at home, all to the good: that leaves less for export.) As my colleague Patrick Clawson has shown, those domestic categories comprise \$12,935 million of the \$13,561 million in contracts. That leaves a modest total of \$626 million in oil and gas export projects—of which \$500 million is for an LNG facility where much of the work is on the port. What's left? A paltry \$126 million in binding contracts for oil exploration and production since 2003. (This leaves aside the \$4,450 million Azadegan project, which the GAO report notes has been withdrawn.)

Finally, while the GAO report notes the [7]recent NIE on Iran's nuclear intentions and capabilities, it seems almost oblivious to the NIE's most significant conclusion: that the tool most likely to alter Iran's nuclear calculus is targeted political and economic pressure, not military action. According to the NIE, Iran's decision

to halt its nuclear weapons program in 2003 was "in response to increasing international scrutiny and pressure resulting from exposure of Iran's previously undeclared nuclear work." The key judgments conclude that the intelligence community's "assessment that the [nuclear weapons] program probably was halted primarily in response to international pressure suggests Iran may be more vulnerable to influence on the issue that we judged previously."

The GAO report is likely to be interpreted as a negative assessment of the current program of targeted financial measures, but the truth is the report has very little to say about them. They need to be disaggregated from earlier efforts and accurately assessed in their own right. In the final analysis, there is plenty of evidence pointing to the fact that targeted financial measures are working.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew\\_levitt/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew_levitt/)
2. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC07.php?CID=385>
3. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d0858.pdf>
4. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC07.php?CID=333>
5. <http://www.reuters.com/article/rbssFinancialServicesAndRealEstateNews/idUSL1681161220080116>
6. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2673>
7. [http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/20071203\\_release.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20071203_release.pdf)

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## Bush's Saudi success (2008-01-18 07:21)

From [1]Bernard Haykel

I'm in Riyadh and the sense I get from the Saudis is that the Bush visit was a success for the President in two ways.

First, Bush was told that while the Gulf States' leaderships are against an attack on Iran, preferring instead diplomatic and UN-based initiatives, they would not stand in the way of an attack. They might make some grumbling noises should an attack take place, but this would not amount to a principled position against the attack nor would it be followed up by more substantial anti-U.S. policies. More important, it seems that the United States could use the facilities afforded by the Gulf countries for this attack.

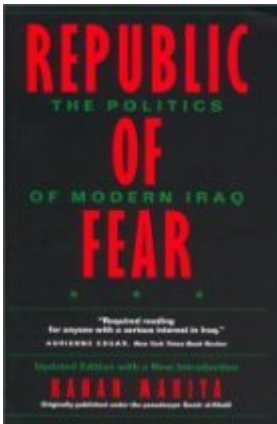
Second, Saudi Arabia has understood that the price of oil needs to be brought down through an increase in output, and the Kingdom has something like one half of all the oil rigs in the world trying to accomplish this. The fear here is that the high oil price will end up forcing the West to find alternatives to oil in the long term, and in the short term this might lead to a world recession, depressing the demand for this commodity. The experience of the 1990s, when prices were very low and Riyadh had serious budgetary difficulties, has not been forgotten.

The Saudis did push the president to do something substantial on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, and want their 2002 Beirut initiative to be taken seriously. The constant refrain in Riyadh is that the Palestinian situation is a source of embarrassment for the regime with its own public, and is a source of tension in its relations with the United States. Riyadh wishes to see the Palestinian problem resolved so that the Kingdom can re-invent its relationship with the United States on the basis of containing Iran and, more generally, act as the bulwark for stability in the Gulf region.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bernard\\_haykel/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bernard_haykel/)

## Writing 'Republic of Fear' (2008-01-21 03:20)

From [1]Kanan Makiya



[2] Writing a book is a long and personal experience. If the experience of writing is genuine—when the writer wrestles with the world’s demons and reflects or refracts those demons through his or her writing—then a good book will invariably result. A book’s beauty comes from personal opinion.

[3] Republic of Fear first appeared to the public in 1989, but was actually finished in 1986. The book took six years to write, which is something one would not know from reading it. But it took those six years to change from one way of thinking about the world to another.

My first political experience was in 1967, the year of the Six Day War. Many Arabs of that generation had similar feelings about the completeness of the Arab defeat. This was not something that a young man growing up in Baghdad, who was totally immersed in school, could ignore. It was a revealing time. The event exposed the lies of the post-World War II nation-states that appeared in the Middle East. Like the rest of my generation, I pinned my hopes on, and channeled my energy into, supporting the rising star of the Palestinian resistance movement. This movement became a viable alternative to the decrepit regimes that had failed in 1967—and the realization that this too was an illusion was the real impetus behind Republic of Fear.

Three major events in the Middle East were crucial to the transformation that resulted in Republic of Fear. The first experience was the Lebanese civil war. The same Palestinian organizations through which so many Arabs had hoped to find a new beginning engaged in mafia-like conduct. The second major event was the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the explosion that threw Marxist notions of progressive movements into complete disarray. The final event was the Iraq-Iran War. The casualties of the war alone, which far outnumbered those of the Arab-Israeli conflict, demonstrated that the political center of gravity did not lie in the ongoing Palestinian dilemma. Instead, the center could be found in much bigger conflicts. Other little things led to the writing of Republic of Fear as well, such as personal stories about the terrible atrocities inside Iraq. There were no explanations or theories for their existence—something that added to my overall disillusionment.

In the course of writing Republic of Fear, I underwent a kind of political transformation from a nationalist, socialist, and Marxist perspective to one based on the liberal classics of the last two hundred years—books that were not available before the writing project began. When I discovered these writings in the early 1980s, it was so revolutionary for my own understanding that I began translating some of them into Arabic. Twenty years later, a contemporary author who wrote biting internet satires of the Iraqi political elite was enormously influenced by these translations. In this way, books live on in other writers in some shape or

form.

Kanan Makiya delivered these remarks last October 20, at the launch of [4]The Washington Institute Book Prize. —MESH

1. <http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/nejs/Faculty/#kmakiya>
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/41QYGRBD36L.jpg>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0520214390>
4. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC11.php?CID=479>

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## Memo from Gulfistan (2008-01-22 06:53)

From [1]Martin Kramer



Martin Kramer made these remarks at the [2]8th Herzliya Conference on January 21.

Lately it has been said that the Arabs are in a panic over the growing power of Iran. We are told that Arab rulers so fear the rise of Iran that this fear has eclipsed all others—it's the sum of all fears. And it's making a new Middle East

That is what David Brooks, New York Times columnist, [3]wrote last November: "Iran has done what decades of peace proposals have not done—brought Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the Palestinians and the U.S. together. You can go to Jerusalem or to some Arab capitals and the diagnosis of the situation is the same: Iran is gaining hegemonic strength over the region." Martin Indyk of the Saban Center used the same language in a November [4]interview. Iran, he said, was making "a bid for hegemony in the region."

The Sunni Arab states, and...Israel, suddenly found that they were on the same side against the Iranians. And so that created a strategic opportunity which the [Bush] administration has finally come to recognize, and that's, more than anything else, what's fueling the move to Annapolis.

If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Just last month, Iran's President Ahmadinejad was invited to attend the summit of Arab Gulf rulers (the Gulf Cooperation Council) in Qatar. That was the first time an Iranian president had ever attended a GCC summit. Two weeks later, Ahmadinejad arrived

Mecca, for the haj pilgrimage, at the invitation of Saudi King Abdullah. It was the first pilgrimage by an Iranian president since Iran's revolution. And as any travel log of Arab and Iranian ministers will show, this is just the tip of the iceberg.

What game are the Gulf Arabs playing? Pretend for a moment that you are ruler of a mythical state called Gulfistan, and I am your national security adviser. You have asked me to prepare a memo on our strategic situation. Page one:

- Your Majesty, these are good times, thanks be to God. With oil at \$100 a barrel, you are awash in cash. You have built mega-projects, you have bought new weapons, you have put us on the map. An American university and a French museum have opened branches here. Our skyline flashes glitz and prosperity. And there is no end in sight to the strong demand for our oil. The developed countries are addicted, and China and India need us more every day.
- We are enjoying this boom under the protection of the greatest power on earth. The United States has built a front line of bases right through the Gulf, and not far from your palace. The Americans are here to protect the oil, and as long as we keep it flowing, we need not fear any enemy.
- But Your Majesty doesn't reward me with a mansion in Aspen to tell you only good news. True, it never rains in Gulfistan, but you wish to know if I see clouds on the horizon.
- I see two clouds. There is President Bush, who thinks God has placed him on earth to make peace in the "Holy Land," and bring so-called democracy to the Arabs; and there is President Ahmadinejad, who believes God has put him here to spread his Shiite perversion, and who wants nuclear weapons to turn Persia into a great power.
- These are dangerous men who threaten our security. Your Majesty, wisdom dictates that we not chose sides in their quarrel. We need good relations with the Americans: they are our biggest customers, they will defend us against any foreign enemy, and the weapons they sell us make us look stronger than we are. But we need good relations with the Iranians too. Iran is so close, we can feel its breath on our faces, from OPEC to Iraq. Were Iran to subvert us, by inciting our Shiite minority or encouraging terror, it could burst our bubble.
- Your Majesty, a nuclear Iran is undesirable. The Persians are pushy; nuclear weapons would only make them more arrogant. For a moment, we thought the Americans would bomb them to stop them. A few of us privately urged them to do that. But the Americans can't make up their minds. Some think Iran should be bombed. Some think Iran has no weapons program. Others share the view of General Abizaid, the former U.S. commander here. "Iran is not a suicidal nation," he's said. "Nuclear deterrence would work with Iran." The Americans would destroy Iran if it touched our oil, which is ultimately their oil. But if Iran is careful, it might get the bomb.
- In this uncertain situation, we should balance America and Iran. On the one hand, let us reassure Iran that we are good neighbors. Tell the Iranians we will oppose aggression against them, and we won't boycott their business or freeze their assets. On the other hand, let us reassure the Americans that we are good allies. Tell them we will stabilize oil prices and let them build their big bases off in the desert. We must keep Washington and Tehran equally close—and equally distant.
- Your Majesty, the Americans want you to shake the hands of Jews and give a hand to Palestinians, to support the so-called "peace process." We are fortunate: God gave us all the oil and no Jews. He gave the Palestinians no oil and all the Jews. If you join the "peace process," the Jew will be at your door, demanding "normalization," and the Palestinian, as usual, will repay generosity with ingratitude.

The wise course is to keep this an American problem. Say you will help, but set impossible conditions; come to their "peace conferences" but make no commitments. True, many of your people are moved by the plight of the Palestinians. But this won't weigh on us, so long as they blame only the Jews and the Americans. If we avoid commitment, the blame will never fall on us.

- If we are wise, we can keep up this game until Bush and Ahmadinejad fade into history. I, your humble servant, will continue to act as your adviser in these sensitive matters. Perhaps, then, I might be rewarded with that small estate outside London? My youngest wife very much fancies it...

Now obviously I've simplified things here. There is no typical Arab Gulf state like Gulfistan—different Gulf states have different interests and different policies. That is why we have Gulf experts.

But this isn't the place to explore what distinguishes, say, Kuwait from Saudi Arabia. The point I want to make is this:

We all know how little fuel there is right here to keep the Annapolis process going. At this point, Israelis and Palestinians are running on fumes. That's why Martin Indyk said that most of the fuel for Annapolis would have to come from a grand anti-Iran coalition. But the reality is that the coalition never formed, and now even its premises have disintegrated. Assembling this coalition was bound to be difficult; after the NIE, it has become impossible.

We have been here before. Every few years, a prophet arises to proclaim a new Middle East, including Israel. In the 1990s, peace between Israel and the Palestinians was supposed to turn the Middle East into a zone of economic cooperation—including Israel. Then we were told that Iraq's liberation would turn the Middle East into a zone of democracy—including Israel. A few months ago, we were told that the Iranian threat would turn the Middle East into a zone of political and military alliance—including Israel.

This latest new Middle East has had the shortest life of them all. Apparently, new Middle Easts just aren't what they used to be.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)
2. [http://www.herzliyaconference.org/Eng/\\_Articles/Article.asp?CategoryID=33&ArticleID=1919](http://www.herzliyaconference.org/Eng/_Articles/Article.asp?CategoryID=33&ArticleID=1919)
3. [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/06/opinion/06brooks.html?\\_r=1&hp&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/06/opinion/06brooks.html?_r=1&hp&oref=slogin)
4. <http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=16572421>

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## Gaza into Egypt (2008-01-24 12:48)

From [1]Martin Kramer

"This may be a blessing in disguise." This is how an unnamed Israeli official [2]greeted the destruction by Hamas of a chunk of the border barrier separating Gaza from Egypt, followed by an unregulated flood of hundreds of thousands of Gazan Palestinians across the border into Egypt. "Some people in the Defense Ministry, Foreign Ministry and prime minister's office are very happy with this. They are saying, 'At last, the disengagement is beginning to work.'" Obviously, a broken border between Egypt and Gaza is a major security problem for Israel. But war matériel and money for Hamas crossed the border anyway. An open border effectively absolves Israel of responsibility for the well-being of Gaza's population, and may prompt Israel to sever its remaining infrastructure and supply links to Gaza. A large part of the responsibility for Gaza would be shifted from Israel to Egypt, which might explain the satisfied murmurings in Jerusalem.

But the implications of the big breach go further. Given that Gaza and the West Bank are unlikely to be reunited, the question of Gaza's own viability as a separate entity is bound to resurface. In the 1990s, economists talked about Gaza's viability as a function of economics: massive investment could turn it into a high-rise Singapore. But in an article written back in the summer of 1991, a leading geographer argued that this wasn't feasible, and that a viable Gaza would need more land. Most of it, he argued, would have to come from Egypt.

"Gaza Viability: The Need for Enlargement of its Land Base"—that was the title of an [3]article by [4]Saul B. Cohen, a distinguished American geographer and one-time president of Queens College and the Association of American Geographers. Cohen began with this basic assumption: a high-rise Gaza "would be ecologically disastrous... To become a successful mini-state, one that would serve as a 'gateway' or exchange-type state, Gaza will need additional land." Cohen calculated that a viable Gaza would need about 1,000 square kilometers of territory—that is, an additional 650 square kilometers. This is how he mapped his proposal:

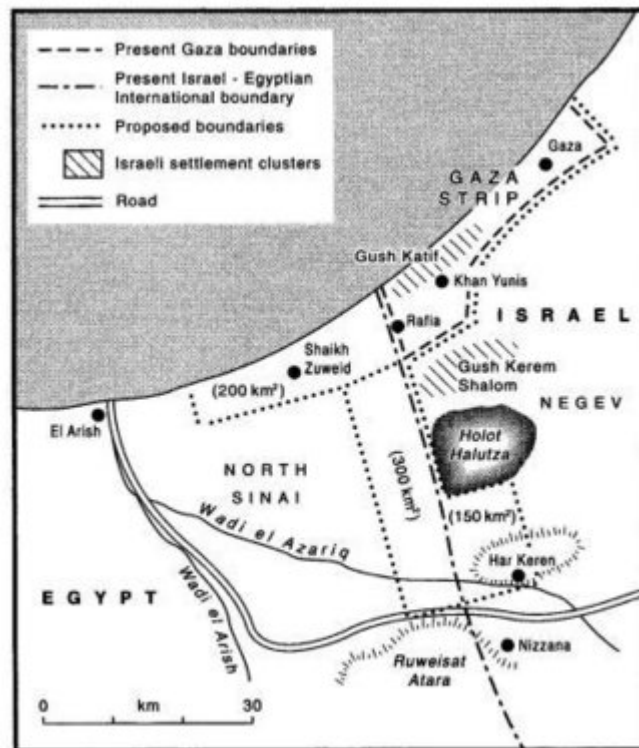


Figure 7.1 A Gaza mini-state

Egypt would provide a 30-kilometer stretch of Mediterranean coast (200 square kilometers), giving an expanded Gaza a total Mediterranean coast of about 75 kilometers. Egypt would also provide a stretch of the north Sinai plain (300 square kilometers), and Israel would kick in a parcel on its side of the border (150 square kilometers). This would be sufficient area, Cohen wrote, "to relieve Gaza's overcrowding, provide for agricultural and natural land reserves, and spread urban activities (including small towns and hotels) to provide a unique, low-rise cultural landscape." Egypt would provide water (by extending a Nile water canal from El Arish) and power (via a natural gas line). Cohen also believed that Israeli settlements at Gush Katif "in the long run should be removed." The long run didn't take all that long.

The Oslo accords eclipsed the idea of a Gaza mini-state. Gaza was supposed to find its outlet in



the West Bank, through a safe-passage corridor. The idea of an expanded Gaza was revived shortly before Israel's unilateral withdrawal, by an Israeli geographer (and former rector of Hebrew University), [5]Yehoshua Ben-Arieh. He proceeded from this assumption: a corridor to the West Bank would not suffice to relieve the pressure building up in Gaza. Gaza could only be viable if it became a crossroads or gateway, which would require a deep-water port, an airport, and a new city.

Ben-Arieh [6]proposed a three-way swap. The Palestinian Authority would be given 500 to 1,000 square kilometers of Egypt's northern Sinai. Israel would give Egypt 250 to 500 square kilometers along their shared border at Paran, and would also give Egypt a corridor road to Jordan. On the West Bank, the Palestinian Authority would cede to Israel the same amount of territory (500 to 1,000 square kilometers) it received in Egypt. This is how Ben-Arieh mapped the southern part of his plan:



1. Egyptian land to be transferred to the Palestinians
2. Israeli land to be transferred to Egypt
3. Israeli Highway/corridor to be transferred to Egypt
4. Proposed highways

Ben-Arieh presented his idea and maps to then-prime minister Ariel Sharon, who ([7]according to Ben-Arieh) described the plan as premature, but didn't reject it. "Maybe one day it can become an idea," he reportedly said.

To anyone who knows the complexities of the politics, these plans look fantastic. But while geographers often miss the devilish details, they do have an appreciation of how tentative the map of the Middle East really is. It is a schematic representation of other forces, and if the strength of those forces changes, the map will ultimately show it. There were 350,000 Palestinians in Gaza in 1967. Now there are 1.3 million, who are pushing against the envelope of Gaza's narrow borders with growing force. Israel has the power and the resolve to push back. Egypt just doesn't, which is why the envelope burst where it did.

That pressure will not relent, and since Hamas seeks to channel it into a "right of return" on the ruins of Israel, which the United States says it rejects, the question is this: where does Washington propose to divert this pressure? Can its "peace process," now focused entirely on the West Bank, divert any of it? Unless the White House can make water flow uphill, perhaps now is time to revisit the geographers' alternatives, and honestly ask whether they're more fantastic than the present policy.

Comments by MESH invitation only.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)
2. <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/01/23/africa/mideast.php>
3. <http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&id=8IQ0AAAAQAAJ>
4. [http://www.regents.nysed.gov/Bios\\_and\\_pictures/cohen.html](http://www.regents.nysed.gov/Bios_and_pictures/cohen.html)
5. <http://geography.huji.ac.il/personal/Benarieh.html>
6. <http://www.passia.org/meetings/2004/July-14-Territorial-Exchange-Draft.htm>
7. <http://isracast.nethost.co.il/Articles/article.aspx?ID=223>

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Steven A. Cook (2008-01-24 19:42:11)

The recent breach of the barrier along the Gaza-Egypt border is just the latest act in a struggle going back to the mid-1990s over who will control the Gaza Strip. As Israel's deputy defense minister, Matan Vilnai, and Foreign Ministry spokesman Arye Mekel [1]indicated, the Israelis have achieved something they have long wanted to do: unload Gaza onto someone, anyone, even Yasir Arafat. The fact that they have dumped the territory into Husni Mubarak's unwitting lap seems like a fitting end. Yet, Vilnai and Mekel are significantly underestimating the Egyptian capacity to resist. Let's stipulate that if the Egyptians were smarter they could have actually played the Gaza border problems to their advantage. There was a case to be made that the Egyptians could have used more border police than the Israelis were permitting and that Israel's pressure on Gaza was driving the smuggling problem. Instead, the Egyptians chose to complain that the problems on the Gaza-Egypt border were not that bad and that the Israelis were just stirring up trouble for them in Congress. That being said, so long as the Egyptian commanders charged with securing the border were getting a cut of the smuggling proceeds, there was little chance that the Egyptians were going to do much anyway. Now that the border barrier has been breached, Egypt's languid approach to Gaza is quickly coming to an end. From Cairo's perspective the worst possible development—besides Hamas ruling Gaza well—is Jerusalem's current effort to foist Gaza on Egypt. The Egyptians are already contending with unrest in Sinai, a failed social contract, overburdened infrastructure, and the prominence of the Muslim Brotherhood. A new responsibility for Gaza's 1.3 million Palestinians is likely to accentuate each of these problems in a variety of ways that will instill further tension and uncertainty in Egypt's fraught political environment. As a result, Egypt's security services are unlikely to take any chances with Gaza. Despite growing public pressure on Mubarak to do something to relieve the suffering in Gaza, the Egyptians will reseal the border. They did it in 2005 after a previous breach and they will do it again. Moreover, despite Hamas' demands it is unlikely that there will be major changes to the way the border is administered. The Egyptians simply will not countenance changes to the status quo. There isn't a single upside for Cairo. Having learned their lesson, after resealing Gaza the Egyptians are likely going to work hard to ensure that the responsibility for the suffering in Gaza is squarely on the shoulders of both Jerusalem and Washington. This narrative—which has the benefit of being largely true—will, no doubt, encourage the Europeans to begin clamoring for dialogue with Hamas. It will also subject Washington to Arab demands that it either apply pressure on the Israelis or risk losing Arab support on Iran. Indeed, with Cairo and Riyadh already hedging when it comes to Tehran, Washington's Arab allies have some leverage in this area. The United States will likely blink and force some sort of change in Israeli policy toward Gaza. There is too much at stake as the situation on the Gaza-Egypt border is, if left unattended, likely to undermine the Bush administration's two recent regional initiatives—the “Annapolis process” and building a durable coalition against Iran (an uncertain prospect to begin with). Once the Egyptians reseal the border, expect the Bush administration to continue to emphasize negotiations between Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. The administration's position is based on the hunch that progress between Israel and the Palestinian Authority will undercut Hamas and ultimately lead the way back to the 1990s when a passage between the West Bank and Gaza seemed like a viable option. Given conditions on the ground—the situation in Gaza, continued Qassam fire, settlement building, and the political fissures in both Israel and among Palestinian factions—it is unlikely that this hoped-for progress will be realized. So what to do about Gaza in the long run? A very good question that has very few good answers. It is hard not appreciate the creativity of both Saul B. Cohen and Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, but their plans are farfetched for two primary reasons. First, Palestinians are likely to resist the further fragmentation of their land. From their perspective, there is no such thing as a “three-state solution” as Gaza remains an integral part of any future Palestinian state. Second, Egypt is unlikely to surrender territory for the benefit of creating a Gazastan. The return of every inch of Sinai is a critical component of Egypt's nationalist pantheon. In the Egyptian narrative, Israelis give up land for peace, Arabs do not. For Cairo, Gaza is an Israeli problem. If there is going to be a state in Gaza, then it is an Israeli responsibility, after the dispossession of the Palestinian people, to

provide the territory to make it viable. In the end, Gaza will remain in Gaza and the struggle over who can pass it off to whom will continue. *Steven A. Cook is Douglas Dillon Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. —MESH*

1. [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080124/ap\\_on\\_re\\_mi\\_ea/israel\\_palestinians\\_179](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080124/ap_on_re_mi_ea/israel_palestinians_179)

James Lindsay (2008-01-28 14:18:00)

The "blessing in disguise" argument, it seems to me, has a good deal of truth to it, but it also shows the failure of Israeli policy in 2005, which is only now perhaps being remedied by the actions of Hamas and Egypt. In departing from the Philadelpi corridor in 2005, the Israelis either accepted that there would be increased smuggling on (and under) the Gaza-Egypt border, or fantasized that Egypt would openly support Israel against the Palestinians. (The Israelis never summoned the nerve to do the only thing that could have ended the tunnel smuggling: clearing a greater area along the border and digging a moat. They might well have asked themselves how likely it was that the Egyptians and the PA would do that.) Instead, by turning Philadelpi over to the PA and the Egyptians (but with supposed Israeli "control" from afar via the EUBAM), the Israelis got the worst of both worlds. They had no ability to stop the traffic in Hamas and/or Iranian money, material and manpower. But, because Israel supposedly controlled *all* access to Gaza, world opinion held it responsible for Gaza's misery. The Egyptians, for whom Israel is arguably the ultimate enemy, had little incentive to cooperate with Israel. Somehow the smuggling through tunnels just couldn't be stopped, despite some 750 Egyptian military troops (permitted by an agreed modification of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty) and Egyptian police forces. When it suited the Egyptians (for example, when they wanted Hamas to turn over a terrorist suspect), they temporarily opened the border to Hamas. Once the NIE came out, and the American threat to Iran seemed to wane, Egypt boosted cooperation with the Iranian-sponsored Hamas, even to the detriment of the PA. Most notably, Egypt permitted the exit and re-entry of Gazan "pilgrims" to Mecca, in cooperation with Hamas instead of the PA. Indeed, it is not impossible that Hamas demonstrations and the mass "breakthroughs" at the border over the last few days were coordinated with Egypt. In retrospect, Israel might have done better to have left the border to the PA and the Egyptians when it evacuated Gaza in 2005. At least the PA might have gotten credit for the inevitable opening of the border, and it might have been able to control who crossed. Of course it is just as likely that the PA would have done no better than the Israelis working through the EUBAM. But at least Israel would not have been held responsible for "imprisoning" Gazans. As Israeli politicians are suggesting, a new Israeli policy may include a complete separation from Gaza, with all crossings into Israel closed permanently, leaving Egypt as Gaza's only connection to the outside world. Giving up on Gaza and sealing it off is a real alternative—as soon as the UN can make alternate provisions for bringing in humanitarian assistance through Egypt or by sea. Israelis arguably would then be freed from responsibility for Gaza. Unlike Steven Cook, I do not think the Egyptians or the "International Community" can stick Israel with Gaza. If Israel does cut all ties with Gaza, then the likelihood of Gaza becoming a ward of Egypt is much greater than its reversion to Israeli custodianship. The Israelis, especially if they were to redirect their sea blockade to intercepting contraband rather than obstructing all commerce, would have a reasonable basis for ending all land connections with the bellicose, terrorist-run Gaza. And the Israelis could offer to send UN shipments arriving at their ports to the Israeli-Egyptian crossing point at Nizzana, a few miles south of Gaza, whence they could enter Gaza via the Egyptian-Gaza crossing point at Rafah. It is Egypt that would be stuck with the onus of isolating fellow Arabs and fellow Muslims. It is likely that Egypt would come under greater pressure than Israel to allow traffic through its border with Gaza. But a complete separation has downsides for Israel too. Gaza would be left under the domination of Israel's implacable enemies, and moderate Gazans, unable to re-establish economic ties with Israel, would be hostages to Hamas. And of course, Israel's critics would still try to saddle Israel with continued responsibility for Gaza's problems, no matter what steps Israel takes. Finally, with regard to making Gaza viable, I suspect the physical enlargement of Gaza is a non-starter. Egypt has already, and not unreasonably, rejected outright any surrender of territory to the Gazans. It is hard to imagine a set of circumstances in which Israel could be induced to give more land to the Gazans—at least not without compensation in West Bank land, a circumstance which, if Gaza and the West Bank do become two states, also seems highly unlikely. In any event, the Gazans, given their likely natural growth, would quickly fill up any additional space allotted to them—and then require more. *James G. Lindsay is a visiting fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. During 2000-2007, he served with the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which carries out relief and public works projects for Palestinian refugees*

*in the Near East. —MESH*

## Are we winning the financial war on terror? (2008-01-25 15:31)

From [1]Matthew Levitt



Combating terror finance is often hailed as one of the true successes in the "war on terror." But is it? Even after six years of following and freezing terrorists' funds, American and European officials warn Al Qaeda still has both the capability and intent to conduct devastating attacks. Academic [2]Ibrahim Warde recently [3]commented, "This whole hunt for terrorist money has been driven by politics and bureaucracy, not reality." According to Warde, terror attacks are inexpensive, and combating terror finance through public trials and designations is more political grandstanding than effective policy.

Warde's doubts are shared by others. Over the past year I have lectured in London, Brussels and Berlin on the utility of combating terror finance. I found receptive audiences among government officials and some bankers, but near universal incredulity among academics and analysts.

Critics like Warde fail to appreciate the benefits of prosecuting or designating terror financiers, and overlook the fact that these are only two of the tools available to target terror financiers. While terror attacks are themselves inexpensive and not infrequently funded by local cells through criminal activity (consider the Madrid bombings, for instance), measuring the cost of financing terrorism must include much more than the cost of a single attack. Maintaining terror networks is expensive, and requires funds for such diverse activities as recruiting, training, traveling, planning operations, bribing corrupt officials, and more. To eliminate or reduce a cell's means of raising and transferring funds is to significantly degrade that cell's capabilities.

Indeed, the deterrent, preventive and disruptive benefits of the financial war on terror are significant. For example, as difficult as it may be to deter a suicide bomber, terrorist designations can deter non-designated parties, who might otherwise be willing to finance terrorist activity. Major donors inclined to finance extremist causes may think twice before putting their personal fortunes at risk.

Operationally, the financial trail created by moving money links people with numbered accounts or specific money changers. Following such trails can reveal conduits between terrorist organizations and individual cells. For example, British authorities foiled the summer 2006 liquid explosive aviation plot thanks in large part to critical financial intelligence.

And while following the money will not stop all plots, it can disrupt terrorist activity and complicate the efforts of logistical and financial support networks. At a minimum, it makes it harder for terrorists to travel, procure materials, provide for their families, and radicalize others. Denying terrorists easy access to financial tools forces them to use more costly, less efficient, less secure, and less reliable means of financing.

Targeting terror financing is just one tool in the counterterrorism toolbox and it is a tool most effectively

employed in tandem with other tools, from multilateral diplomacy to intelligence operations. Securing convictions for financing terrorism may be difficult, and financial designations may not drain the swamp of all available terrorist funds, but they effectively deter, preempt and disrupt the activities of terrorist support networks.

Perhaps most important, prosecutions and designations should not be mistaken for the sum total of the counterterror finance efforts when, in fact, they are only the most visible. Case-by-case analysis should determine what mix of counterterrorism tools is best suited to deal with any given target, which is why some targets are neither designated nor prosecuted. In the final analysis, combating terror finance—whether by following or freezing terrorists’ assets—is an exceptionally powerful weapon in frustrating terrorist activity.

Comments by MESH invitation only.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew\\_levitt/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew_levitt/)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0520253701>
3. [http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/articles/2008/01/20/small\\_change/](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/articles/2008/01/20/small_change/)

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Victor Comras (2008-02-02 14:07:32)

While I completely agree with Levitt that the efforts made by the Administration to clamp down domestically and internationally on terrorism financing are necessary and worthwhile, I fear that they continue to fall way short in meeting the challenge effectively. Despite these measures, Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and other terrorist groups continue to have access to the funds they need for active and expanded indoctrination, recruitment, maintenance, armament and operations. I fear that we are not winning this war against terrorism financing, and I believe that it is time for us to re-assess, revamp and strengthen our overall counter-terrorism financing strategy. While the United States has put in place an extensive array of measures to ferret out and stop funds from flowing to terrorists from our shores, the main sources of terrorism funding are overseas, not here. And we are still very far from achieving the needed international consensus on who the terrorists are, and what constitutes terrorism financing. It is still not illegal in most countries of the world, for example, to provide funding to terrorist organizations such as Hamas or Hezbollah. We have to concentrate our efforts to find a solution to this very serious deficiency. Our international approach to date has focused on (1) criminalizing terrorism financing internationally and (2) cooperating with certain of our allies to “follow the money.” UN Security Council resolutions and counter-terrorism conventions now set forth various international norms and obligations for combating terrorism financing. But there are serious gaps in these measures and the system of implementation and enforcement lacks any real oversight or accountability. The UN’s strongest measure—designation—only comes into play for Al Qaeda and the Taliban, and then only after a specific individual or entity has been added to the special [1]list maintained by the UN’s Al Qaeda and Taliban Sanctions Committee. That list is way to short and out of date. Implementation of the UN’s main counter-terrorism resolution, [2]1373, has also proved woefully disappointing. It directs that all countries criminalize terrorism and terrorism financing and requires all countries to freeze the funds and other assets and economic resources of any person or persons who commit, or attempt to commit terrorist acts. But these measures only come into play after terrorist acts have been attempted or carried out. And, even then, local judicial or administrative proceedings are required before any of the assets can be frozen or transactions stopped. Another serious problem is the lack of consensus on a clear definition of terrorism. The International community has been struggling with this definition for over a decade. Without a common definition countries remain free to interpret their own obligations and define for themselves which groups are terrorists and which are “freedom fighters.” “Following the money” has also proved something of a “hit or miss” proposition. We have put a lot of effort into developing useful links with the intelligence and enforcement services of a number of countries. But due to the sensitive nature of sources and methods, and other political sensitivities, this circle of cooperating countries is not very extensive. This has produced some good results in identifying and closing down terrorist cells within our countries. But, we have had considerably less success in putting the prime funders out of business. In most cases they were not to be found within the circle of countries cooperating with these efforts. Identifying and designating international terrorism financiers is central to our strategy to combat terrorism financing. Yet, it is becoming increasingly difficult to convince the other members of the UN Al Qaeda and Taliban Sanctions Committee to designate those responsible for funding terrorism. The Council of Europe and the European Court of Justice are now questioning the legitimacy of this designation process and its lack of transparency. Both Yasin Al Qadi and the Al Barakaat International Foundation, for example, have convinced the EU Advocac General

to challenge their EU designations. And domestically, we have the Humanitarian Law Project Cases, one of which recently resulted in a very problematic ruling challenging the President's authority to designate individuals or groups as "Specially Designated Global Terrorists" (SDGTs). That case is now being appealed. Earlier the Swiss Prosecutor's office had to reimburse Youssef Nada for the costs of defending an earlier prosecution alleging his terrorism financing. Another early identified terrorism financing facilitator, Ahmed Idriss Nasreddin, was also recently mysteriously, and without any real explanation, removed from both the US and UN designation lists. These reversals have seriously undercut the credibility of the US, EU and UN designation process. There is reason also for concern with the lack of international enforcement supporting the UN designation measures. A certain weariness has set in here and more and more countries are reluctant to dedicate the enforcement resources necessary to control terrorism financing activities. Malaysia and Saudi Arabia have taken no steps, for example, to freeze Yasin Al Qadi's assets or to put him out of business. And it now appears that Turkey may also soon release his assets. It is well known that several charities designated by the UN for terrorism financing are still in business, many having merely changed their names. Both Wa'el Hamza Julaidan and Abdulaziz Al-Aqeel are reportedly still actively engaged with Saudi charities providing assistance to suspect groups abroad. Here at home we have also suffered several serious setbacks, including the dismissals, acquittals, and mistrials in the Al Arian Case in Tampa, the Holy Land Foundation case in Dallas, and the Oregon Al Haramain Case. The *New York Times* [3] reports that since 9/11, the government has commenced more than 108 material support prosecutions. 46 of these were dropped. The government took pleas in another 42. Eight defendants were acquitted and 4 cases were dismissed. The Government obtained jury convictions in only 9 cases. The overall success rate in terrorism cases is around 29 percent compared to 92 percent for felony prosecutions in general. This is not a criticism—rather, it is evidence of the sheer difficulty of establishing the knowledge and subjective intent of those shielding these activities under the guise of charitable giving. These setbacks and failures are indicative of the problems we are facing in cutting off terrorism financing. That doesn't mean that we should stop what we are doing. To the contrary, we need to do what we are doing better, and we need to do more. We simply cannot be satisfied with the results we have had to date. I believe it is time for us to review and update our counter-terrorism financing strategy to deal with current terrorism funding realities and methodology. Different funding mechanisms are being used in different cases, although there are certain common elements. One size does not fit all. And we must distinguish between funding for local terrorist cells and funding for more substantial insurgencies. While US government agencies have the benefit of regulatory requirements, reports and intelligence, the private sector, academia and think-tanks have some of the best analysts and experts in the business. It's time to bring these assets together to re-assess the situation and to develop some new ideas and new strategies for dealing with terrorism financing here and abroad. *Victor D. Comras, a retired career diplomat of the United States, is special counsel to The Eren Law Firm. He joined the firm from the United Nations, where he served, under appointment by Secretary General Kofi Annan, as one of five international monitors to oversee the implementation of Security Council measures against terrorism (Al Qaeda) and terrorism financing. This comment appears courtesy of [4]Counterterrorism Blog. —MESH*

1. <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/index.shtml>
2. <http://www.un.org/sc/ctc/>
3. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/24/washington/24justice.html?ref=nationalspecial3>
4. [http://counterterrorismblog.org/2008/01/are\\_we\\_winning\\_the\\_financial\\_w\\_1.php](http://counterterrorismblog.org/2008/01/are_we_winning_the_financial_w_1.php)

## Land swaps for peace (2008-01-29 15:13)

From MESH Admin

At last week's Herzliya Conference, Tel Aviv University geographer Gideon Biger presented a futuristic plan for land swaps and border alterations among Israel, the Palestinians, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. Biger, author of [1]The Boundaries of Modern Palestine, 1840-1947, proposes a map based on 1967—that is, each party would end up with the same net territory it possessed prior to the June 1967 Six-Day War. Biger has provided MESH with the map he displayed at the conference, illustrating the proposed swaps.



In Biger's plan, parts of the West Bank where there are large Jewish settlement blocs, as well as part of the Jordan Valley, would be annexed to Israel. In exchange, the Palestinians would receive Israeli territory along the Green Line, and Egypt would relinquish territory between al-Arish and Rafah to the Palestinians. Israel would compensate Egypt with territory from Israel in the Paran Desert, as well as a corridor across the lower Negev to Jordan (a proposal [2]revisited last week at MESH).

In the north, Biger also envisions a three-way swap. Israel would keep possession of a part of the Golan Heights. It would give Lebanon territory in the northern Galilee associated with the so-called "[3]seven [Shi-ite] villages" abandoned in 1948. Lebanon, in turn, would relinquish territory to Syria, to compensate Syria for ceding part of the Golan Heights to Israel.

Comments by MESH invitation only.

1. <http://books.google.com/books?id=jC9MbKNh8GUC>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/gaza\\_into\\_egypt/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/gaza_into_egypt/)
3. <http://www.imra.org.il/story.php3?id=30478>

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David Schenker (2008-01-30 17:32:47)

I don't know Gideon Biger and I wasn't at the Herzliya Conference, so I can't comment as to the spirit in which he recently proffered his "land swaps for peace" proposal. From where I sit in Washington, reading the MESH post brought me back to the good old days of Shimon Peres' "New Middle East," where friendly neighbors abound and regional peace is just around the corner. The first thing that strikes me is the comprehensive and inter-dependent nature of the proposal, which *prima facie* makes it destined to fail. Regarding the Palestinians, the notion of land swaps is not a new idea; Arafat agreed to a swap in 2000 at Camp David. No problem here, except the small matter that the Israelis will not find the prospect of providing more land to Hamas-controlled Gaza appealing. So Gaza—and Egypt—are out of the equation. Still, Israel could work out some arrangement with a future Palestinian state in the West Bank. The challenges for this proposal on the Syria and Lebanon fronts are even more daunting. Syria has



traditionally demonstrated little interest in creative solutions to negotiations with Israel. Perhaps the best example of the phenomenon is how Syria responded to the spring 2007 Track II “Swiss Channel” talks between the Syrian-appointed (US-citizen) Abe Sulieman and former Israeli Foreign Ministry official Alon Liel. When it was publicized that the disposition of the Golan would ultimately be a nature reserve, the Syrians distanced themselves from Abe Suleiman, the brother of the former chief of internal security forces in Syria. Worse—for the map proposal and for the Lebanese—it’s unlikely that Damascus, under the Asad regime, would ever come around to the idea of Lebanon ceding territory to Syria as a “swap.” Indeed, the Asad regime already views Lebanon essentially as Syrian territory. According to a report issued by a Lebanese NGO, the International Lebanese Committee for UNSCR 1559, as of last summer, Syria was occupying at least 177 square miles of Lebanese soil. And this grim assessment of the prospects for Prof. Biger’s map doesn’t even take into account the issue of the Lebanese-Syrian dispute over the Sheba’a Farms. I take no issue with the prospect of redefining Middle Eastern borders—I think this would be a discussion worth having. Prof. Biger’s map is interesting. But from a practical standpoint, it is hard to imagine the circumstances in which such an arrangement would be feasible. [1]David Schenker is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david\\_schenker/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david_schenker/)

## MESH user’s guide (2008-01-30 07:59)

From MESH Admin



The blog at MESH differs in an important way from most multi-expert blogs. We have some advice about how to make the most of the website, and how not to miss any of the action.

At most multi-expert blogs, the contributors write posts, and any reader can submit a comment. At MESH, our contributors—we call them members—write the posts and the comments. Comments aren’t open to readers, so when a comment appears, you can be sure it has been written by an authority in the relevant field. (If we don’t have a member who knows the subject, we will try to find a guest commentator who does.)

The main advantage of this system is that with one link, you can access a post and the entire exchange or debate that follows it. A good example is this [1]debate over the prospects of democracy in the Middle East.

But there is a disadvantage. The latest comment, no matter how substantive, doesn’t appear at the top of the blog. You have to look for it, under “Latest Comments” on the sidebar to the right.

To make sure you don’t miss a comment, you have three options:

1. Regularly consult “Latest Comments” on the sidebar.
2. Enter this [2]combined feed in your news reader. It includes the full text of all posts and comments, as they are published.
3. Subscribe to MESH by email. You’ll get one email a day, containing the full text of all the posts and comments published over the previous 24 hours. Click [3]here, enter your email, and confirm it.



If you don't plan to visit the blog every day, we recommend you chose the second or third option. You'll get all the new material at MESH, including all the comments, which you don't want to miss.

(And if you want to comment and haven't been invited, anyone can comment on the [4]MESH Facebook page. Each post is mirrored there.)

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/middle\\_east\\_sustain\\_democracy/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/middle_east_sustain_democracy/)
2. <http://feeds.feedburner.com/mesharvard?format=rss>
3. [http://www.feedburner.com/fb/a/emailverifySubmit?feedId=1507249&loc=en\\_US](http://www.feedburner.com/fb/a/emailverifySubmit?feedId=1507249&loc=en_US)
4. <http://www.facebook.com/mesharvard>

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## Winograd: Will Israel's politicians learn? (2008-01-30 18:00)

From [1]Andrew Exum

Today, as Eliyahu Winograd presented his final report in Jerusalem on Israel's performance during the 2006 war with Hezbollah, I sat in London, having coffee with one of the U.S. Army's smartest counterinsurgency experts. The two of us were discussing what lessons we, as American military professionals and analysts, should draw from those 33 days of war. To be sure, there are many. As I have written previously for this blog, both sides—[2]Israel and [3]Hezbollah—deserve careful study.

But in the end, one of the lessons of the 2006 war was that tactics—and correcting tactical mistakes—only get you so far. The 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel started with a disastrous strategic miscalculation by Hasan Nasrallah—that Israel would respond in a measured, limited fashion to the kidnapping of two of its soldiers across the Blue Line—and was followed up by a series of catastrophic failures of leadership in Israel that led to so much suffering for both the Israeli and Lebanese populations.

Military exertions, as the Prussian philosopher of war Carl von Clausewitz recognized, are only means employed toward political ends. Sometimes the military's organization and performance can be solid, but if the policy toward which it is being employed is flawed, the result will be disastrous nonetheless. In the aftermath of Napoleon's victories, Clausewitz asked: "But is it true that the real shock was military rather than political?... Was the disaster due to the effect of policy on war, or was the policy itself at fault?"

In the 2006 war, the IDF was asked to accomplish strategic aims that were unrealistic and hastily considered by decision-makers in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Watching the war unfold from Cairo in 2006, I knew the minute Israeli strategic decision-makers assured a nervous Israeli populace that the IDF would destroy Hezbollah, rescue the hostages, and end rocket attacks on northern Israel, the job of the IDF had become next to impossible. Hezbollah had only to deny Israel one of its goals to be considered a victor in some circles. In the end, they denied the IDF all three.

To be sure, the IDF was not well prepared for this most recent war. Between 2000 and 2006, the IDF had grown complacent in its operations in the West Bank and Gaza and was unprepared for combat in southern Lebanon. But I wonder whether even the U.S. Army's XVIIIth Airborne Corps would have been able to destroy Hezbollah within the month-long period given to the IDF.

The failures of the IDF in the 2006 war are known, and new IDF Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi has already [4]corrected most of them. The unrealistic objectives civilian policymakers set for the IDF in the first few days of the war, however, are less recognized. From statements issued today, the final Winograd report seems to have [5]gone easier on Ehud Olmert and Gen. Dan Halutz than had previous drafts. It seems more

likely, in fact, that Hasan Nasrallah and Hezbollah—already [6]crowing about the report from Beirut—have learned the lesson from their strategic error better than the Israeli political establishment has learned theirs.

The IDF will learn its lessons, as it always seems to do. I wonder, though, whether the political leadership in Jerusalem will be able to resist getting mired in such a disastrous conflict again.

Comments by MESH invitation only.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew\\_exum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew_exum/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/learning\\_from\\_israels\\_mistakes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/learning_from_israels_mistakes/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2007/12/learning\\_from\\_hezbollah/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2007/12/learning_from_hezbollah/)
4. <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/949687.html>
5. <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3500888,00.html>
6. <http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&063A440CCEC3028FC22573E0006E3C1B>

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Chuck Freilich (2008-01-31 14:51:24)

I read Andrew Exum's post with great interest. I agree with much of it, although I think he may be too forgiving of the IDF's failures. Some additional points also deserve emphasis. Exum is certainly right that Nasrallah misjudged Israel's response, but I believe the error went far beyond one of miscalculated proportions. Hezbollah and Iran had spent the better part of a decade building up a vast rocket arsenal in Lebanon, estimated by Israel at the time to have been 13,000 rockets. (Nasrallah later claimed 20,000.) The arsenal, which could blanket all of Israel with rockets right from her border, was apparently intended as a retaliatory deterrent force in the event that Israel (or the United States) attacked Iran's nuclear program. While this capability was not taken out entirely (and has been fully rebuilt since), the war compelled Hezbollah to use it under the wrong circumstances. The war thus gave Israel a badly needed wake-up call to get its act together, rethink its priorities and strategy, and prepare for the "big one." No less important, the war taught Israel that it "can take it," and that you don't have to be a stoic Brit to absorb bombardment. I've never fully understood why Israel continually needs to be reassured of this. The people of Israel have shown remarkable resilience and steadfastness over the years, and the tests administered by the Scud shower of 1991 and the Intifada suicide bombers should have been enough to convince the skeptics. But the fact remains that Israel periodically does need to reassure itself. I fully agree that the decision-making process at the cabinet level—marred by what Exum calls "catastrophic failures of leadership"—was indeed catastrophic. Never before had Israel engaged in a war of its own choice and timing from such a propitious starting point—and bungled things so disastrously. Not only were the strategic aims unrealistic and hastily formulated. In fact, the government never set out clear objectives at *any* time, from the beginning of the war to its end. As a consequence, the IDF never knew what it was supposed to achieve. The failure to formulate clear policy objectives and priorities, and to elucidate options for achieving them, reflects a structural flaw in Israeli decision-making, which the Winograd Commission and others have criticized repeatedly. As I said, my only disagreement with Exum is that he merely reprimands the IDF for unpreparedness and complacency. The failings were far worse and inexcusable. Hezbollah is undoubtedly very well trained and armed. It is highly motivated through religious fanaticism, and it benefits from the best Iranian thinking regarding asymmetric warfare. Nevertheless, nothing excuses the IDF's inability to overcome a force of a few thousand fighters. Israel was not taken by surprise, and there were no major intelligence surprises. The IDF knew perfectly well that this battle was coming, and ostensibly prepared for it during six years of self-restraint. If the cabinet's decision-making process was catastrophic, the IDF's was no less so. It engaged in four weeks of very limited lateral movements a few kilometers inside southern Lebanon, going village to village and house to house—precisely the type of warfare the IDF does not know how to wage. The IDF knows how to stage lightning blitzes and wars of rapid maneuver, not steady wars of attrition. The IDF should have reached the Litani immediately and worked its way south on the ground. No one in the national security establishment thought that this war could be won from the air. Halutz himself did not believe this, although he seems to have become blinded during the fighting. Everyone knew the reserves were not sufficiently trained or armed. Some tankists had not seen a tank for five years. On what grounds did the Chief of Staff still advise the government that he could finish the job without difficulty, and why did he stick to his recommendations when his war plan faltered? Where were all of the other independent-minded officers who are supposedly the pride of the IDF? The good news is that the deployment of the expanded UNIFIL and Lebanese army in south Lebanon has improved Israel's situation—until Hezbollah finds a way and pretext for sparking the next round. The IDF is undergoing a major transformation and hopefully will be ready next time, having learned the necessary lessons. But

none of this absolves the civilian or military leadership of the failures, as Winograd correctly points out. I link to an [1]analysis of Israel's failures I wrote during the last days of the fighting. I believe that analysis is still fundamentally valid. [2]Chuck Freilich, former Israeli deputy national security adviser, is a senior fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. —MESH

1. <http://www.jcpa.org/jl/vp546.htm>

2. [http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/experts/870/chuck\\_freilich.html](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/experts/870/chuck_freilich.html)

## 2.2 February

### Terrorists die but ideology lives (2008-02-01 19:29)

From [1]Raymond Ibrahim

Will the recent killing in Pakistan of “senior” Al Qaeda leader, Abu Laith al-Libi, have any tangible effects on the “war on terror”? Considering the headline news coverage, one might assume so. In fact, whenever any major Al Qaeda operative or leader is slain, the media is abuzz with it, implying that we are one step closer to eradicating Al Qaeda's terror. But will the death of al-Libi—or any other Islamist leader—make any difference at all?

There was, for instance, all the hubbub surrounding the killing of the head-chopping Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, nearly two years ago. Then, almost every major politician, including President Bush, Prime Minister Blair, and Iraq's Prime Minister Maliki gave some sort of victory speech, some highly triumphant, others more cautious.

But if Zarqawi's death did not diminish Al Qaeda's highly influential presence in Iraq—it took the “surge” to make a dent—will al-Libi's death affect Al Qaeda's position in Afghanistan? Indeed, would the deaths of Ayman al-Zawahiri or Osama bin Laden himself have any long-term effects on the growth, spread, and goals of radical Islam?

Recent history provides a lucid answer to these questions.

Consider the progress of the Muslim Brotherhood, the largest and oldest Islamic fundamentalist organization today. Founded in Egypt by Hasan al-Banna in 1928, it originally boasted only six members. In the following decades, in part thanks to the radical writings of one of its premiere ideologues, Sayyid Qutb—whom Al Qaeda quotes liberally in their many writings—the Brotherhood, though constantly clashing with Egypt's government, grew steadily.

As leaders, both Banna and Qutb were eventually targeted and killed by Egypt's government—the former assassinated, the latter executed. The Brotherhood however, continued thriving underground for many more decades. Then, to the world's surprise, the partially-banned, constantly-harassed Brotherhood managed to win 88 out of 454 seats in Egypt's 2005 parliamentary elections—making them the largest opposition bloc in the government.

After two of its most prominent leaders were killed, after thousands of its members have been harassed, jailed, and sometimes tortured, today the Brotherhood is stronger, more influential, and more secure than at any other time in its turbulent history.

The Palestinian Hamas, itself an offshoot of the Brotherhood, is another case in point. Founded in

1987 by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Hamas has since been labeled a terrorist organization by several governments, including the United States, most notably for its many suicide operations against Israel. Due to Yassin's figurehead status in Hamas, the Israeli government targeted him for assassination in March 2004. (While the quadriplegic Yassin was being wheeled out of a mosque after morning prayers, an Israeli helicopter launched two Hellfire missiles into him, killing him instantly.)

The result? Hamas, like the Brotherhood, did not decline or lose morale. To the contrary, it went on to win a major landslide election in the January 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections, allowing it to claim to represent the Palestinian people.

There are countless of other examples from both past and present history where popular Islamist leaders were either killed (or died naturally), and the only thing that changed is that the movement they led grew and consolidated more power.

Ayman al-Zawahiri summarizes this phenomenon well. Asked in one of his more recent interviews about the status of bin Laden and the Taliban's one-eyed Mullah Omar, he confidently replied:

Jihad in the path of Allah is greater than any individual or organization. It is a struggle between Truth and Falsehood, until Allah Almighty inherits the earth and those who live in it. Mullah Muhammad Omar and Sheikh Osama bin Laden—may Allah protect them from all evil—are merely two soldiers of Islam in the journey of jihad, while the struggle between Truth and Falsehood transcends time (from [2]The Al Qaeda Reader, 182).

According to this statement, which itself is grounded in Islamic theology, Islamic militants are not the cause of the war. They are but a symptom of a much greater cause—the “struggle between Truth [Islam] and Falsehood [non-Islam] that transcends time.” The problem, then, is not men like Banna, Qutb, and Yassin—nor is it even bin Laden, Zawahiri, or al-Libi. Individually killing them off is only treating the symptom—a good thing, to be sure—but it does not cure the malady. The root cause is the violent and fascist ideology that motivates them.

Comments are limited to MESH members.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_ibrahim/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_ibrahim/)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/076792262X>

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Walter Laqueur (2008-02-14 19:30:21)

Does the killing of terrorist leaders make any difference? Raymond Ibrahim [1]thinks it does not. I don't believe such a categorical answer can be given, certainly not in the light of historical experience since each case is different. There have been studies over the last decades of the effects of the elimination of terrorist leaders. They all reached the unstartling conclusion that the more terrorists are eliminated, the less terrorism survived—unless there is an unlimited reservoir of aspiring terrorists (in our days suicide bombers). But is there such an unlimited reservoir? There has been a phenomenon called the Salafi burnout—and this is hastened if it is realized that terrorism does not make progress (such as in Egypt in the 1980s and 1990s). To repeat once again: each case is different. It could be argued that the killing of Zarqawi was “objectively” counterindicated since his extremism caused more damage to his own cause than his opponents did. It could well be that if Osama and Zawahiri were eliminated the impact would be very limited except perhaps on the psychological level, given the structure of Al Qaeda. Why have individual leaders been targets of counterterrorism? Partly because of the feeling that for justice to be done, those who committed criminal acts should not go scot free. Partly because the elimination of prominent leaders is a blow to the prestige of terrorist groups even if the practical significance is limited. I do not think that the references to Sayyid Qutb and Hasan al-Banna are very relevant. These were ideologues preaching ideas which fell on fertile ground. They became martyrs

but this was not the main reason why their ideas became influential. Raymond Ibrahim could have gone much further back, for instance to early Christianity and one of its first spokesmen, Tertullian: The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. True, Qutb and Banna preached violence, but not necessarily individual terrorism—it could have been political, collective action as in the case of many other such movements. Terrorism is usually a gamble. Think of the Muslim Brotherhood challenging Hafez Asad. There was no terrorism in Syria after Homs and Hamah. Or the brutal Russian actions taken against the Chechens. They have been quite effective even though there has been no political solution to the underlying problems. It is not so much the terrorist ideology threatening the West but their weapons. One of the constant and deeply ingrained Western misconceptions concerns the role of violence in this context. Violence, we are told, is of no help against terrorism, which is a struggle for the hearts and minds, etc. It is true, of course, that antiterrorist violence should be accompanied by attempts to find political solutions. This may be possible in some cases but not in others. It is also true that the use of a little violence very often fails. But massive violence usually succeeds. The domestic political resistance against such a course of action is enormous and it will not be taken by democratic countries except if their very existence is at stake. But this belongs to a different chapter.

[2] *Walter Laqueur is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/02/terrorists\\_die\\_ideology\\_lives/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/02/terrorists_die_ideology_lives/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_laqueur/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_laqueur/)

## Winograd rises above scapegoating (2008-02-02 16:22)

From [1] Alan Dowty

✖ Commissions of inquiry are one of the strengths of the Israeli political system. They are taken very seriously, typically composed of highly respected public figures, operate in a highly judicial style, and are accorded considerable attention and deference in the public arena. Moreover, more often than in many other democracies with similar processes, there is a strong presumption that the recommendations of such commissions will be enacted, and to a surprising extent they have been. In 1983, for example, Ariel Sharon tried to resist the Kahan Commission's recommendation that he be removed from office as Minister of Defense—but in the end was forced out by public pressure.

The downside of this exalted position held by commissions of inquiry is that that they have played into, and perhaps abetted, the tendency of Israeli opinion to search for convenient scapegoats to explain any and all failures in governmental policy. It is always less threatening to find particular decision-makers to blame than to force examination of basic assumptions and procedures that may be widely shared by all circles, including those doing the judging. The Agranat Commission, examining the causes of Israel's failures in the 1973 war, called for the dismissal of several senior commanders but stopped short of recommending the resignation of Prime Minister Golda Meir. The public, not satisfied with finding only the military echelon at fault, continued pressing until Meir stepped down. In the case of the Kahan Commission, investigating Israel's role in the Sabra and Shatilla massacres, the question of personal responsibility was quite clearly and legitimately at the center of the matter, and the thrust of the report was appropriately on the "drawing of conclusions" for those responsible, including Sharon.

But the problem with any search for scapegoats is that it relieves the investigators from the more difficult, but in the long run more critical, task of identifying fundamental flaws in the system that may persist despite the dismissal of particular culprits. The Israeli public has sometimes been almost obsessive in its search for particular targets for blame; following the 1973 war, movements emerged focused on the firing of one particular leader. The unspoken assumption behind such movements is that the system itself is not at fault; with the removal of a particular dysfunctional cog, the machine will return to its usual smooth operation. Yet the intelligence failure in the 1973 war was not limited to particular figures in intelligence and military command; it was rooted in the widely held assumption ("The Conception") that Egypt and

Syria would not dare to initiate a war with Israel. A similar situation prevailed in the U.S. debate over the Vietnamese War, where the Pentagon Papers abetted the tendency to look for scapegoats ("Who lied to us?")—while the basic assumption that the United States had to oppose any "Communist" threat, anywhere in the world, was initially shared by a vast majority of both decision-makers and the public.

The mandate of the Winograd Commission was particularly broad, covering the background to the 2006 Lebanon campaign, the decision to go to war, and the conduct of that war on all levels. As Judge Winograd noted in his press conference, "this covered extensive, charged and complex facts, unprecedented in any previous Commission of Inquiry."

But the pressure to focus on scapegoats was as strong as with previous commissions. Even before the commission finished its work, the Chief of Staff and the Minister of Defense had, in one way or another, been forced from their posts. Public and media attention was riveted on the issue of whether Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, and his government, could survive the issuing of the Final Report. In this environment, it is remarkable, and to its credit, that the Winograd Commission has deliberately tried to move the focus of attention from scapegoating to the more general, and more critical, question of systemic "failures and flaws" in the overall approach to and conduct of the war.

Given its broad mandate and the importance of drawing lessons for the future, Judge Winograd says, "this conception of our role was one of the main reasons for our decision not to include in the Final Report personal conclusions and recommendations. We believe that the primary need for improvements applies to the structural and systemic malfunctioning in the war on all levels." And to judge from Judge Winograd's "highlights" in his press conference, this critique of fundamental assumptions and procedures cuts very deeply. If the commission's recommendations on these matters are implemented, they will fundamentally change the system. Those who were looking forward to seeing heads roll may be disappointed, but the country will be better served.

This does not mean that the commission has avoided conclusions on personal performance: "the fact that we refrained from imposing personal responsibility does not imply that no such responsibility exists." The Interim Report issued nine months ago, which covered the period up to the decision to go to war, examined in detail the functioning of all the key actors in the drama, and it can be assumed that the full text of the Final Report will continue this scrutiny during the period that followed. It is quite possible that severe judgments of particular decision-makers will yet lead to additional ousters from office. But the focus has passed, quite properly, from scapegoating to fundamental questions of national strategy, decision-making processes, military planning, and coordination between the political and military commands.

In the end, Winograd's recommendations "contain suggestions for systematic and deep changes in the modalities of thinking and acting of the political and military echelons and their interface." This is where the focus should be. Those who were seeking titillation and expiation by the offering of sacrificial lambs will be disappointed. It is well that they should be.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)

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## Civilians: shields and targets (2008-02-05 17:05)

From [1]Harvey Sicherman

The Winograd Report has confirmed what I heard on a trip to Israel in August 2006, namely, that an inexperienced Israeli cabinet sought the rewards of a combined arms (air-ground) operation at the risk of an

air raid. When this proved inadequate to the rhetoric of victory, the same group bungled the transition to an inferior infantry action and then ran out of time. In the end Israel got only the benefits of the air raid. And the politicians (perhaps) learned the timeless lesson that excessive rhetoric supported by underwhelming force is a sure formula for disaster. Jerusalem may not be the only place in need of that lesson.

It seems to me, however, that the crucial problem we all need to tackle is the strategy revealed in Lebanon. How do you defeat a well-trained enemy using some civilians as shields and other civilians as targets? Even precise firepower will still kill many civilians. And a careful infantry operation will risk many soldiers.

Current Israeli strategy is to wage a select war of attrition against the Hamas command and leadership ranks while exacting a penalty (the economic blockade) against a population partial to the terrorists. This produces its own pressures. As the recent Gaza blowout shows, Hamas' reaction will be to escalate while offering a cease-fire intended to enable them to consolidate until they are ready for the next round. It is not clear that Israel's government and population have the patience to play this game, especially if more accurate rocket fire affects more of the country. This would return Israel to the 1953-56 situation when Fedayeen raids from Gaza, among other places, made the south unsafe. And, insofar as this tactic succeeds, the wet noodle that is the Palestinian Authority will be further enfeebled in fulfilling its pledges and negotiating a diplomatic settlement. People go with the strong horse, as Osama bin Laden once observed.

Israel will then be left with the alternative of firepower and infantry.

Israel, the United States, NATO, and, indeed, the Western democracies as a whole must find a solution to the "shield and target" problem. Otherwise, we shall find the Iranian and other forces throughout the region gaining ground and adherents. None of our diplomacy will matter except perhaps as a smokescreen for defeat. The United States and others, of course, can always withdraw to other places. Israel cannot.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey\\_sicherman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey_sicherman/)

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## Chasing illusions in the Middle East (2008-02-07 00:27)

[1]Elie Kedourie (1926-1992) was a rigorous interpreter of Middle Eastern history and contemporary affairs, famous for his penetrating style and principled conservatism. In 1970 he published an essay on "The Middle East and the Powers," as the opening piece in a collected volume named after its most renowned article, [2]The Chatham House Version. Below, we reproduce a key passage from that article (in green, beneath Kedourie's photograph), on the dangers of illusion-driven diplomacy. In response to our invitation, MESH members Charles Hill offers reflections on Kedourie's position, and MESH members Bruce Jentleson and Barry Rubin offer comments.

[kedourie.png] "The sober assumption that Middle Eastern instability is today endemic has found little favour either in Britain or in America. The prevalent fashion has been to proclaim the latest revolution as the herald of a new day, and the newest turbulence as the necessary and beneficent prelude to an epoch of orderliness and justice.

"The meliorism of western liberals, the activist categories and the hopeful concepts of their political science go far to explain such an

attitude, as also their conviction that a stable, universal peace will ensue only when the world is composed of democratic and progressive nation-states. Whatever the truth of this dogma, it is not one which a statesman should entertain, and indeed it is irrelevant to him whether the events with which he has to cope are milestones on a road leading somewhere, or mere variations on an eternal theme eternally repeated.

"The ultimate significance of social and political change, and the remote consequences of action, are dim and uncertain. The power of chance, the accident of personality, the ritual of tradition, and the passions of men are always at work to mock benevolence and denature its contrivances. It is enough for practical men to fend off present evils and secure existing interests. They must not cumber themselves with historical dogmas, or chase illusions in that maze of double talk which western political vocabulary has extended over the whole world."

Elie Kedourie, "The Middle East and the Powers," Chatham House Version and other Middle-Eastern Studies, 1970.

From [3]Charles Hill

I talked with Elie Kedourie almost twenty years ago, when he was nearing the end of his days and had come to visit the Hoover Institution at Stanford. In my view, no wiser head has ever spoken on the endlessly tangled and violent history of the Middle East.

This quotation from his essay on "The Middle East and the Powers" could stand as a definitive pronouncement on the American diplomatic and foreign policy approach to the region across recent decades during which the United States saw itself as the indispensable manager of the "Peace Process."

One reason for what Kedourie called the "meliorism of western liberals" simply has been that dimension of American national character which has proved resistless to the lure of "problem solving" in the belief that all peoples everywhere want the same things we want and given a fair chance would eagerly seize the opportunity to turn themselves into good neighbors, resolving their local feuds and cooperating with the larger outside world. No American president has been able to sit still when such a prospect has beckoned.

Of course there has been a second propellant of this approach: the diplomatic community often labeled as "Arabists." This group comprises a set of sub-groups ranging from entrenched opponents of Israel committed to the position that the Jewish State should never have been permitted to come into existence and recognized as a state in the international system, to those who have remained convinced that a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict has all along been the one and only key to peace, progress, and harmony all across the Middle East, to those who see primarily a human rights "tragedy" involving a muscle-bound Israeli bully pummeling a helpless Palestinian refugee population in ways that damage the former more than the latter. Taken together, all these varieties of "Arabism" have greatly enhanced the project of the Arab regimes to propagandize and subsidize their own populations into an anti-Israel, anti-Semitic, anti-American frenzy that draws their ire away from the oppressions and depredations of the Arab regimes themselves.

Third are the American statesmen who, from one angle of vision, might appear to adhere to Elie Kedourie's view that "It is enough for practical men to fend off present evils and secure existing interests."



But even these policy-makers found cause to conduct American diplomacy in ways difficult to distinguish from lesser and obviously tendentious officials. Henry Kissinger stressed the importance of maintaining stability and balance in the region, an approach not to be lured into dreams of major, epochal breakthroughs. But Kissinger too considered that at least periodic efforts to focus on and try to push forward an Arab-Israeli negotiating track were essential to his larger "Realist" strategy. George Shultz was the exemplar of the belief that America's philosophy is Pragmatism. Within this intellectual context Shultz recognized that "nothing is ever settled" either in Washington or in the Middle East. Yet he too was always ready to take up one or another perceived opening in the "peace process," on the purely pragmatic reasoning that "it's necessary to be seen to be actively engaged in peace-making; when nothing appears to be going on, the situation region-wide rapidly deteriorates."

So all this would seem to validate Elie Kedourie's "sober assumption" that Middle Eastern instability is endemic, and that "It is enough for practical men to fend off evils" rather than "chase illusions"—even though no practitioners of statecraft ever seem to be capable of following that advice.

So Kedourie-ites have, with much justification, taken the position that, as far as the wider world is concerned, the Middle East has been, is, and will continue to be, "the bad part of town," and therefore that the best approach toward the region is to seek to "manage" and contain it and, above all, never to press forward in the hope of achieving a rapid breakthrough or even of bringing some form of slowly progressing change. To try to do so, they suggest, runs terrible risks of inciting even greater violence launched by those who will cite their frustration with yet another failure to deliver on heightened expectations.

But a new factor has to be considered. Simply put, it is that the Middle East, the bad part of town, has so deteriorated that its pathologies are being spat out into other regions of the world, through tactics of mass terrorist slaughter and ever-spreading cultural and religious intimidation—accompanied of course by vast petro-wealth and a radical ideology that proposes to overthrow and replace the established international state system.

So it seems that the approaches of Realism or Pragmatism, even were they to prove able to follow Elie Kedourie's advice to eschew Meliorism, are not sufficient to deal with the new magnitude of this danger. President Bush's post-9/11 strategy to try to bring about the "transformation of the Greater Middle East" through, *inter alia*, the use of major military power, pressures for political reform from democratization to just plain "good governance," working for changed information and communications standards, offering cultural exchanges, imposing targeted sanctions, fostering integration into the global economy, arguing for women's rights and, to be sure, seeing a necessity to try to include the Israel-Palestinian confrontation in this overall strategy, amounts to an historic shift in American policy necessitated by an historic expansion of the threat to world order posed by the malignancies of the Middle East.

The question then seems to be: If not this, then what?

Comments are limited to MESH members.

1. [http://sandbox.blog-city.com/elie\\_kedourie.htm](http://sandbox.blog-city.com/elie_kedourie.htm)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1566635616>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/charles\\_hill/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/charles_hill/)

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Bruce Jentleson (2008-02-08 12:31:26)

The Kedourie quote evokes three observations/interpretations/implications from my perspective. First, it embodies "small-r realism." This is not to get into the Realism of IR-isms. It is to get back to fundamental meanings as in common parlance like "let's be realistic about the way things are." I'm comfortable under that umbrella. It evokes

the power of history, especially for us Americans who have so little sense of it, most especially in our recurring self-concept of re-makings of the world. It cautions us against naïveté on the one side and hubris on the other, each risking commitments and “projects” that are flawed from the start and that cumulatively can add up to strategic overstretch. Second, though, as a particular targeting of liberals and our “meliorism”: hello, what about the Bush administration and neo-conservatives and their often blind, ideological sense of America-the-Remaker-of-the-World (not even just the Middle East)? For or against us, freedom vs. fundamentalism, evildoers: you can’t get more dichotomous or un-small r-realist than that. And, frankly, more damaging of American strategic interests than any policy or set of policies pursued by administrations on the other side of the aisle. Third, to get down to strategy: If not this, then what? I pose the question to open up non-dichotomous debate about strategies. A few points along these lines: • Kedourie’s assessment of instability as “endemic” is true depending on how fully one means endemic. As a prudent caution, absolutely yes. But if taken too far it becomes like the debate about ethnic conflicts as “primordialist”—essentially historically-determined, based on identities going back centuries as fixed and continuous bases for deep conflict (“Balkan ghosts,” medieval *buhake* agricultural caste system of Tutsi dominance over Hutu in what is now Rwanda)—rather than “purposive”—historically shaped but not determined, acknowledging the deep-seated nature of animosities but also the forces and factors that intensify and activate these as serve particular interests. So, sure, “the doctrine that the world tends to become better or may be made better by human effort” (meliorism according to Webster’s) needs caution and qualifiers. But so too do we have to deal with the fact that the world tends to become *worse* or may be made *worse* by human effort. • Kedourie also can be read as fitting the warning about the need for “ripeness” of conflicts. Here too it is realistic to stress that unless conditions are at least somewhat conducive, efforts to intercede are much less likely to succeed. But we also have to be concerned about “rotting.” If the fruit is left on the vine too long, it gets diseased. So yes, à la Kedourie, states can err by doing too much too soon. But they also can err by doing too little for too long. • “It is enough for practical men to fend off present evils and secure existing interests.” This is the sentence that bothers me the most. Think the current bursting of the American economic bubble: homeowners and other consumers took on too much and too risky debt; bankers and investors went after quick-hit profits; both may have “secured existing interests,” but neither was sustainable. And in foreign policy terms, think much of US Cold War policy in the Third World: support for Mobutu in Zaire, Siad Barre in Somalia, the Shah in Iran, Somoza in Nicaragua. And, as we speak, Musharraf in Pakistan. Short-term fendings-off and calculuses of interests very often end up incurring medium- and longer-term strategic costs. [1]Bruce Jentleson is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bruce\\_jentleson/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bruce_jentleson/)

Barry Rubin (2008-02-09 09:15:56)

Thanks to Bruce Jentleson for his interesting response. While his remarks are accurate from the present perspective, let’s remember that Elie Kedourie was writing many years ago and in a particular context. I read Kedourie’s points about associating “liberals” with the idea of changing the region toward democracy in a different way. Kedourie was right at the time and in the present context the statement takes on a great irony. For it was a traditional liberal vision that the Middle East (like Latin America) should solve its problems by moving toward democracy and greater respect for human rights. Two quick examples are the policy of presidents Kennedy and (pre-revolution) Carter toward Iran. What makes this so interesting is that President George W. Bush took a traditional liberal policy and adapted it, but everyone then forgot where the ideas originally came from. They definitely did not originate among conservatives. And if Kedourie were alive today, there would be no fiercer critic of the Bush administration’s policies and the invasion of Iraq. On the central issue, what was Kedourie saying? (And I not only read this in his work but heard it from him directly.) Bruce Jentleson is quite correct in saying his ideas were in the realist tradition, but they are not like some Edward Said-caricature of Western views. (And we should always remember that Kedourie spoke as a Middle Easterner somewhat bemused by Western naïveté, saying things that many Arabs—albeit not so often in public—say every day.) I would say two points are key. First, the main problem with the region was the nature of the internal systems: the dictatorships, ideology, and social systems that dominated the countries. The regimes acted on the basis of their interests (both survival and foreign policy goals) but these interests were often quite different from those perceived by many in the West. Second, these problems were not going to be fixed by outsiders because they were very deep, requiring a long-term and major process of change that had not even begun. I hope that in my work, books like [1]*The Tragedy of the Middle East*, [2]*The Truth About Syria*, and [3]*The Long War for Freedom*, among others, I have provided an extension of his basic viewpoint. In my opinion, he was the best analyst of the Middle East in the twentieth century. I hope that students today will continue to read and think about his work, and I note that its absence from university courses is yet one more indication of the lamentable state of studies on the region. [4]Barry Rubin is a member of MESH.

1. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0521603870>
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1403982732>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0471739014>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry_rubin/)

## NIE redux (2008-02-10 04:07)

From [1]Mark T. Clark

The November 2007 [2]National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iran's nuclear program set off a storm of controversy and criticism. I critiqued only one part of it in an [3]earlier post. I believed then, as I believe now, that the report was flawed intellectually as it relied on an academic assumption that the Iranian leadership behaves as a rational actor that decides through a traditional "cost-benefit" calculus. However, there were other substantive criticisms that touched on its many other problems, not the least of which was what kind of intelligence could have led to a reversal of the intelligence community's earlier judgment on Iran's nuclear program.

The 2007 report showed that our intelligence officials judged with "high confidence" that Iran had stopped the military component of its nuclear program in 2003 and with "moderate confidence" that it had yet to restart that component by mid-2007. The thrust of the report, however, rocked the administration's policy towards Iran's nuclear weapons program and helped stifle its efforts towards containing or reversing the Iranian program.

This past week, however, we've seen two new developments that challenge this view, though they may not improve the administration's ability to stop the Iranian program. The first development occurred in Israel. The director of the Mossad, Meir Dagan, reported to Israel's foreign affairs and defense committee that it judged Iran will develop a nuclear weapon within three years.

The second development occurred in the United States. In his [4]Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community, Director of National Intelligence Michael McConnell recast the report in a slightly modified form. He acknowledges that the most difficult challenge of nuclear production, uranium enrichment, continues under the Iranian regime. In addition, whereas the 2007 report glosses over whether Iran could have restarted its covert weapons program as of mid-2007, McConnell's report changes the tone significantly. He says: "We assess with moderate confidence that Tehran had not restarted these activities as of mid-2007, but since they comprised an unannounced secret effort which Iran attempted to hide, we do not know if these activities have been restarted."

This last admission is interesting in light of the fact that Israel earlier had agreed that Iran halted its covert military program in 2003, but restarted it elsewhere soon after.

Is the intelligence community backtracking or hedging its bets against the future? I do not know. I do hope, however, that these developments encourage junior intelligence officers to challenge the "mainstream" view of our senior intelligence officials. Far too often we have experienced intelligence failures because the "mainstream" view failed to account for the unpalatable. Many low- to mid-level intelligence officers were deeply disturbed by the Iranian NIE's "consensus" view, when in fact, their views were not even considered.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_t\\_clark/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_t_clark/)
2. [http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/20071203\\_release.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20071203_release.pdf)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2007/12/fundamental\\_flaw\\_in\\_nie/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2007/12/fundamental_flaw_in_nie/)

4. [http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/20071203\\_release.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20071203_release.pdf)

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## Defining and confronting the Salafi Jihad (2008-02-11 05:31)

From [1]Assaf Moghadam

In recent years, a growing number of analysts and policymakers, have referred to the doctrines guiding Al Qaeda and its associates as an ideology, and appear to have influenced the Bush administration into adopting the term as well. President Bush, for example, has [2]characterized the 9/11 suicide hijackers as men who “kill in the name of a clear and focused ideology.” Although descriptions of the precepts and beliefs guiding Al Qaeda and its associates as ideological in nature certainly hit the mark, few serious attempts have been made to justify the use of the term ‘ideology’ in connection with the Salafi Jihad—the guiding doctrine of Al Qaeda, its affiliates, associates, and progeny. A closer look at what makes the Salafi Jihad an ideology reveals that a more proper term to describe the Salafi Jihad would be as a religious ideology.

The Salafi Jihad is an ideology because its functions are essentially congruent with those of other ideologies.

- First, ideologies have an explanatory function, whereby they attempt to raise awareness among a certain group that a certain problem deserves their attention. Salafi-Jihadists attempt to raise awareness among Muslims that their religion has been on the wane.
- Second, and analogous with the diagnostic function of modern ideologies, the Salafi Jihad identifies the alleged source of the Muslims’ conundrum in the persistent attacks and humiliation of Muslims on the part of an anti-Islamic alliance of what it terms ‘Crusaders,’ ‘Zionists,’ and ‘apostates.’
- The third function of the Salafi Jihad also parallels that of other ideologies, namely its attempt at creating a new identity for its adherents. Several scholars, [3]including Olivier Roy, have argued that Muslims and Western converts adopting Salafi-Jihadist tenets suffer from a crisis of identity. To those who are disoriented by modernity, the Salafi Jihad provides a new sense of self-definition and belonging in the form of a membership to a supranational entity. Salafi-Jihadists attempt to instill into Muslims the notion that the only identity that truly matters is that of membership in the umma, the global community of Muslims that bestows comfort, dignity, security, and honor upon the downtrodden Muslims.
- Finally, like all ideologies, Salafi-Jihadists present a program of action, namely jihad, which is understood in military terms. They assert that jihad will reverse the tide of history and redeem adherents and potential adherents of Salafi-Jihadist ideology from their misery. Martyrdom is extolled as the ultimate way in which jihad can be waged—hence the proliferation of suicide attacks among Salafi-Jihadist groups.

What, however, is the Salafi Jihad’s relationship to religion? Religions differ from ideologies in two important respects.

First, the primary focus of ideologies is the group, whereas that of religions is the individual. Precisely because of its preoccupation with the group as a whole, ideology demands great loyalty and commitment on the part of the individual member. Ideologies, like religions, demand verbal assent from their members. But more than religions, ideologies also demand complete control over the thoughts, words, and deeds of their adherents. This characteristic also applies to Al Qaeda and like-minded groups.

Second, religions tend to support existing orders, while ideologies tend to confront them. “Ideologies are not merely world-reflecting but world-constituting,” [4] writes Bruce Lawrence. “They tend to have a ‘missionary’ zeal to show others what they need to do, to correct and help them to that end.” Thus, unlike religious leaders, bin Laden goes beyond merely disagreeing with those who do not share his beliefs—he battles them.

Yet, while the Salafi Jihad is distinct from Islam due to the former’s ideological nature, it also differs from ordinary ideologies in an important respect. It tends to use religious words, symbols, and values to sustain itself and grow—a tendency that defines it as a religious ideology. Ideologies are usually devoid of religious symbols. Ian Adams, for instance, [5] writes that “what separates [religion from ideology] is that while the central feature of a religious understanding is its concept of the divine, the central feature of an ideological understanding is its conception of human nature.”

Unlike secular ideologies, however, the Salafi Jihad invokes religion in three ways.

- First, it describes itself and its enemies in religious terms, such as the ‘Army of Muhammad,’ the ‘lions of Islam,’ and of course ‘jihadist.’ Their enemies are labeled as Crusaders, apostates, or infidels.
- Second, Salafi-Jihadists describe their strategy and mission as a religious one. Their struggle is a jihad, which they themselves define in military terms, as opposed to the ‘internal war’ against human temptations. Their main tactic, they claim, is not suicide attacks, but ‘martyrdom operations.’
- Finally, they justify acts of violence with references drawn selectively from the Quran. Most Muslims, including non-violent Salafis, cite a number of sources from the Quran and hadith against the killing of civilians. Salafi-Jihadists, on the other hand, cite a number of Quranic verses and Hanbali rulings in support of their actions.

Accurately labeling the nature of Salafi-Jihadist doctrine as a religious ideology is not merely an exercise in academic theorizing, but has important policy implications. Confronting Salafi-Jihadists on religious grounds is highly problematic because Salafi-Jihadists draw from the same religious sources—albeit selectively and stubbornly—that inform the lives and practices of over a billion other Muslims. It is for that reason that ordinary Muslims—not to speak of non-Muslims—find it difficult to challenge Salafi-Jihadists without running the risk of being accused of targeting Islam as a whole.

A counter-terrorism approach that highlights the corruption of Salafi-Jihadists ideology not on religious, but on secular grounds is more likely to have the desired effect of weakening the appeal of the Salafi Jihad. Rather than highlighting the doctrinal and theological inconsistencies within Salafi-Jihadists, the United States and its allies would be wise to grasp every opportunity they have to highlight the disastrous consequences that Salafi-Jihadist violence has wrought on the everyday lives not only of Westerners, but first and foremost on Muslims themselves.

It is a simple, though not sufficiently emphasized fact that the primary victims of Salafi-Jihadists are Muslims, who are killed and maimed in far greater numbers than non-Muslims. Salafi-Jihadists openly justify the killing of civilians, including Muslims, under a logic of the ends justifying the means. It is equally a fact that leaders of Salafi-Jihadist organizations hypocritically preach about the benefits of martyrdom, but rarely, if ever, conduct suicidal operations themselves, or send their loved ones on such missions. It is a fact that Al Qaeda and associated groups offer no vision for Muslims other than perennial jihad—hardly an appealing prospect.

Waging a battle against a religious ideology such as the Salafi Jihad is a challenging task that requires

commitment and ingenuity. Yet, highlighting a few simple, but damaging facts about the actual results of Salafi-Jihadists can also go a long way.

This post is an excerpt from a longer article to appear in the forthcoming issue of the [6]CTC Sentinel, the new monthly publication of the [7]Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. —MESH

Update: The longer article has appeared [8]here. —MESH

Comments are limited to MESH members.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/assaf\\_moghadam/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/assaf_moghadam/)
2. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/09/20060905-4.html>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0231134991>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/157003091X>
5. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0719060192>
6. <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/sentinel/>
7. <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/>
8. <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/sentinel/CTCSentinel-Vol1Iss3.pdf>

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Adam Garfinkle (2008-02-15 16:07:37)

I very much appreciate Assaf Moghadam's attempt to parse the precise nature of Salafi Jihadism, and to derive therefrom some practical guidance for how to design appropriate strategic communications. I have little to offer with regard to his practical suggestions, except to mention one caveat: It is it risky and probably counterproductive for non-Muslims to try to weigh in on theologically tinged issues. This is not only because in criticizing Salafi thinking might offend other Muslims, but because non-Muslims are not qualified in the eyes of most Muslims to have any opinions on such matters. We would be well advised to identify those authentic sources of Islam that oppose Salafi interpretations, and quietly help them by linking them to one another, by financing quietly their good works, and by encouraging them to speak out. This is what we should have been doing now for more than six years; instead, we have mainly be concerned with the U.S. image in the Muslim world—a marginal and mostly pointless exercise concerning an adolescent superpower's easily bruised ego. I do, however, disagree with Moghadam on a few analytical points. First, the contention that ideology is a group phenomenon while religion is an individual one does not strike me as correct. Ask any anthropologist of the Middle East, or of any other traditional society, and he or she will tell you that religion is for the most part organic to a community, and particularly so to the endogamous social organizations that still characterize many Middle Eastern societies. A person is born into a religion by virtue of being born into a tribe. No one particularly cares what a person believes privately so long as he or she conforms to expected social roles, and these are sanctioned by religion. That leaves room for some non-conformism in belief in a way that need not upset social relations. This is pretty wise and stable an arrangement, for the most part—one that certain forms of modernity miss. In the West, after Hobbes and Locke and the rest, yes, religion has been confessionalized and privatized. And yes, in theological terms, a Muslim (like a Jew) engages God directly and individually. But in terms of politically sociology, no, religion is a very social business in most societies, and that certainly includes most Middle Eastern societies. Nor do I think it possible to show that religion is always status quo and ideology always anti-status quo. Revitalization movements in religion can be very anti-status quo. Think Muhammad himself. Think the Almohads. Think the jointure of the Al-Saud and the Al-Wahhab. For that matter, think the White Lotus societies that overthrew a Mongol dynasty in China in the 14th century. Think radical Protestants like Luther or, better, Thomas Muntzer in the Peasants Rebellion. Now, if one ipso facto tries to define all such episodes as ideology just because they are anti-status quo, then one has a rollicking case of circular thinking, if ever there was one. And ideology can be status quo, too—even the formal kind. Think Brezhnevian stagnation; think the latter day Stasi state in the DDR. No, the key difference between religion and ideology, as Anna Simons and others have pointed out, is that religion is indeed organic to society and so does not need day-in, day-out enforcers. But when there are no enforcers of ideology, it dries up and blows away. It does not link into the mazes and traditions of people to be able to do without artificial forms of sustenance. The other difference is that religion promises understanding and salvation when it comes to cosmic mysteries. It thus brings solace. Ideology, on the other hand, is limited in what it can promise to outcomes on earth. This may seem a trivial matter, but it isn't. Religion has a way of providing balance for people as to what they can affect in life and what they cannot affect. It provides a practical philosophy for coping with difficulties.

Ideology, on the other hand, has no innate balance. Its general tendency is not to promote calm and balance, but always to stimulate action, to marshal discontent or angst in order to go out and *do* something, whether on behalf of change or on behalf of defending the status quo from real or imagined assailants. The cumulative social impact of this difference can be significant. All of which brings us back to the problem Moghadam has so wisely identified. Is Salafi Jihad comprised of ideological or religious energies? Well, it is some of both, as he says. It is, as Mark Lilla would put it, an example of political theology ([1]*The Stillborn God*, Knopf, 2007 and well worth reading). Here's a thought experiment for you: Suppose you stopped saying and thinking "Protestant Reformation" and "French Revolution" and started thinking instead "Protestant Revolution" and "French Reformation." In other words, suppose you scrambled categories in your head between what is religious and what is political in terms of Western history. Notwithstanding the differences between religion and ideology noted above, you would find perhaps, as I have, that thinking about creedal systems as a whole, in which theology is either implicit or explicit but always present, and in which political ideology is either implicit or explicit but also always present, is an interesting exercise. It forces us to re-think the associations we have learned, and it generates new questions that our old scheme of compartmentalization prevented us from formulating. Assaf Moghadam is trying to wrap his mind around a really difficult question. My hat is off to him for trying. As for myself, I have generated plenty of questions from this exercise but, alas, not yet many answers. I just don't know enough yet. [2]*Adam Garfinkle is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1400043670>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)

Michael Horowitz (2008-02-16 10:28:03)

Thanks to Adam Garfinkle for a truly impressive [1]comment. I would only add that it might be possible to simplify, at least conceptually, the way we think about the group-versus-individual question. It seems that ideology, like nationalism and ethnicity, has the ability to motivate people on the basis of group factors. Members will engage in actions to perpetuate the group, help it survive, etc. Think about people dying for their country. One potential difference between religion and all of these things is that while religion "shares" with them the ability to motivate people on a group basis, there is an added individual basis for motivation due to the possibility of salvation. That is to say, religion shares with nationalism or ideology (which could be a nationalist ideology) the ability to motivate people to engage in actions, even to die, for the group. However, religion adds the possibility for individual benefits in the form of the afterlife/salvation/etc. So it is the combination of both individual and group benefits that might, conceptually, make religion interesting. [2]*Michael Horowitz is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/02/defining-and-confronting-the-salafi-jihad/#comment-192>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_horowitz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_horowitz/)

## For an all-out assault on Gaza (2008-02-12 06:53)

From [1]Robert O. Freedman



The recent destruction of part of the wall separating Gaza from Egypt underscores the weakness of Israel's current strategy toward Hamas-ruled Gaza. With rockets being fired against the Israeli town of Sderot as well as against the city of Ashkelon, Israel has yet to find a means of stopping the attacks. Essentially, Israel has three policy alternatives to deal with the rockets:

1. Continuation of the current policy, which involves attacks on those firing the rockets, selected assassinations of Hamas and Islamic Jihad operatives, and periodic cutting off of energy and other supplies to Gaza.

2. Negotiations with Hamas to end the rocket fire.
3. An all-out assault on Gaza, after proper diplomatic preparations, aimed at destroying the political and military infrastructures of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and eliminating their ability to hold Israeli cities hostage to rocket fire.

Continuation of Policy. The government of Ehud Olmert and his Defense Minister, Labor Party leader Ehud Barak, has utilized a series of measures to try to stop the rocket fire. It has regularly sent in army troops to hit Hamas and Islamic Jihad forces in Gaza near the Israeli border; it has used the Israeli Air Force to hit Palestinian teams firing rockets (or about to fire rockets, or returning from firing rockets); and it has also undertaken selected assassinations of Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists. While these Israeli attacks have gradually escalated, they have not yet succeeded in either stopping the attacks or deterring future attacks.

Another tactic utilized by the Olmert government has been the periodic closure of Israel's borders with Gaza, with Israel cutting off supplies of energy and other goods. This strategy too has not met with success. Even worse, it has brought down the wrath of anti-Israeli sectors of world public opinion, as pictures of "starving" Palestinians make the headlines.

Thus continuing with the current strategy does not appear to solve Israel's rocket problem.

Negotiations with Hamas. Some on the left of the Israeli political spectrum have advocated negotiations with Hamas to stop the rocket attacks. They advocate Israel's agreeing to the Hamas offer of a hudna, or ceasefire. This position rests on a central assumption that once Hamas signs onto the ceasefire it will mellow, if not split into pro-peace and anti-peace factions, and thus become a long-term partner for Israel in the peace process. A benefit of this position, they argue, is that it will lead to a reunification of the West Bank, now led by Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah organization, and Gaza, now run by Hamas. This, they assert, would facilitate the establishment of an Israeli-Palestinian peace, because Israel cannot make peace with the West Bank alone.

There are several weaknesses in this argument. The most important is the assumption that a ceasefire would lead Hamas to make peace with Israel. Given its Islamic-based opposition to Israel's existence, as noted in its charter, and in the continued calls for Israel's destruction by the Hamas leadership both in Gaza and in Damascus, such a development would appear unlikely. In addition, Hamas would be likely to use the ceasefire to build up its stockpile of rockets, including long-range katyushas, much as Hezbollah used the period from the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon in May 2000 until the Israeli-Hezbollah war of July-August 2006 to build up its rocket arsenal. The ceasefire would also give Hamas increased diplomatic legitimacy, despite the fact that it had not renounced its stated goal of destroying Israel.

Thus the ceasefire strategy also doesn't solve Israel's security dilemma with Hamas.

All-Out Assault. This strategy would utilize Israel's technological superiority to end, once and for all, the rocket firing from Gaza. After a carefully prepared diplomatic offensive in which Israel would inform the world that it will no longer tolerate rocket attacks on its citizens, Israel would give Hamas an ultimatum that unless all rocket attacks ceased, Israel would use the full range of its military might to attack Gaza. Israel would state that Gaza would be treated just as Germany was after Hitler began World War II. Israel would point out that just as U.S. and British bombers attacked German cities to weaken German military capability and prepare the way for a ground invasion, so too would Israel begin a major artillery and bombing campaign against Gazan cities to pave the way for an Israeli army attack.

Such an ultimatum would pose a strategic dilemma for Hamas, and would be much more likely to split



the organization than a long-term ceasefire. If Hamas wished to avoid the destruction of Gaza's infrastructure, the deaths of thousands of Gazans, and the uprooting of the institutions which Hamas has created in Gaza, it may choose to accept the Israeli ultimatum.

Should it not do so, and the IDF were compelled to invade Gaza, the end result could well be positive as far as the peace process is concerned. First, after the destruction of the Hamas and Islamic Jihad infrastructure, Israel would restore control of Gaza to Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah organization, thus recreating the unity between the West Bank and Gaza that was destroyed when Hamas seized power in Gaza in June 2007. This, in turn, would make the signing of a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement possible, something that cannot be done so long as Hamas controls Gaza. While Hamas would undoubtedly claim that Abbas's Fatah organization is a group of Quislings—indeed they are already asserting this—it must be emphasized that Fatah is committed to a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict while Hamas is not. Israel's destruction of Hamas would help both Abbas and the peace process.

There are three objections to this strategy.

- First, it would involve the deaths of Israeli soldiers as well as Gazans. Yet for Israel to wait until Tel Aviv comes into the range of Hamas rocket fire is a more dangerous option, for then many unprepared Israeli civilians would be killed as opposed to trained IDF soldiers.
- A second objection is that world opinion would not tolerate such an Israeli attack. To counter this, as noted above, Israel must carefully prepare the diplomatic ground for the ultimatum, especially in the United States and Europe. Olmert could help Israel's diplomatic position by closing the illegal West Bank settlement outposts prior to the attack on Gaza, and thereby strengthen Abbas as well as Israel's position in the world. In any case Israel is already being heavily criticized for its limited actions in Gaza.
- Finally, it is argued, such an attack would threaten Israel's relations with Jordan and Egypt, the two Arab countries that have made peace with Israel. In this context it should be noted that the Egyptian regime of Husni Mubarak, and the Jordanian regime of King Abdullah II detest Hamas, because it is an ideological ally of their main domestic political opposition—the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Islamic Action Front in Jordan. While these groups may lead public demonstrations against Israeli policy—much as they did during the Al-Aqsa intifadah—it is doubtful that either Mubarak or King Abdullah II will change policy as a result of the Israeli attack.

In sum, an Israeli ultimatum followed by a full-scale attack on Gaza would appear to be Israel's best option for stopping the rocket attacks.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)

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## Imad Mughniyah is dead (2008-02-13 07:56)

From [1]Andrew Exum



[2]Imad Mughniyah is dead, [3]killed in Damascus by a car bomb at the age of 45. Mughniyah was believed to have been Hezbollah's chief of military operations, and his assassination marks the first time a major figure in the movement has been killed since secretary-general Abbas Musawi in 1992—an assassination which brought the current secretary-general, Hasan Nasrallah, to power.

For many, Mughniyah was a reviled figure, wanted by both Israel and the United States for his alleged role in numerous attacks on American and Israeli targets—including the truck-bombing of the U.S. Marine Corps barracks in Beirut in 1983 and the attack on the Israeli embassy in Argentina in 1992. (Formally, the FBI [4]most-wanted him for his role in the 1985 hijacking of an American airliner to Beirut and the murder of a U.S. Navy diver on board.) For researchers such as myself, Mughniyah was of great interest because he represented a constant figure in Hezbollah throughout its evolution from an Iranian-backed Lebanese militia in the 1980s to a nationalist insurgent group in the 1990s and finally to its current incarnation as the most powerful political party in Lebanon—both in terms of weapons and popular support.

The timing of the assassination, from the perspective of Lebanese of all political stripes, could not have been worse. Tomorrow, after all, is the [5]anniversary of the assassination of a great figure on the other side of Lebanon's current political divide, former prime minister Rafik Hariri. One hopes that calm heads will prevail and that any ostentatious rallies in Hariri's honor are postponed. At last year's mass rally, ugly sectarian chants broke out, and surely given Beirut's current tension, such chants could easily devolve into open violence.

This past week, Lebanon's leaders once again irresponsibly postponed the election of a new president. So the assassination of Imad Mughniyah has taken place within a political environment that is, still, on a razor's edge. If this year's assassination and the memory of another lead Lebanon down a short path to civil war, Lebanon's sectarian leaders will have only themselves to blame.

Comments limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew\\_exum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew_exum/)
2. <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2370123>
3. [http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/world/international-syria-blast.html?\\_r=2&hp&oref=slogin&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/world/international-syria-blast.html?_r=2&hp&oref=slogin&oref=slogin)
4. <http://www.fbi.gov/wanted/terrorists/termughniyah.htm>
5. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/feb/13/lebanon.israelandthepalestinians>

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Andrew Exum (2008-02-15 08:21:35)

Allow me especially to thank my friends Michael Young and Lee Smith for lending their intelligent voices to this debate from outside the MESH community. In the end, Occam's Razor seems to apply here: Given what we know now, the simplest answer is probably the correct one. That doesn't mean questions of whether or not Syria might have been complicit aren't worth asking, though for some that question obviously stirs up some strong emotions! Thanks, everyone, for the lively debate. I think this is the most commented-upon thread we've had here at MESH, and I for one appreciated all the comments. Feel free to continue the discussion with me off-line. [1]Andrew Exum

is a member of MESH. For more on the Mughniyah assassination, proceed to this subsequent [2]post and discussion. This discussion thread is now closed. —MESH Admin

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew\\_exum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew_exum/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/02/imad\\_mughniyah\\_who/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/02/imad_mughniyah_who/)

Michael Young (2008-02-14 17:38:37)

Syria's regime has killed many people over the decades, but I think it's a stretch to assume Imad Mughniyah is one of them. Not just because they would have never done such a thing in Damascus; not just because the Iranian foreign minister went ahead with his visit to Syria, and would surely not have done so had there been suspicion of official Syrian involvement in Mughniyah's assassination; and not just because the last thing Damascus would do in the midst of a vital Syrian-sponsored political crisis in Lebanon is to kill a leading figure in the ranks of its most powerful ally in Beirut. But the real problem I have with this theory is that Mughniyah was just not opening-shot material. Assuming for a moment that Syria wanted to give the Americans a present, you don't start such a process with the most valuable asset you have, for nothing in return, while simultaneously alienating the Iranians and Hezbollah (a reaction we have in fact not seen). You use Mughniyah as the icing on the cake, and start off the process by handing over someone lower on the totem pole, in exchange for concessions. That's how the Syrians bargain, usually without offering much up on their end. I would also like to correct Jon Alterman. There may have been speculation that Mughniyah was involved in the Hariri assassination, but that's all it is. I've followed the case closely, and there is no real evidence for this claim based on what we know of the Hariri investigation up to now. We don't even know whether Hezbollah was involved in the crime. What really happened with Mughniyah? I accept that we're so in the dark about this case, that one of us might have unintentionally stumbled onto the truth. It seems that everyone in the media is suddenly an expert on the man, but we might all be repeating fallacies that have been circulating for almost 20 years. However, based on what we have, and on the Syrian, Iranian, and Hezbollah reactions, I still find "the Syrians did it" theory unconvincing. [1]Michael Young is opinion page editor of the Daily Starnewspaper in Lebanon.

1. <http://www.reason.com/staff/show/138.html>

Lee Smith (2008-02-14 14:24:08)

I don't know why the idea that Syria might be behind the Mughniyah assassination has gained such traction, as articulated here by Andrew Exum and Jon Alterman, but I am [1]hearing even some in Lebanon are convinced it is part of a U.S.-Syria deal. Still, it doesn't make sense on a number of levels. Syria's is a hard security regime, or, as regime-friendly explicator Joshua Landis likes to put it, Syria gets an A for security. So to have cars blowing up in the middle of the Syrian capital damages the prestige of the regime—and at a very high level, given that Asad's brother-in-law Asef Shawkat is an intelligence chief. When the Syrians want to show to the world (i.e., Washington) that they are actively killing terrorists (Sunni jihadis of course, not Shia like Mughniyah), they take them down in shootouts, which shows the high competence of the security services, not their incompetence, which is what a car-bomb in Damascus proves. Vulnerability is probably the last thing such a regime can manifest for two reasons. On the domestic front, it shows to the people that their security state is not capable of providing security. And on the regional front it suggests to other clandestine services that Damascus is a vulnerable target. With Syria meddling in the internal affairs of so many of its neighbors, one can only imagine what such a message would mean to the spy agencies of Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey to name only a few. All this speculation about Damascus being behind the assassination depends on two odd assumptions: one, the two-decades-old conviction that it is possible to "pry" Syria away from Iran and here finally is Syria's opening gambit for such a deal; and two, that the most obvious agent of Imad Mughniyah's demise could not really have killed Imad Mughniyah. But the Israelis have the resources, history and motivem so why look so far afield? Arab conspiracy theorists hold the Mossad responsible for everything from 9/11 to making matzoh with the blood of gentile children taken from ... Damascus! It seems our almost equally credulous analogue is to believe the Israelis are incapable of penetrating the Syrian capital (Does no one remember Eli Cohen?)—when they flew deep into Syrian air space four months ago—to get at a man held responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Jews. And so why did the Syrians do it? To compromise the domestic and regional standing of the regime and kill a Hezbollah legend and an Iranian pillar, eulogized today by the Iranian foreign minister at Mughniyah's Beirut funeral? To extend an olive branch to the U.S., when, as David Schenker noted above, they've never done it before? [2]Lee Smith is a visiting fellow at the Hudson Institute.

1. <http://beirut2bayside.blogspot.com/2008/02/mughniyeh-assassinated-in-damascus.html>

2. [http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff\\_bio&eid=LeeSmith](http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff_bio&eid=LeeSmith)

Barry Rubin (2008-02-15 07:39:03)

Andrew Exum complains that David Schenker is wrong in condemning Syria for letting in Imad Mughniyah *if* their only reason for doing so was to kill him. This is illogical. First, Mughniyah was very close to—and arguably an agent of—the Iranians. The loud wails at his death by Iran and Hezbollah indicate that if they had any reason to believe Damascus was responsible, this would be a huge political problem for Syria. We would soon be seeing inescapable signs of a crisis in their relationships. And of course we won't. Second, is the humiliation of having him killed in Damascus, which makes the regime look very incompetent. The idea that the Syrian government would welcome this situation is ridiculous. As for the core of Exum's argument, he implies that this was Mughniyah's first trip to Syria. One can hear Bashar on the phone with him saying: "Yeah, you've never seen Damascus. Come on over and we'll give you the tour!" Of course, Mughniyah was no doubt in Syria many times over the last 25 years doing what he did best, coordinating terrorist attacks and other operations. No doubt, he was doing so with the Syrian government completely aware and probably complicit in his efforts. After all, he was working for Hezbollah, Syria's client, and Iran, Syria's number-one ally. Are we to believe that the first 10? 20? 30? times Mughniyah was in Syria don't matter because *this* time he was only there to be terminated with extreme prejudice? Does this mean then that David Schenker was wrong or in contradiction to complain about Syria's close and long-term association with one of the world's most wanted terrorists—wanted not just by Israel but by the United States of America? Anyone inclined to ignore Syria's central role in Middle East instability, the Iraq insurgency, murders in Lebanon, terrorism against the United States, disruption of any progress in the Arab-Israeli peace process, as well as the very strong and deep basis for the Iran-Syria alliance, Syria's real rejection of peace with Israel, and any number of other issues, should at least try to sound reasonable. [1]Barry Rubin is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry_rubin/)

Andrew Exum (2008-02-14 07:08:21)

David Schenker asks some great and necessary questions, but there is also a contradiction in what he says. You can only denounce Syria for allowing Imad Mughniyah into the country, as David does, if they did not have a role in his killing. If Syria did, in fact, play a role in his assassination as Jon Alterman suggests, you can't condemn them for allowing him in. For critics of the Syrian regime, this is equivalent to having one's cake and eating it too. You might have to open up to the possibility that Syria meant his assassination as an "olive branch" to the U.S. or Israel, as Jon suggested. But even if Syria was working with other elements of Hezbollah or the Iranians and not in concert with the U.S. or Israel, you still can't criticize Syria for "harboring" Imad Mughniyah into the country if their intent was to kill him. Being killed by a car bomb in one of Damascus's more secure neighborhoods is no one's idea of safe harbor. Trying to tie this in with the U.S. presidential election or what Senator Obama's policy might be toward Syria is also premature. Who killed Imad Mughniyah and what their motivation was must surely first be determined before solid policy conclusions can be drawn. [1]Andrew Exum is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew\\_exum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew_exum/)

David Schenker (2008-02-14 13:37:34)

My friend Jon Alterman's supposition about Damascus being somehow involved in Mughniyah's demise deserves some discussion. We're probably going to be hearing a lot of this line of thinking in the coming days. This is a pretty murky world we're talking about here, but the common wisdom on Mughniyah has traditionally been that he was very close with Iranian intelligence and the Qods Force in particular. A lot of information on his ties to Iran in the 1990s is now in the public domain—and we also know that Mughniyah's people were visiting their counterparts in Tehran as recently as 2007 for coordinating meetings on operations in Iraq. So I think it's a stretch to argue that Mughniyah had gone "rogue" as my friend Andrew Exum [1]suggests in his blog today. In any event, if Damascus did want to kill Mughniyah, it seems to me the kind of decision that would have required Tehran's blessing. A few additional points regarding the "olive branch" theory: 1) When did Syria ever give a concession—particularly one that could never be revoked—as an olive branch? 2) The model we're looking at is not that of the former Syrian viceroy in Lebanon, Ghazi Kenaan, who apparently was "suicided" after the Hariri assassination because he knew too much. In this case, I think Syria's modus operandi more closely resembles what they have done with potentially embarrassing foreigners. Like Ocalan, who Syria dispatched to Russia in 1999 (he was eventually nabbed in Kenya), and former Saddam regime member Ibrahim Sabawi—who had been helping to orchestrate the insurgency from Syrian territory. Sabawi was unceremoniously dumped on the Iraqi side of the Syria-Iraq border in 2005, just a week or so after the Hariri assassination, a move most likely intended to alleviate pressures on Damascus. 3) Why would the Asad regime

kill Mughniyah in Syria, when it would only confirm the provision of safe haven? It's not as if Mughniyah was lured to Syria on this one occasion. According to his relatives, he lived there. I do agree with Jon's last point, though. These are not nice people. [2]David Schenker is a member of MESH.

1. <http://abumuqawama.blogspot.com/2008/02/imad-mughniyeh-who-killed-him.html>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david\\_schenker/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david_schenker/)

Jon Alterman (2008-02-13 18:25:23)

I'm surprised my friend David Schenker ignores the possibility that Mughniyah's death was an olive branch from Syria to the West. Certainly Syrian state security had the capacity both to plant a powerful car bomb and to surveil Mughniyah well enough to know where the bomb should be placed so as to be lethal. In fact, such a task would be infinitely easier for the Syrians than any other potential actor. Given speculation that Mughniyah may have been involved in the Hariri assassination, eliminating him may have had the dual effect of eliminating a witness and demonstrating Syrian good faith in the battle against terrorism. If nothing else, his death is a lesson that if you hang out with people who have no respect for human life, they tend not to have very much respect for your life either. [1]Jon Alterman is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon\\_alterman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon_alterman/)

David Schenker (2008-02-13 16:16:00)

Mughniyah's death raises some interesting issues. The fact that Mughniyah was killed in Damascus highlights the Asad regime's increasing difficulties in protecting the terrorists they provide with "safe haven." In 2004, another guest of the regime, Hamas leader Izzeddin Subhi Sheikh Khalil, was killed by a car bomb in Damascus. The Israelis bombed an Islamic Jihad training camp in 2003, buzzed Asad's Latakia palace in 2006, and destroyed a presumed North Korean-supplied nuclear facility in 2007. As Mughniyah's aunt told AFP earlier today, "We were shocked to learn that he was killed in Syria. We thought he was safe there." In all of these cases, to put it mildly, the Syrian response has been remarkably restrained. Another interesting issue raised by Mughniyah's death is the impact this will have on the next U.S. Administration's policy toward Syria. It's no doubt problematic that the Asad regime provides sanctuary to top former Saddam regime elements who help orchestrate the insurgency in Iraq, getting a lot of U.S. soldiers killed in the process. But this hasn't stopped many in the United States from arguing that "dialogue" with Damascus is the solution to these misunderstandings. But Syrian attempts to harbor a leading killer of American citizens like Mughniyah will likely be viewed even more harshly by Washington. It will be more difficult for a candidate like Senator Obama to make the case for talks when Syrian behavior is so brazenly anti-American. The harboring of Mughniyah and others belies Syrian officials' claims (like [1]those of Syrian Ambassador Imad Mustafa) that Damascus seeks good relations with Washington. Finally, Mughniyah's departure may have implications for the internal politics of Hezbollah. In recent months, a series of articles have appeared in the Arab press (here is an [2]example) suggesting some dissatisfaction among Hezbollah elites with Secretary-General Nasrallah's leadership of the organization. Mughniyah, as Andrew Exum correctly notes in his post, was a constant for decades. His removal from the scene will necessarily impact the internal dynamics of the group, perhaps resulting in some changes within Hezbollah. [3]David Schenker is a member of MESH.

1. <http://faculty-staff.ou.edu/L/Joshua.M.Landis-1/syriablog/2006/08/syria-wants-to-talk-by-imad-mustapha.htm>
2. <http://www.free-syria.com/loadarticle.php?articleid=24830>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david\\_schenker/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david_schenker/)

## Imad who? (2008-02-14 11:30)

From [1]Martin Kramer

As Hezbollah's official funeral of Imad Mughniyah unfolded today—Hezbollah's leader eulogized him over a coffin decked in Hezbollah's flag—it is useful to recall the party's denial of his very existence over all these many years. Mention of his name to Hezbollah officials would draw a blank stare or blanket denial.

"Hezbollah professes no knowledge of the man," the New York Times [2]reported in 2002. A journalist who [3]interviewed a top Hezbollah official and parliamentary deputy, Abdullah Kassir, once asked him if he knew Mughniyah. "Kassir flashed a blistering look and responded curtly, 'I have no answer.'"

Hezbollah's leader, Hasan Nasrallah, followed a double tack: he would defend "freedom fighter" Mughniyah, but not acknowledge him. "The American accusations against Mughnieh are mere accusations," he was [4]quoted as saying. "Can they provide evidence to condemn Imad Mughnieh? They launch accusations as if they are given facts." But when pressed, Nasrallah "refused to reveal whether Mughnieh has a role in Hizbullah." Of course.

Another American academic wrote this precious paragraph in her [5]book on Hezbollah:

For its part, Hezbollah has consistently denied the existence of any relationship with Mughniyeh, direct or indirect. As a matter of record, from the time of the party's inception, all Hezbollah officials have emphatically denied ever knowing a person by the name of Imad Mughniyeh. The apparent avoidance of this issue is clear in an answer to a recent question about the party's relationship with Mughniyeh. The response of a Hezbollah senior official was that Mughniyeh had never held a position in their organization, and was, in Deputy Secretary General Naim al-Qassim's words, 'only a name'.

The same author then spends a few embarrassing pages agonizing over this question: "Was Mughniyeh a member of Hezbollah?"

Now that Nasrallah's eulogy has placed Mughniyah officially in the pantheon of Hezbollah's greatest martyrs (with Abbas al-Musawi and Raghieb Harb), this question looks absurd. That it ever arose is a testament to the discipline of Hezbollah in sticking to lies that serve its interests. One of its paramount interests is concealing from scrutiny that apparatus of terror that Mughniyah spent his life building. Hiding the clandestine branch protects it from Hezbollah's enemies, and makes it easier to sell the movement to useful idiots in the West, who insist that the movement hasn't done any terror in years, and maybe never did any at all. They produce statements of such mind-boggling gullibility that one can easily imagine Mughniyah chuckling to himself on reading them. The "literature" is rife with claims that Mughniyah didn't really belong to Hezbollah, or he answered to Iran, or he had his own agenda—anything to dissociate his terrorist acts from the party.

The truth is (and always has been) a simple one. Hezbollah is many things, but it has always included within it a clandestine terrorist branch, and it probably always will. Indeed, Nasrallah's [6]threat in his eulogy—to commence an "open war" with Israel outside the Israel-Lebanon theater—alludes to the "global reach" that Mughniyah helped to build.

If Hezbollah were absolutely determined to distance itself from the terror tag, it wouldn't have accorded an official send-off to a most-wanted terrorist. Nor would its leader have stood over his coffin and threatened "open war." Assassinations of terrorists can boomerang, and so might this one. But it's already had the one merit of exposing the core of Hezbollah that lies deep beneath the schools, the hospitals, and all the other [7]gimmicks the party uses to get support and pass in polite company. On page one of the International Herald Tribune today, there are photographs of the aftermath of the Beirut bombing of the U.S. Marines barracks (1983), the hijacked TWA Flight 847 (1985), and the ruins of Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia (1996). That's Hezbollah too, and that was Imad Mughniyah—and they were one.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)
2. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F04E7DF123CF937A15751C1A9649C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0312425112>
4. <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-106101942.html>
5. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1845110242>
6. [http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20080214/ts\\_nm/lebanon\\_hezbollah\\_dc\\_5](http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20080214/ts_nm/lebanon_hezbollah_dc_5)
7. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0691124213>

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Michael Young (2008-02-16 06:39:58)

Tony Badran also has a [1]good rundown on the gullibility of scholars when it comes to Mughniyah at his *Across the Bay* blog. What he shows is that few of those writing on Hezbollah bothered to search beyond what the party told them about Mughniyah—and even came to internalize the party line on him. In recent days, I’ve learned that while Mughniyah was indeed a shadowy figure, there were quite a lot of people who knew him from his early days when he was a member of Fatah, and who sporadically knew what he was up to afterward. That’s not to say that they would have spoken to researchers, or even that they had much to say; but it was not especially difficult for scholars to dig deeper and discover that Mughniyah at least existed and was not the non-entity that some “experts” made him out to be. This is emblematic of a wider problem. Hezbollah has been very adept at turning contacts with the party into a supposedly valuable favor. Scholars, particularly in the West, who can claim to have a Hezbollah contact are already regarded as “special” for having penetrated a closed society, so that readers are less inclined to judge critically the merits of what the scholars got out of Hezbollah. The same goes for book editors. Since Hezbollah denied knowing Mughniyah, few were willing to say “This is rubbish, I’m going to push further.” The mere fact of getting that denial was regarded as an achievement—one the authors were not about to jeopardize by calling Hezbollah liars. My friend Mohamad Bazzi, in an [2]interview with the Council on Foreign Relations, seems to have fallen into this trap. On the CFR site, he told Bernard Gwertzman the following about Mughniyah: “The reports that list him as an active senior leader of Hezbollah at the time of his death are mistaken. He might have had some contact with some people in Hezbollah leadership but he wasn’t giving out orders and he wasn’t in the position to do that.” How does Bazzi know this? These are not details that Hezbollah would share with journalists, unless it is to begin a process of disinformation. And how does this square with Hezbollah’s own statements and behavior to the contrary since the assassination? I can understand the logic of downplaying the importance of someone important who was murdered, as a means of telling the perpetrators that they did less damage than they think. But what’s the logic of affirming the importance of someone like Mughniyah if he is unimportant? Doesn’t it just confirm that Hezbollah suffered a terrible blow? My feeling is that Bazzi, like others, perhaps internalized the denials he heard from Hezbollah before the assassination, and has yet to adjust his argument to the aftermath. Writers and scholars quite naturally don’t like to admit that they’ve believed lies. But Hezbollah’s response to Mughniyah’s murder surely imposes a reassessment. But if downplaying Mughniyah’s importance is not a case of scholars wanting to remove egg from their face, then we could be seeing something different: a situation where writers and scholars are consciously or unconsciously perpetuating their initial belief that Mughniyah was always little more than an American, Israeli, or European creation, therefore that he was another excuse to justify further Western hegemony over the Arabs. Since so much Middle Eastern commentary and scholarship tends to be filtered into that template, it will be worth watching how writers and scholars comment on the further revelations in the Mughniyah case—assuming any are believable. [3]Michael Young is opinion page editor of the Daily Starnewspaper in Lebanon.

1. <http://beirut2bayside.blogspot.com/2008/02/paging-norton-and-other-hezbollah.html>
2. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/15507/bazzi.html>
3. <http://www.reason.com/staff/show/138.html>

Andrew Exum (2008-02-15 08:04:22)

Martin Kramer asks some excellent questions of existing Hezbollah scholarship—questions that sent me scrambling to my bookshelf to check how other scholars handled the figure of Imad Mughniyah in their books on Hezbollah. (The answers are mixed.) I wonder if scholars or journalists currently working on Hezbollah will now ask the organization about the apparent contradiction in the way Hezbollah publicly distanced themselves from Mughniyah in recent years yet embraced him in death. It is worth remembering that very little is definitively known about the life and career of Imad Mughniyah. Perhaps now that he is dead, an interview might surface in Hezbollah media such as [1]al-Manar

or [2]al-Intiqad that reveals more. The degree to which Mughniyah has been publicly claimed by Hezbollah gives us hope the organization will be more transparent about the role he once played. In the meantime, Marc Sirois [3] makes a point in today's edition of the *Daily Star* worth noting: "...virtually everything that is thought to be known about Mughniyah—including, now, his death itself—is suspect." [4] *Andrew Exum is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://www.almanar.com.lb/>
2. <http://www.alintiqad.com/>
3. [http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition\\_id=1&categ\\_id=2&article\\_id=88987](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=2&article_id=88987)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew\\_exum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew_exum/)

Magnus Ranstorp (2008-02-17 18:15:28)

Over the last two decades, I have invested an immense effort in mapping the links among Imad Mughniyah, Hezbollah leader Hasan Nasrallah, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, the Al-Qods Force, Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security, and the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While the "open" evidence on Mughniyah is relatively limited, there's enough to build a coherent picture. He was indisputably involved in several terror cases beginning with the 1985 hijacking of TWA 847 (his fingerprints were found on board). Giandomenico Picco, the UN envoy who finally closed the Western hostage file in 1991, affirmed that Mughniyah was principal interlocutor in the negotiations. I assisted the Argentinian Supreme Court investigation into the 1992 bombing of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires that resulted in the indictment of several Iranians as well as Mughniyah. The evidence left no doubt about Mughniyah's extensive involvement. Over the years I've also interviewed several intelligence officers and investigators from France, the United States, Germany and other countries where Mughniyah was active, and they unanimously agreed that the threat posed by Mughniyah remained very real, extraordinarily dangerous and complex. Just two weeks ago I conducted such an interview at a European intelligence agency, and they continued to regard Mughniyah as a serious security threat. Martin Kramer is right in affirming that Hezbollah has maintained a clandestine terror capability revolving around Mughniyah, as a node to other terror channels within Iran's intelligence architecture. Hezbollah's denial of Mughniyah was evidence for its fragile double identity. I perfectly understand why they opted for plausible deniability. Why should they have admitted his existence or role in terrorism? Less understandable are the many academics who allowed themselves to be misled about Hezbollah's clandestine wing and its use by Iran and, at times, Syria. Some of them were blinded by going "native," or they never really got close enough to Hezbollah to grasp the centrality of the clandestine wing and the crucial role of Mughniyah, the Hamadi clan and others. They preferred to believe that Hezbollah could not possibly harbor a secret structure involved in terrorism, when its above-the-board operations—social, political and military—were so effective and (according to some) so noble and legitimate. And so Hezbollah was allowed to have its cake and eat it too. Hezbollah's present embrace of Mughniyah as a great commander and hero has vindicated experts such as myself, who were right to underscore Mughniyah's significance. We were not surprised to see Nasrallah standing over Mughniyah's coffin and vowing vengeance. The same cannot be said for [1] Amal Saad-Ghorayeb and others, who downplayed or altogether ignored the most senior Hezbollah commander. [2] *Magnus Ranstorp is Research Director of the Center for Asymmetric Threat Studies at the Swedish National Defence College, and the author of [3] Hizb'allah in Lebanon.*

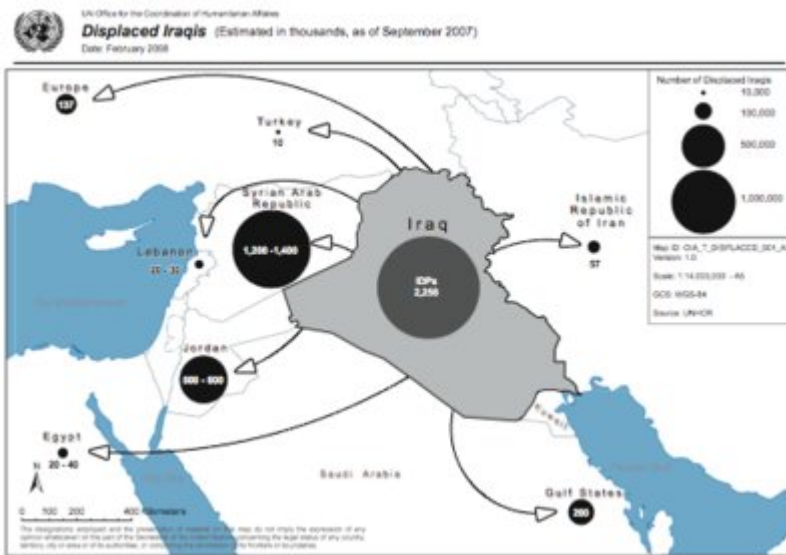
1. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0745317928>
2. <http://www.fhs.se/sv/Forskning/Forskare/Forskare-ISS/Magnus-Ranstorp/>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0312164912>

## Displaced Iraqis (2008-02-17 07:54)

From MESH Admin

This new map, prepared by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), illustrates the disposition of Iraqi IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) and refugees, as of last September. Click on the map to see it in larger (legible) size.





[1]

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/02/displacedlarge.png>

## Arabs for Obama? (2008-02-17 09:21)

From [1] Tamara Cofman Wittes

I'm in Doha for the [2]5th Annual U.S.-Islamic World Forum—my fourth year at this annual confab (organized by my fine colleagues in the [3]Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution) that brings together Americans with Muslims from Nigeria to Malaysia and everywhere in between. This year we've included a number of prominent faith leaders, such as Amr Khaled, Egypt's massively popular TV preacher, and Bob Roberts of the Texas megachurch, Northwood. Despite the diversity of the conference's participants, though, the U.S.-Arab relationship usually sets the tone of the proceedings—and for the past four years, that tone has been bitter indeed. This year is different.

In previous years, our opening session has featured senior Arab voices lambasting American interventionism in Iraq and abandonment of Israeli-Palestinian peace, alongside provocative (and often tone-deaf) defenses of U.S. policy by Americans like Karen Hughes and Philip Zelikow. This year, the opening keynote was instead delivered by President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan, who argued that Muslims in Afghanistan and Bosnia were right to expect and accept American military intervention to relieve their suffering, and America was just in coming to their aid.

After his speech, former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan, and U.S. Ambassador to the UN Zalmay Khalilzad seemed to echo Karzai's themes: common interests between Muslims and the West in fighting terrorism, improving regional stability, and building the foundations for prosperity and freedom. Karzai pointed to the global contributions to Afghanistan's reconstruction as a symbol of Western-Islamic world cooperation; Babacan proudly referred to the Turkish accession talks with the European Union as evidence that the values of the Union are not essentially Western but rather universal in their appeal.

The lack of a fire-breathing Amr Moussa or Sheikh Yusuf Qaradawi on the program certainly made a difference. But changes in the region and in U.S. policy also help explain the slackening of the resentment that has accompanied our past years' discussions on America's role in the Muslim Middle East. Violence in

Iraq is down, there's new (if fragile) hope for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and pushy rhetoric from the White House, once directed at autocratic Arab allies, is now reserved for Iran, which Americans and Arabs both perceive as threatening. A cynical colleague of mine here argued that the positive tone from the regional leaders at the conference reflects age-old realities of international politics: when America is weak, he said, everyone loves to beat up on us—but when America is stronger, everyone wants to be on our side. That's great—as long as the current lull in Iraqi violence lasts.

Quite honestly, though, I don't think the relative love-fest at this year's meeting is all ascribable either to regional shifts or to the conference organizers' choice of speakers. The most powerful explanation for the change is evident in the overwhelming fact that all anyone at this conference really wants to talk about is Barack Obama.

A friend from the Gulf tells me her young relative was so excited about the Democratic candidate that he tried to donate money over the Internet, as he'd heard so many young Americans were doing. Then he found out he had to be a U.S. citizen to do so. Another young woman, visiting from next-door Saudi Arabia, said that all her friends in Riyadh are "for Obama." The symbolism of a major American presidential candidate with the middle name of Hussein, who went to elementary school in Indonesia, certainly speaks to Muslims abroad.

But more important is just the prospect of a refreshing shift in the the breeze off the Potomac. More than the changes in the region, it seems to be anticipated changes in Washington that are drawing the eyes of my Arab counterparts and giving the conference its unusually forward-looking tone. We'll see how long the honeymoon lasts!

MESH Update, February 18: AFP [4]reports that Obama "won overwhelming support in a mock election by more than 200 American and Muslim delegates at the U.S.-Islamic World Forum in the Qatari capital [on Monday]. His Democratic rival Hillary Clinton and Republican candidates won only a handful of votes."

Update from Tamara Cofman Wittes, February 22: I did not witness a straw poll like that described by AFP in any of the conference sessions I attended, nor did my research assistant. I'd love to hear the specifics from the AFP correspondent to back up this story.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara\\_cofman\\_wittes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara_cofman_wittes/)
2. <http://www.thedohaforum.org/>
3. <http://www.brookings.edu/saban.aspx>
4. [http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20080218/wl\\_mideast\\_afp/usvoteislamqatar\\_080218175510](http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20080218/wl_mideast_afp/usvoteislamqatar_080218175510)

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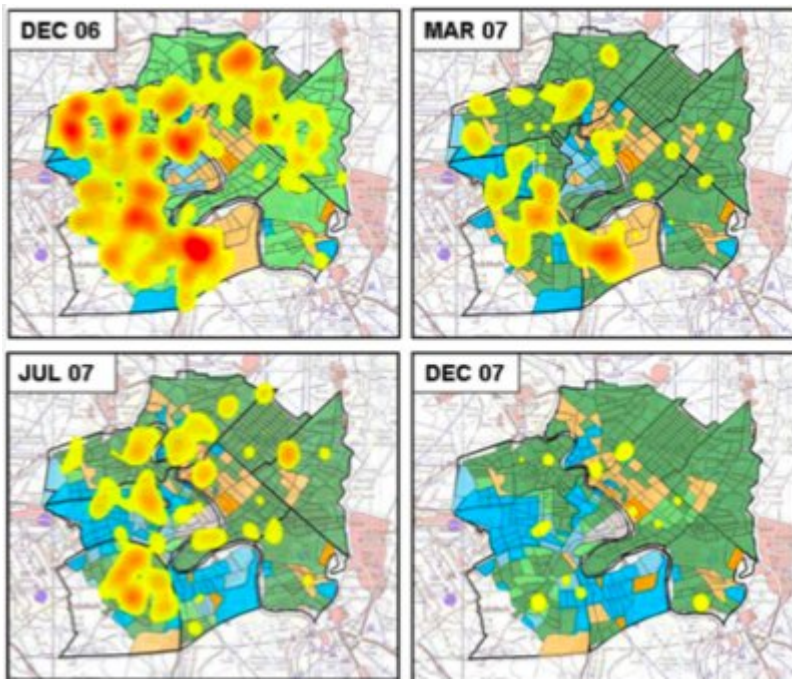
## Pacification of Baghdad (2008-02-18 09:18)

From MESH Admin

Here is the latest (January 17) map of trends in ethno-sectarian violence in Baghdad, from the Multinational Force Iraq (MNF-I). The green areas are predominantly Shiite, the blue are mostly or predominantly Sunni, and the brown areas are closely mixed. The yellow-orange-red inflammation indicates "incidents where deaths occurred from any means that were clearly ethno-sectarian in motivation, to include car bombs." The methodology for determining what constitutes ethno-sectarian violence is explained [1]here.

This map and other charts may be found in the January 17 [2]briefing slides of Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, and in the [3]report by Anthony Cordesman, *The Situation in Iraq: A Briefing from the Battlefield*,

published on February 13.



1. <http://www.talkingpointsmemo.com/docs/icd-methodology/>
2. <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/briefingslide.aspx?briefingslideid=321>
3. [http://www.csis.org/component/option,com\\_csis\\_pubs/task,view/id,4334/type,1/](http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_pubs/task,view/id,4334/type,1/)

## 'The Israel Lobby' and the American interest (2008-02-19 01:04)

From [1]Adam Garfinkle



In the [2]latest issue of *The American Interest*, March/April 2008, [3]Itamar Rabinovich, the former Israeli ambassador to the United States, former president of Tel Aviv University, former head of the Dayan Center, current visiting professor of public policy at Harvard's Kennedy School, and a member of the *The American Interest* editorial board, [4]takes on the Mearsheimer/Walt phenomenon. That is to say, he is not reviewing the book so much as the various reviews of the book, the reaction of the authors to the reviews, and so on. So if a book is a one-dimensional intellectual object, and a review is a two-dimensional intellectual object, and authors' reactions to reviews a three-dimensional intellectual object, then what Rabinovich has done aspires to be truly Einsteinian in nature.

I will not take time here to relate or summarize his narrative. I want only to note that, of all the many reviews and discussions about this book and its precursor essay and "working paper," Rabinovich's is the only one to have taken the book's argument to its logical apex, to wit: If, as Mearsheimer and Walt argue, the real variance in U.S. Middle East policy is explained by U.S. domestic politics, then a book like theirs should have a significant impact on that policy. But it isn't, so it hasn't. And it won't. Point, set and match,

thank you very much.

There is plenty to admire in Rabinovich's essay, although, as its editor, I confess to a natural bias in thinking so. But the "test" he has devised for the book's claims, relying on the book's very own thesis, is, I think, noteworthy. Ecclesiastes tells us (more than once) that there is nothing new under the sun. At times like this, however, I'm not so sure.

MESH invites its members to comment on Rabinovich's concluding paragraphs:

[I]t is harder to make a realist case for the U.S.-Israeli relationship today than it was during the Cold War. At that time, Israel's role as a strategic asset was clear, if not to off-shore balancers like Mearsheimer and Walt, then to every American President since John F. Kennedy. Israel and the United States had the same enemies—the Soviet Union and its radical Arab allies—with the conservative Arab regimes stuck awkwardly in the middle. Today things are altogether more muddled, so a more plausible case can be made that Israel is a drag on U.S. security interests and that radical Muslims only hate and attack America because of its support for Israel....

Clearly, the end of the Cold War and the rise of new challenges require fresh thinking about the strategic dimension of the U.S.-Israeli relationship. By defending every aspect of the special relationship when the rationales for them no longer exist, the Israel lobby risks overloading what political realities can bear. There will always be those like Mearsheimer and Walt, as there have been since 1947–48, when the State of Israel came into being, who will argue that U.S. support for Israel and its policies harms U.S. national interests. Israel's response must focus not only on refuting this charge but on formulating policies that will render Israel, in deed as well as in rhetoric, a valuable partner of the United States.

An opportunity to do precisely that is in the offing, for the next U.S. administration will no doubt formulate a revised comprehensive policy toward the Middle East. An Israel engaged in a peace process orchestrated by the United States and working together with Washington and its other Middle Eastern allies against radical foes will be an important strategic asset in the post-Cold War Middle East. The specific challenge for Israel and its American friends will be their ability to demonstrate how Israel can serve as a strategic asset in the Iranian and Syrian context as it once did against the Soviet Union and its radical allies in the region. The wider strategic canvas, not the vicissitudes of U.S. domestic politics, will as always make the difference.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)
2. <http://www.the-american-interest.com/ai2/index.cfm>
3. [http://ksgfaculty.harvard.edu/itamar\\_rabinovich](http://ksgfaculty.harvard.edu/itamar_rabinovich)
4. <http://www.the-american-interest.com/ai2/article-bd.cfm?Id=416&Mid=18>

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Chuck Freilich (2008-02-19 08:51:48)

I believe that Itamar Rabinovich and others greatly overstate the importance of the strategic dimension in the U.S.-Israeli relationship in general and specifically during the Cold War. Yes, Israel had and has strategic importance for the United States, and it is the one country in the Middle East which can always be counted upon to be firmly pro-American in all circumstances—a "land-based aircraft carrier" whose military and diplomatic support is assured. For Pentagon planners, this is a valued source of stability in a region ridden with uncertainty and danger. I believe,

however, that Israel's strategic importance is secondary to the vitality of the relationship, and that it is the normative dimension which is its essence. During the Cold War Israel was a strategic burden for the United States, no less than an asset. A possible focal point for a Soviet invasion, certainly of Soviet allies in the region, Israel's primary strategic role at the time was as an embattled ally to be defended. U.S. problems with the Arab world then, as now, did not stem from its support for Israel, but that support did exacerbate them, and became a growing problem in the post-1973 oil-embargo world. Moreover, the sole case in history in which the United States ever declared a nuclear alert, was in support of Israel, in the face of a Soviet threat to invade during the October 1973 Yom Kippur War—not the Cuban Missile Crisis, even though the latter was, admittedly, an infinitely more dangerous situation. 9/11 and the entire confrontation between the United States and Muslim world have nothing to do with Israel. Indeed, if Israel disappeared tomorrow this would have virtually no bearing on the situation at all. This is not to say, however, that U.S. support for Israel does not further inflame already existing Arab hatred of the United States. It does. As for strategic importance, it should be noted that the one country in the region whose active support the United States did *not* want in both Gulf Wars, was precisely its foremost "strategic ally," Israel, for the simple reason that Israel's involvement would have led to the collapse of the Arab coalitions the United States sought to build, successfully in 1991, unsuccessfully in 2003. Whereas Egyptian, Saudi, and even *Syrian* forces fought by the side of the United States in 1991, the United States did everything in its power to keep Israel out of both wars and ensure that it did not even respond to the 39 missiles fired by Saddam. All of this is not to deny Israel's strategic importance to the United States, as its one totally reliable ally in the region, especially in what may prove to be particularly difficult circumstances. Having a major deposit in a savings account, for a rainy day, is very important, even if one cannot make a withdrawal against the account on an ongoing basis. I believe, however, that it is the normative element, not the the strategic dimension, that truly accounts for the incredibly close "special relationship," the ongoing perception of a large majority of Americans of Israel as a "mini-America" in the heart of the Middle East, an embattled democratic bastion whose national roots and struggle are similar to their own. Both countries fought for their independence, both carried a democratic beacon, where only the darkness of religious and political oppression existed. The shared Judeo-Christian heritage and view of modern Israel as the realization of biblical prophecy, further buttressed the picture. This is why some 60 percent of Americans have continually supported Israel over the decades. (The overwhelming majority of the rest simply have no opinion; support for the Arabs or Palestinians is miniscule.) The view of Israel as a reliable strategic ally is important, but the normative level is vital. So a reformulation of the rationale for the relationship is not needed. What is essential, however, is for Israel to maintain this public image in the United States and to conduct its policies in various areas, including the Palestinian one, accordingly. Common policies on Iran, Syria and other issues are of great importance as well. But interests come and go; a full convergence of interests does not and cannot always exist. Relations based on common values and beliefs are far more durable. [1] *Chuck Freilich, former Israeli deputy national security adviser, is a senior fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.*

1. [http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/experts/870/chuck\\_freilich.html](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/experts/870/chuck_freilich.html)

Charles Hill (2008-02-19 08:38:36)

The answer to Ambassador Rabinovich's call for "fresh thinking about the strategic dimension of the U.S.-Israel relationship" is clear and simple. The Cold War threat to world order has been superseded by an ideologically radical Islamist movement which aims to disrupt, destroy and replace the international state system in the Middle East with Islamic rule—even as it seeks to gain footholds in Europe, Southeast Asia and elsewhere for further phases of its universalist cause, which may be traced at least as far back as the 1924 fall of the Ottoman Caliphate. This movement is not a centrally-directed monolith, but its parts are nonetheless related in important ways, most notably in rejection of the basic elements of the international system: the state as the fundamental unit of world order, international law and organization, universal human rights, the requirement to field a professional military, etc. Today's overriding strategic necessity for the United States is to defend, shore up, and extend the international state system all across the Middle East. Israel, as a free, well-governed and good international state citizen is the linchpin of this strategy. Every major problem in the region can be understood in this context. The strategy must assist Pakistan to preserve itself from the Islamist challenge; continue to work with Afghanistan to consolidate its recently regained statehood; finish the duty of helping Iraq regain the legitimate statehood which it lost under Saddam Hussein; and act internationally to restore Lebanon to its rightful territorial integrity and independence as a state. Iran, an Islamic republic that benefits from its membership in the international system even as it acts to defy, undermine, and endanger world order through its drive for nuclear weapons, presents a signal challenge to American strategy. Elsewhere, the United States has to press Arab regimes to reform and fulfill their responsibilities as states and to abandon their subsidies, propaganda, and support for Islamists in ways that harm the international system and, ultimately, will bring an end to their own existence.

For Israel and the Palestinians, the achievement of a two-state solution which would produce greater security and recognition for the State of Israel and bring a new State of Palestine into existence would be a major setback for the Islamist ideological cause. In this context, Israel's strategic importance to the United States is greater than it was during the Cold War. Israel's economy is a model for the region; its democracy, while probably not attainable any time soon by others in the region, is nonetheless an example of good governance, political transparency, and open intellectual exchange. And Israel's military capacities, faced as it is with non-state, anti-state Islamist terrorist polities to its north and south, requires America's utmost understanding and support. [1]*Charles Hill is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/charles\\_hill/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/charles_hill/)

Harvey Sicherman (2008-02-19 18:47:13)

I liked Itamar Rabinovich's article not least because my own earlier [1]article on the subject amused him. That said, the "reformulation of strategic rationales" for important U.S. relationships occurs every election cycle and tortures speechwriters in particular. So everyone counts on amnesia to carry the day as new labels are pasted onto old (very old) battles. The U.S.-Israeli strategic relationship will survive as a staple of U.S. foreign policy and even a bout of "fresh thinking." Professors will never bring it down but failure to achieve common goals can injure it. Today, the United States and Israel face common enemies in the region, so the strategic question is whether their collaboration on a strategic level can make a difference. This has diplomatic and military dimensions. A successful Israeli-Palestinian peace process cannot satisfy the Islamists, whether of Sunni or Shiite persuasion; can it ease the operations of a regional coalition to oppose Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran and the rest? During the Cold War, Egypt's defection from the pro-Soviet coalition added measurably to Israeli and American interests but it did not prevent other mishaps whether in Lebanon or the Gulf. So it was worth doing but had less "bounce" on other conflicts (or even the Arab-Israeli one) than many hoped. The military dimension may be more significant. As I noted in an earlier [2]post on the Winograd Commission, both the United States and Israel must find a solution to the Hezbollah-style warfare whereby a well-trained force uses civilians as both targets and shields. Iran and its allies are counting on this to defeat Western military superiority, just as Tehran is counting on a nuclear deterrent to guarantee that it will remain a sanctuary, no matter its support for terrorism. On this issue, the strategic allies dare not fail. [3]*Harvey Sicherman is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/20060328.sicherman.israellobby.html>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/02/civilians\\_shields\\_and\\_targets/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/02/civilians_shields_and_targets/)

3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey\\_sicherman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey_sicherman/)

Robert Satloff (2008-02-19 18:02:47)

Charles Hill and Chuck Freilich offer the foreign policy version of the "tastes great/less filling" debate of beer commercials from my youth. When asked which factor can and should animate the vibrancy of U.S.-Israel partnership into the future, the former offers a strategic rationale (the common fight against Islamist extremism) while the latter offers a more cultural motivation (common values). I venture to suggest that both are right. What makes Israel such a special case in the international system and for U.S. foreign policy is precisely the fact that it both plays a critical role in the greatest ideological and strategic challenge facing America in the world today (the fight against radical Islamist extremism and its spread throughout Muslim societies and beyond) and that it is an outpost of shared values in a region that appears so inhospitable to them. If Israel were only a cultural outpost—a "mini-America"—but played no role as ally in a common strategic campaign, or if Israel were only a strategic partner without any of the religious, historical, cultural or social connections that bind our nations, then the partnership would rest on much shakier ground. The challenge for friends of Israel in the United States is to broaden popular and elite understanding of the profound strategic threats that both our countries face and the contributions each of us bring to the effort against our common foe, while at the same time deepen a sense of shared culture and values that has frayed in recent years. The health of the U.S.-Israel partnership depends on progress on both fronts. [1]*Robert Satloff is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_satloff/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_satloff/)

Alan Dowty (2008-02-19 17:06:43)

Itamar Rabinovich—and Adam Garfinkle—have hit the nail on the head. Domestic lobbies have seldom had a decisive impact on U.S. Middle East policy, especially when major strategic interests (see Charles Hill's comment) or shared norms (Chuck Freilich) are at stake. My own detailed studies of U.S. crisis decision-making in 1958, 1970,

and 1973 bore this out: when the heat was on, lobbies were shunted aside. Why isn't this dirty little secret more widely recognized? In large part, because the lobbies themselves have every reason to perpetuate the myth of their own insidious power—leaving the way open for the Mearsheimers and Walts. With the mythology demolished, can Israel establish—or re-establish—itsself as a strategic asset in the post-Cold War context? The fight against Islamic extremism does provide a likely focus. But the role of Israel as a strategic asset was problematic in the Cold War period and is likely to become even more so in the multi-dimensional arena of religiously-inspired terror. Having common enemies does not always mean that joint action is possible or advisable. There were circumstances in the past when Israel was able to act positively and decisively as a strategic partner; for example, in acting to preserve King Hussein's rule in Jordan in 1970. But there were also circumstances, as Chuck Freilich points out, in which Israel's direct support would have been more of a burden than an asset. The U.S. interest in the Middle East, during the Cold War and today, has a central focus: stability. Instability in the past created openings for Soviet influence, and instability today is the breeding ground for Islamic extremism. If there are circumstances in which Israel can furnish military and other assets in this struggle, they will undoubtedly be called into play. But given the nature of the struggle, these circumstances are likely to be limited. The major contribution that Israel can make to stability in the region is in its own struggle with the Palestinians: in working toward a two-state solution to the conflict that would improve the contours of the broader struggle—as both Rabinovitch and Hill point out. (This is not said in support of the fantasy that elimination of the Arab-Israel conflict would magically resolve all strife in the Middle East). There is room and need for a common strategy. But it has more to do with the problems that occupy Israel already, than with broader regional vistas. [1]Alan Dowty is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)

## Ahmadinejad, Israel, and mass killings (2008-02-20 18:32)

From [1]Stephen Peter Rosen

I am worried. Last year I did some historical research on the shifts in discourse within British, Japanese, and South African official elites prior to their use of biological weapons. In all these cases, including the deliberate distribution of small pox-infected blankets by the British in North America, the use of bubonic plague by the Japanese in China, and the use of anthrax by the South Africans in what was then Rhodesia, use of biological agents was preceded by an escalation of rhetorical campaigns to demonize and dehumanize the targeted enemy.



The problem in using these shifts in discourse as an early warning indicator, is, of course, one of calibration and of over-prediction. Many references to enemies as less than human are not associated with biological attacks or other unconventional mass killings. Some streams of discourse are chronically laden with dehumanizing rhetoric. Detecting meaningful shifts requires close study of the discourse of interest over time, and I have not done this with regard to Iran and Israel. Casual observation suggests that references to Israel as a "cancer" are old, but that the [2]reference to Israel as a "black and dirty microbe" is new.

On the basis of my historical research, my recommendation was that a significant shift in discourse of this character be used as a indicator that we should focus intelligence collection assets on a target that is now suspected of being willing to engage in mass killing by unconventional means, and to issue specific deterrent threats of retaliation. I do not know if either of these measures has been adopted by the government

of Israel, or the United States, but it would seem prudent for them to do so.

I invite comment from those who systematically track Iranian discourse, to reassure me that there is nothing to worry about, or to verify my concerns.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)
2. [http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5g\\_nrxYSrTbp\\_LIZcVU4VGCBpQ0hQ](http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5g_nrxYSrTbp_LIZcVU4VGCBpQ0hQ)

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Meir Javedanfar (2008-02-21 09:12:40)

Ahmadinejad is a man who prides himself on being a straight talker. When he calls Israel a "dirty microbe," he means it. And we have to believe him. But we also have to understand the fact that name calling is all he can do. Despite his tough words, Ahmadinejad has very little say over Iran's defense policies. Even if Iran gets its hands on a nuclear bomb, it will not be Ahmadinejad who will be in charge of the all-important launch button. That job will belong to Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei. Unlike Ahmadinejad, he is not a messianic. Furthermore, he is not suicidal. He was there when Ayatollah Khomeini took the decision of agreeing to a ceasefire with Iraq in 1988, because Khomeini was told by his commanders that if he carried on fighting, his regime would collapse. Khamenei is very well aware of Israel's capabilities, and it is extremely unlikely that he would risk losing life and power because of the beliefs of one of his soldiers, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Unfortunately for Iran, what Ahmadinejad doesn't seem to realize is that these statements are self-defeating. When Ahmadinejad makes such statements, in the long run, the number of countries willing to justify Iran's right to a civilian nuclear program, and to trust Tehran with it, dwindles. Meanwhile, the international community must take a decisive stance against the use of such terms by Ahmadinejad. He would be well advised to focus on eliminating the germ of poverty, unemployment and corruption at home. After all, this is why his supporters elected him president. [1]Meir Javedanfar is the co-author of [2]The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the State of Iran. *He also heads the Middle East Economic and Political Analysis Company (MEEPAS).*

1. <http://www.meepas.com/aboutmeepas.htm>
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0786718870>

Mark T. Clark (2008-02-21 13:22:52)

Stephen Rosen asks an important question about the escalation in rhetoric by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. I do not follow Ahmadinejad's rhetoric closely, or at least any closer than most people who try to stay current with international news. However, from what I know of the processes of intelligence, I do not think the United States will devote any more resources to evaluating his rhetoric as an indicator of Iran's intentions, though I have no idea whether Israel would. There are at least two major reasons why this is so. First, intelligence analysts have historically shied away from evaluating intentions of leaders, frequently because intentions can change rapidly. In place of analyzing intentions, analysts prefer to focus on capabilities; that is, the resources a state could bring to bear in the event of a war, or crisis, and the like. Bureaucratically, such analysts also stand to lose less influence when they are wrong on questions of capabilities, but stand to lose quite a lot when wrong on intentions. Cynically, I would add that this leads analysts to avoid taking clear positions and putting their reputations on the line for what they think and believe. Second, the dynamics of leadership analysis for intelligence are different with different nations. When a Hitler or a Stalin is in power, it is easier to look for leads in their rhetoric for their intentions, since they hold enough power to bring about what they desire to achieve. However, Iran is much more complicated, and the power structure within Iran is more divided: Ahmadinejad may not be the most important broker of power within the Iranian leadership. But I think Stephen Rosen is right. If analyses such as his yield useful predictors of leaders' intentions, it would be prudent for our intelligence agencies to pay attention to shifts in rhetoric. I am especially interested in his historical case studies that demonstrate a shift in rhetoric before the use of unconventional weapons in war. I am, unfortunately, not sanguine that our intelligence agencies will detect that shift on their own. [1]Mark T. Clark is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_t\\_clark/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_t_clark/)

James R. Russell (2008-02-21 04:03:38)

My short answer is that Ahmadinejad and Hezbollah are obviously murderous and crazy. Iranians as a group are generally anything but genocidal or homicidal though, and find their president an acute embarrassment. But the very strident rhetoric against them has backed them into a corner. In talking to various friends in Iran, and the Iranian



media, my sense is that society is divided between the official line and a generally pro-Western, liberal attitude that gets little attention and enjoys very little political clout. Unfortunately Khatami's overtures to the United States were not answered, and this further isolated Iranian reformists. Seymour Hersh thinks Israel sent a message to Iran by bombing the site in Syria. Now we have to see what Hezbollah does after the assassination of Imad Mughniyah. If they fire katyushas at Haifa then I think Israel will have U.S. support in a strong response that involves naming and punishing Iranian state complicity. The problem is, it's a Pandora's box. A direct attack on Iran would be catastrophic, I think. [1]James R. Russell is Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies at Harvard.

1. <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~nelc/faculty/russell.htm>

Mehdi Khalaji (2008-02-21 04:07:04)

I agree with Stephen Peter Rosen that we have to research the shift in discourse of Iranian leaders about Israel. But giving too much credit to Ahmadinejad's speeches does not seem to be realistic. Ahmadinejad does not represent the Iranian government. The Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, is the one who deserves to be focused upon, and I do not see any discourse shift in his speeches. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and other Iranian military and security bodies are under the direct supervision of the Supreme Leader, not Ahmadinejad. Ahmadinejad is losing his social power base as well as his political power base within the regime itself. Much evidence indicates that Khamenei is trying to bypass Ahmadinejad and assert his authority on a variety of issues. [1]Mehdi Khalaji is a visiting fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy and author, most recently, of [2]Apocalyptic Politics: On the Rationality of Iranian Policy.

1. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC10.php?CID=33>

2. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=286>

Ze'ev Maghen (2008-02-21 15:24:15)

I, too, agree with Stephen Rosen that Ahmadinejad's recent words reducing Israel and its people to the status of a disease should serve as a wake-up call, but I don't see this as representing a particularly noteworthy rhetorical escalation. Iranian leaders and Islamists in general have been speaking this way about Israel for a long time: Khomeini himself was particularly volatile and vulgar on the subject, and many of the "reformists" who still claim to follow his "line" are not so easily outdone in this area themselves. The wake-up call, in other words, has been shouted from the rooftops for a long time now, but if the specific usage of "microbes" does the trick—as opposed to "devils," "pigs," "a cancer," "murderers," "pharaohs," "baby butchers," "perpetrators of genocide," "killers of the prophets," "enemies of God," etc.—then so be it. The premier difference between previous governments and the present one in this connection is not one of intent or aspiration, but one of perceived ability to prevail. A variety of regional developments have contributed to the genuinely held outlook among members of Ahmadinejad's administration, and in the mind of the President himself, that Israel has deteriorated from a potent nemesis to a Potemkin village, to a "hollow tree" that the "combined breath of the world's fasting Muslims [during Ramadan] can easily topple." Few motifs have been as ubiquitous in the media of the Islamic Republic over the last several years than what is described as the implosion of the "Zionist entity": every ill plaguing Israeli society, from drugs and violence in the schools to difficulty in absorbing Russian immigrants to (believe it or not) the decline in Sabbath observance is reported with relish as an indication of the increasing demoralization of the eternal foe. If Iranian words lead to Iranian actions in the near future where they did not do so in the past, this is not so much a function of a shift in terminology as it is a result of the expanding belief among Iranian leaders that they can threaten Israel and chip away at its security with relative impunity. This perception must be changed by transforming the reality that led to it—that is, by restoring to full throttle Israel's deterrent power. This, in turn, will bring about a softening of the rhetoric, which is a reflection of the reality and not vice versa. While I agree with Mehdi Khalaji that Khamenei can sometimes serve as a counterweight to Ahmadinejad, the rhetoric of the Supreme Leader on the subject of Israel (and America) is hardly less fierce than that of the chief executive: the Supreme Leader has quite the mouth on him when the mood strikes. As for the remainder of the government and populace, I believe that we should stop deluding ourselves that one has to be a doctrinaire Islamist ideologue in order to see the annihilation of Israel as a desideratum. Most Iranians have imbibed *cum lacte*, and throughout their lives, the notion—the "absolute truth"—that Zionism is a (is *the*) source of profound evil, and although for many this idea was long ago reduced to a mere mantra, a meaningless slogan, it should never be forgotten that such mantras and slogans, when they cloy in the conscious mind, burrow ever deeper into the recesses of the psyche, and are installed down underneath the level of meaning, in the place where basic instincts, automatic assumptions and ontological verities reside. When the time is ripe—and it will be soon—the decades of propaganda pounded into the brains of Iranians and other Muslims will be reactivated in order to create an atmosphere conducive

to the eradication of an entire population. Here in Tel Aviv, we haven't slept well for a while now. [1]Ze'ev Maghen is professor of Persian language and Islamic history and chair of the department of Middle East studies at Bar-Ilan University in Israel.

1. [http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/zeev\\_maghen.html](http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/zeev_maghen.html)

### PKK bases in northern Iraq (2008-02-24 06:29)

From MESH Admin

On Thursday evening, Turkish forces entered northern Iraq to do battle with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. Iraqi foreign minister Hoshiyar Zebari has called the move "a limited military incursion into a remote, isolated and uninhabited region." According to various sources, there have been clashes in the Qandil mountains along the Iraqi-Iranian border and in the Zap region. Turkish aircraft reportedly also bombed targets around Al-Amadiyah, an Iraqi Kurdish mountain town about 10 kilometers south of the Turkish border.

[1]The Washington Institute for Near East Policy has made available three maps showing the location of PKK enclaves in northern Iraq. (Click on each thumbnail to see the full map.)



[2] The first one has been prepared by [3]Abdulkadir Onay, a lieutenant colonel in the Turkish Army and a visiting military fellow at The Washington Institute. It divides the PKK presence in northern Iraq into eight regions, delineates them, and numbers the camps and "the approximate number of terrorists" in each region. It also shows which parts of northern Iraq are accessible only with PKK authorization

The other two maps, from last year, show the same area in a satellite view that gives a sense of the topography, and marks PKK bases. One map shows the western sector, the other shows the eastern sector.



[4] ..... [5]

1. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/>
2. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/mapImages/47bb356330675.jpg>
3. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC10.php?CID=35>
4. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/mapImages/471f964e18a6f.jpg>
5. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/mapImages/471f95d2b5745.jpg>

**Lebanon 2006 was prelude (2008-02-24 12:45)**

From [1]Barry Rubin



[2] Jonathan Spyer's [3]article, "Lebanon 2006," appears in the new issue of the Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA) Journal. This is the first analysis to include the findings of the Winograd Commission. Spyer points to the failure of the Israeli political leadership to define a clear set of goals in the 2006 war and then to commit to their achievement. The mediocre performance of elements of the Israeli ground forces allowed Hezbollah and its allies to depict war as a victory, despite their failure to achieve their own stated goals and the greater losses suffered by their side. Spyer reaches this conclusion:

Ultimately, the 2006 war must be understood as a single campaign within a broader Middle Eastern conflict, between pro-Western and democratic states on the one hand, and an alliance of Islamist and Arab nationalist forces on the other. The latter alignment has as one of its strategic goals the eventual demise of the State of Israel. While such a goal may appear delusional, given the true balance of forces involved, the inconclusive results of the 2006 war did much to confirm the representatives of the latter camp in their belief that they have discovered a method capable of eventually producing a strategic defeat for Israel. It is therefore expected that a further round of conflict is only a matter of time. Israel, meanwhile, must endeavor to develop a strategy capable of striking a blow in a future engagement sufficient to make any subsequent ambiguity untenable.

[4]Read it all.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry_rubin/)
2. [http://www.analyst-network.com/profile.php?user\\_id=133](http://www.analyst-network.com/profile.php?user_id=133)
3. <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2008/issue1/jv12no1a1.asp>
4. <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2008/issue1/jv12no1a1.asp>

**Islam in Europe: cycle of controversy (2008-02-25 03:35)**

From [1]Michael Reynolds



Despite all that is going on in the Middle East, what caught my eye recently are three items concerning western Europe. Each is very different, but all indicate that the question of the integration

of Muslims into European societies will remain contentious for some time to come.

The first involves Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan's visit to Germany. Khaled Diab has an account of it [2]here. Erdogan's success in attracting a large crowd of Turks and his pleas to them not to lose their cultural identity irritated Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel, who said, "If you grow up in Germany in the third or fourth generation, if you have German citizenship, then I am your chancellor." But as Diab notes, due to Germany's unwillingness to grant citizenship to immigrants, very few Turks in Germany fit Merkel's definition. Europe, Diab concludes, is increasingly multicultural, and increasingly polarized.

One way to deal with this reality is to accommodate multiculturalism by institutionalizing polarization. By establishing clear boundaries between communities one reduces the likelihood of clashes. This in essence is the recommendation of the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. Rowan Williams, who in his lecture of February 7 on the topic of civil and religious law in England suggested the recognition in Britain of the sharia's jurisdiction in certain spheres, such as marital law and the regulation of financial transactions. As he states, "But if what we want socially is a pattern of relations in which a plurality of divers and overlapping affiliations work for a common good, and in which groups of serious and profound conviction are not systematically faced with the stark alternatives of cultural loyalty or state loyalty, it [recognition of Islam law] seems unavoidable." (The lecture and related materials can be found [3]here.)

Williams' lecture has caused quite a stir, not for its intellectual content—the relationships between law, religion, and identity are famously knotty, and rather than engage the difficult issues in those relationships Williams instead skims over them by making a series of glib assumptions—but because of what many see as its message of "appeasement" or "surrender." I don't think that this was Williams' intention, but his lecture does lend support to the argument that with the Islamization of Europe now underway, Muslim immigrants should not accommodate European norms and assimilate European culture, but instead they should strive to reshape Europe in accord with their vision(s) of Islam.

Meanwhile the popular Dutch member of parliament Geert Wilders is sending a radically different message. Wilders declares Islam "an ideology of a retarded culture" and "something we can't afford any more in the Netherlands." Not only does he want to ban the "fascist Koran" but he claims to have prepared a short ten-minute film on Islam in which he desecrates the Koran. (Go [4]here for an interview with Wilders.)

Wilders claims he loathes Islam but not Muslims. His overtly hostile rhetoric and inflammatory cinematic projects, however, ensure that even lax Muslims in the Netherlands and Europe will, at least in the public and political spheres, identify more closely with their faith and culture, not less. The result will be to foster the growth of suspicion and hostility between Europe's Muslim immigrant and native populations.

The presence of immigrant Muslims in western Europe in the coming decades is projected to continue to increase in both absolute and proportional numbers. Muslim immigrants have been a significant part of the European landscape for some four decades. Yet, as these three items all highlight, European societies remain anxious and at a loss at how to deal with their immigrant communities. Discord will remain a feature of relations between native Europeans and Muslims. As the incident with the Danish cartoons illustrated, with today's transnational communities and global communications, conflict inside Europe can and does ripple throughout the Middle East and beyond, with destabilizing consequences.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_reynolds/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_reynolds/)
2. [http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/khaled\\_diab/2008/02/diversity\\_not\\_adversity.html](http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/khaled_diab/2008/02/diversity_not_adversity.html)
3. <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/1581>
4. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/feb/17/netherlands.islam>

Walter Laqueur (2008-02-25 20:33:12)

Michael Reynolds well summarizes European-Muslim relations. I offer three footnotes. 1) Is it really true that (as Khaled Diab says) Germany is unwilling to grant the immigrant Turks German citizenship? The known figures do not bear this out. About 500,000 have received citizenship in recent years. On the other hand, between 25-35 percent of the rest (there are considerable variations between the various *Laender*) have declared that they do not wish to become citizens. And does naturalization make much difference as far as integration is concerned? 2) As for the archbishop of Canterbury and his widely criticized suggestions, a policy of appeasement vis-à-vis the Muslim minorities may be necessary to keep internal peace; this is the inevitable result of years of uncontrolled immigration—including not a few troublemakers who came under the guise of Islamist preachers. (I have dealt with this dilemma in some detail in my [1]*Last Days of Europe*, 2007.) There is great resistance and the danger of a political backlash. But what is the alternative? The crucial question, of course, is how far these concessions should go. 3) As for Wilders and his hostility to Islam but not Muslims, this is a very marginal phenomenon. Europeans have shown no particular aversion towards Islam in recent centuries. In fact they have shown hardly any interest at all in the subject—hence the inherent fraudulence of the very term “Islamophobia.” There is fear of violence and its perpetrators. Studies published last month by the German ministry of the interior show a considerable readiness among young Muslims in Germany to use violence (*Gewaltbereitschaft*) and opposition to democracy and its institutions. It could be argued that there is a trend towards violence and similar ideological views also between young people of the extreme right and left. But among these, this has expressed itself more often than not in verbal rather than physical aggression. [2]*Walter Laqueur is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0312368704>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_laqueur/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_laqueur/)

## Another Israel-Hezbollah war? (2008-02-26 14:57)

From [1]Michael Young

✖ Another round of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah is certainly likely, but I don't consider it inevitable, particularly in the short term. There are several reasons for this.

The first is that we have to understand the importance of Hezbollah in Iranian strategy at present. The party is not there to get caught up in repeated conflicts with Israel, let alone a new Lebanese civil war. It is mainly there to act as an Iranian deterrent against an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, and more generally as a valuable lever in the Levant to use against Israel and the United States. In that context, war poses risks. With every conflict, the party loses some of its deterrence capability; at the same time, a conflict may impose unbearable human costs on the Shiite community, in such a way that Hezbollah's ability to fight is further eroded. (Indeed, we are already in that situation today.) And, any new war will have deeply negative repercussions on Hezbollah's domestic position, as a majority of Lebanese and Lebanese political forces reject the idea of again entering into a devastating war with Israel.

Add to that the time factor. Hezbollah is probably not yet ready to fight a war with Israel today, despite what Hasan Nasrallah has said in public recently. Shiites are deeply anxious about a new conflict a mere two years after the summer 2006 war; Hezbollah's defensive infrastructure north of the Litani River appears to be incomplete; and the party cannot guarantee geographical continuity between south Lebanon and the southern and northern Bekaa Valley, though this is not essential for it to fight. These are all reasons why Hezbollah has to be careful in how it retaliates for the assassination of Imad Mughniyah. Provoking a major Israeli offensive is almost certainly not something Nasrallah wants to do today.

As for Nasrallah's claim that the next war will involve an Israeli ground offensive, that's not necessarily true. Israel has the potential to once again primarily employ air power to wreak the destruction it did in 2006—but also in 1993 and 1996—provoking a massive exodus of Shiite civilians and bombing infrastructure

targets. This gruesome policy would create a humanitarian catastrophe that would mainly affect Hezbollah, and the party would find it difficult to respond in such a way that it could impose a balance of terror on Israel. Meanwhile, Lebanese anger with the party would have only heightened, further undercutting its support in society.

What about Israel? There may be a rationale for striking against Hezbollah before it's too late. However, the Israeli priority today appears to be less Lebanon than Iran and its nuclear capacity. Lebanon is a sideshow—an important one, but a sideshow nonetheless. Paradoxically, Hezbollah's reluctance to launch a war might encourage Israel to avert a conflict too. Why? Because both sides would calculate in terms of costs and benefits. Israel knows that it would be very difficult to score a knockout blow against Hezbollah in Lebanon. It does not want to risk getting caught up in a wider regional war via Lebanon. And a new Lebanon war would only make it more difficult to strike against Iran.

Given such uncertainty, each side is more likely to focus on its fundamental aims: Israel, on neutralizing Iran's nuclear capacity; Hezbollah on partly deterring an Israeli attack against Iran. That means both may well try to avoid an unmanageable escalation in Lebanon.

Still, the most likely cause of war remains miscalculation. Here the risks are higher. Too devastating a Hezbollah response to the Mughniyah killing might provoke a fierce response from Israel. Conversely, another assassination of a Hezbollah official could prompt Hezbollah to react in increasingly less calculating ways, making a clash more probable. Even an Israeli offensive against Gaza may force Hezbollah to take steps in southern Lebanon to back its brethren in Hamas, and this may widen the conflict with Israel.

Then again, Hezbollah would have to calculate whether this might lead to a repeat of 2006, which also followed a Hamas raid in Gaza, the net result of which was to Hezbollah's considerable disadvantage—all claims to a "divine victory" notwithstanding.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_young/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_young/)

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Chuck Freilich (2008-02-28 18:56:48)

I largely agree with what Michael Young has written and believe it is an incisive analysis, as are the comments by Andrew Exum and David Schenker. I, too, believe that it does not appear to be in Hezbollah's interest to heat things up too much at this point, but also fully accept Exum's caution. The situation is very fragile and can escalate easily. I believe, however, that another round is highly likely, sooner or later, if only because the battle against Israel is Hezbollah's *raison d'être*. It has undoubtedly evolved into an integral part of the Lebanese political scene and is the primary provider of social services to the Shi'ite population, but Hezbollah is first and foremost a jihadist organization, an Iranian proxy, committed to Israel's destruction. So another round is a matter of timing and the pretext will be found. One of the possibilities that worries me is that the next round may take place a few years from now when Iran already has a nuclear capability, which will be an entirely different ballgame. The following is the opening paragraph of a [1]study I recently published on the Iranian issue:

Fast forward, Lebanon, summer 2010. After four years of tenuous quiet, a rearmed Hezbollah, acting at Iran's behest, again launches rockets into Israel. Israel, determined to deal Hezbollah a truly severe blow, counter-attacks, successfully applying the lessons of the 2006 war. Syria, greatly strengthened by its growing military alliance with Iran, concentrates forces. Iran, having thwarted all diplomatic attempts to curtail its nuclear program, announces that it has "the bomb," hinting at Israel's destruction. The US places its forces on alert. The Security Council convenes in emergency session. Oil prices go off the charts...

If I were writing this today, I might simply put it off by a year or two and ask whether Mubarak is still in power in Egypt, or whether an Islamic regime has taken over and also decides to join the fun and games. It does seem likely that the Iranians wish to preserve the rocket arsenal as a massive retaliatory deterrent against Israel, to be used if and when either the United States or Israel attacks their nuclear program. Indeed, Defense Minister Barak

recently stated that the rocket arsenal had been fully rebuilt and *tripled* in size since the 2006 war. Depending on whose estimates of the prewar arsenal one accepts, Israel's or Nasrallah's, that would now mean between 39,000-60,000 rockets! Having made the mistake of using it too early once, they may be more careful and hesitant to do so next time—or not. UNIFIL makes it harder for Hezbollah to operate but is at best only a partial solution. Hezbollah has fully redeployed north of the Litani and is gradually doing so in the south as well. It appears to have fully restored its capabilities within the towns in the south—actually, far more than restored—but is limited in its ability to redeploy and build up its positions in the open areas in between, where UNIFIL patrols. Moreover, there are already signs that the contributing countries are getting tired and may reduce their forces. In any event, it does nothing to prevent the flow of arms from Syria and Iran, via the Syrian border. Bottom line, sooner or later, Lebanon will continue to be a source of joy for the peoples of the Middle East and beyond. [2]Chuck Freilich, former Israeli deputy national security adviser, is a senior fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

1. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=284>
2. [http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/experts/870/chuck\\_freilich.html](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/experts/870/chuck_freilich.html)

Andrew Exum (2008-02-27 09:16:58)

I completely agree with Michael Young's opinion regarding the likelihood of a new conflict between Hezbollah and Israel. There is sure to be another round of fighting, true, but it likely will not happen anytime soon. There are a few things worth highlighting, however, that Michael did not mention. On the Israeli side, the appointment of Gabi Ashkenazi—arguably the senior commander in the IDF with the most experience in southern Lebanon—was taken by many to be a sign that Israel was preparing for another round of fighting sooner rather than later. But just as surely as an IDF led by Gen. Ashkenazi would be better prepared to fight in southern Lebanon, someone with the general's experience might be much more reluctant to embark upon a large ground offensive deep into the heart of the country from which he withdrew the IDF in 2000. Perhaps more than any other senior Israeli leader, Gen. Ashkenazi knows well the difficulties involved with large-scale operations in Lebanon. In southern Lebanon, the addition of roughly 11,000 more troops to UNIFIL also changes the battlefield geometry. Analysts worry that UNIFIL's mandate is too weak to effectively prevent another conflict, but they forget that Lebanon south of the Litani River is not a particularly large area. One of the things that has struck me in two visits south of the Litani River since the 2006 war has been how ubiquitous UNIFIL and the Lebanese Army have become. 13,000 UN peace-keepers—plus soldiers from the newly deployed Lebanese Army—take up a lot of space, and their presence must be accounted for in the plans of both Hezbollah and the IDF. In the event of full-scale conflict, it's entirely possible that both Hezbollah and the IDF will simply fight through or around UNIFIL and the Lebanese Army. But regardless, they present a significant obstacle for commanders on both sides that was not present in 2006. And finally, I have previously written about Hezbollah's preparations north of the Litani River to which Michael alluded. I suspect—but cannot be sure, of course—that these positions north of the Litani are either meant to shield some of Hezbollah's medium- and long-range rockets (which the Israel Air Force largely neutralized in the opening days of the 2006 war) or, more likely, are meant to deny Israeli armor columns a key axis of advance into the southern Bekaa Valley. What is most curious about these Hezbollah positions, however, is why Hezbollah—in both 2006 and in its preparations for a new round of fighting—is largely organizing conventional defenses in the face of a threat from the IDF. Military analysts are always confused when groups that have previously enjoyed success in guerrilla warfare—such as the Irish in 1919-21 or the Algerians in 1954-62—feel the need to abandon guerrilla tactics and organize conventionally, even if they cannot hope to match their enemies in conventional strength. Finally, if you had asked me on July 11, 2006 whether or not I thought there was going to be a war in southern Lebanon that summer, I would have answered no, and I would have been wrong. Along the same lines, although I agree that war is unlikely anytime soon, I can't bring myself to rule out the possibility. I think we are all waiting to see what the aftershocks of Imad Mughniyah's assassination will be, and Michael Young is wise to consider the possibility that another war might not take the shape of the war of 2006. It could be something much different. What is sure, though, is that it can only result in more suffering for both the people of Israel and Hezbollah's Shia constituents. [1]Andrew Exum is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew\\_exum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew_exum/)

David Schenker (2008-02-27 13:58:21)

Michael Young's post does well to convey the nuance of the uncertainty. The key, as he notes, is Hezbollah's response to the Mughniyah assassination. Hezbollah no doubt doesn't want another war right now. It would be terribly unpopular in Lebanon, and likely wouldn't help Hezbollah achieve its agenda of electing a pro-Syrian president and

securing a blocking third in the cabinet. Nevertheless, given Hezbollah's track record, retaliation against Israel seems a foregone conclusion. Earlier this week, Israeli intelligence chief Amos Yadlin [1] said as much. But what kind of target will Hezbollah choose? Is it realistic to expect that Hezbollah can calibrate its attack so that it demonstrates what it considers to be an appropriate response to the killing of Mughniyah—one of the organization's top three all-time martyrs—while at the same not provoking another war with Israel? Although neither Israel nor Hezbollah necessarily wants another war, it's going to be difficult for Hezbollah, after it retaliates, to avoid what Michael refers to as unmanageable escalation in Lebanon. Indeed, one only has to look to the 2006 war for the last time things spun out of control. Sincere or not, it's useful to recall Nasrallah's televised apology of August 2006:

The party leadership never expected a response on such an unprecedented scale and volume [by Israel]. Had we known that what we did would lead to this, we would certainly not have embarked upon it.

The miscalculation, of course, was that the routine kidnapping of IDF soldiers—something that in the past more likely would have resulted in a more measured response—just happened to occur when Israel was fighting another war in Gaza. Some conditions have changed, but many of the variables remain the same: Israel still sees itself in a war with Hamas in Gaza. For all of these reasons, and others mentioned by Michael and Andrew, I think a return to fighting is likely. But we'll have to wait at least another three weeks or so until the end of Mughniyah's *arba'in* (forty days of mourning) to find out. [2] *David Schenker is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/958342.html>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david\\_schenker/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david_schenker/)

## Hamas in the spotlight (2008-02-27 15:52)

From [1] Matthew Levitt



This past week's news placed [2] Hamas in the spotlight, with press coverage of key Hamas activity in the West Bank, Egypt and Jordan. While Hamas suffered significant setbacks at the hands of Israeli and Jordanian authorities, the group fared much better in Egypt.

First the good news. Coming on the heels of the suicide bombing in Dimona, which was executed by Hamas operatives based in the Hebron area, the Israeli military [3] raided and shut the Islamic Charitable Society (ICS) in Hebron. The ICS was not only a major conduit of [4] funds for Hamas, it also raised funds through businesses it owns, including real estate in Hebron, and it runs a dairy farm. Unlike the majority of the nearly one hundred organizations closed down by Palestinian Authority security forces in the West Bank, almost all of which were small charities of little significance, the ICS is a backbone of the Hamas infrastructure in the southern West Bank.

But beyond their fundraising and money-laundering roles, Hamas charities like the ICS provide day jobs and a veneer of legitimacy to Hamas operatives. For example, Adil Numan Salm al-Junaydi was the head of the ICS until he was arrested for Hamas activity in December 2004. [5] According to the Palestinian news agency Wafa, al-Junaydi was arrested along with six others in a sweep of fifteen houses in the Hebron area. Junaydi was deported to Lebanon with other senior Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaders in 1992, and served as the assistant administrative director for another Hamas charity, the al-Islah Charitable Society, before joining the ICS in Hebron.

Another former head of the society, Abd al-Khaliq al-Natsheh, also was arrested for his Hamas activi-



ties. Natsheh was also among the 1992 deportees, and was imprisoned twice in the 1990s on account of his terrorist activities, once in 1996 and again in 1998. After his release from an Israeli prison in 1998, Natsheh accepted an offer from Hamas political leader Khalid Mishal to assume the position of Hamas spokesman in Hebron. In this capacity, Natsheh would later concede to authorities, he referred several Hamas members interested in carrying out attacks to leaders of Hamas terror cells within the Qassam Brigades. Described as “one of the leading Hamas operatives in the entire West Bank,” and a “Hamas military leader in Hebron,” al-Natsheh oversaw an extensive terrorist infrastructure in Hebron which was responsible for many terrorist attacks carried out within Israel. These include the April 27, 2002, attack targeting Israelis in the community of Adora, which resulted in four deaths, including the death of a five-year old girl, as well as the attack at Karmey Tzur on June 8, 2002, in which two were killed and five wounded.

Meanwhile, across the Jordan Valley, Jordanian officials charged a group of five Hamas activists with “acquiring secret information that could jeopardize the safety of the kingdom.” In a veiled reference to the extensive terrorist training regularly provided in Syria, the men were reportedly received military and security training “in an unidentified neighboring country,” according to accounts of the indictment in the press. The five were accused of receiving training in “information security, tracing, resisting investigations and telecommunications,” and were allegedly tasked by Hamas members in the “neighboring country” to recruit new members in Jordan, monitor military installations along its borders and surveil the Israeli embassy in Amman. The [6]indictment alleged the men already successfully surveilled military sites on Jordan’s borders with Israel and Syria and the Israeli embassy in Amman.

The charges are reminiscent of the Hamas activity that led to the [7]1999 closure of Hamas offices in Amman, Jordan, where Hamas had until then maintained its headquarters. Citing materials seized in Hamas offices, then-prime minister Abdel Rauf al-Rawabdeh noted Hamas appeared to be “threatening the kingdom’s stability. Other officials added that Hamas had been “conducting paramilitary training, raising funds for subversive purposes, using forged Jordanian passports, and recruiting in Jordan’s Palestinian refugee camps and universities.” According to Jordanian counterterrorism officials, “Hamas officials in Jordan were involved in weapons smuggling plots and infiltration efforts through northern Jordan and they were cooperating with Hezbollah to send weapons and recruits to the West Bank from Syria via Jordan.”

But the news has not been all good. In Egypt, Hamas fared better this week. Hamas has been proactively smuggling weapons across the Egyptian border for a long time, and more recently blew a hole in the border wall creating a breach that enabled Hamas operatives and civilian Palestinians alike to swarm into Egypt. Despite this, Egypt released twenty-one Palestinians to Hamas custody this week, including twelve people described as “directly affiliated with Hamas” who had been detained with explosives and weapons inside Egypt. According to [8]press reports, they were believed to be trying to infiltrate back into Israel to carry out attacks.

By all accounts, Hamas control of Gaza is the most significant obstacle to resuming serious Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. So while news of crackdowns on Hamas in the West Bank and Jordan is welcome, the news out of Egypt could prove to be the most significant of these three developments.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew\\_levitt/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew_levitt/)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0300122586>
3. [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080226/ap\\_on\\_re\\_mi\\_ea/israel\\_palestinians\\_5](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080226/ap_on_re_mi_ea/israel_palestinians_5)
4. [http://www.intelligence.org.il/Eng/sib/12\\_04/interpal.htm#partc](http://www.intelligence.org.il/Eng/sib/12_04/interpal.htm#partc)
5. <http://www.wafa.ps/english/body.asp?id=2475>
6. <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1203847464349&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>
7. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=1917>
8. <http://www.iht.com/bin/printfriendly.php?id=10367243>

## 2.3 March

### Overcoming 'Fitna' (2008-03-02 06:01)

From [1]J. Scott Carpenter



As early as this weekend, Geert Wilders, controversial Dutch politician and vocal critic of Islam, will release his new film, *Fitna*, on the internet. *Fitna*, which in Arabic means “dissension,” promises to be even more inflammatory in Muslim-majority countries than the Danish cartoons that sparked riots in many capitals in 2006. According to Wilders, the 15-minute film will show that the Quran is “a fascist book” that “incites people to murder,” and he promises something special at the end of the film: “Something will happen to [a picture of Muhammad] but I won’t say what.”

MESH Updater: See the MESH posting on the film and its reception by Josef Joffe, [2]*Fitna and the 'Euroweenies'*. The film may be viewed [3]here. And scroll down for J. Scott Carpenter’s post-release [4]assessment: “There is little newly controversial—or even wrong—here.”

The State Department has been in routine discussion with the Dutch government about the film and was hoping that Wilders would be persuaded not to release it. He has resisted such entreaties and has said he is housing the server from which the film will be released “in North America” to prevent the Dutch government from shutting it down.

Even before its release, the film has caused a backlash, particularly in Egypt, where a government spokesman has already chastised “European lawmakers and politicians” for using “gratuitous methods to gain electoral votes by attacking” Islam. Shortly after that statement, the organizers of the International Film Festival for Children in Cairo boycotted the Dutch entry, *Where is Winky’s Horse?* For good measure, they boycotted the Danish entries as well. In universities around Egypt, thousands of students have already joined protests—all in response to a yet-to-be-released film that no one has seen.

Whatever Wilders’ ultimate motivation for releasing the film, he aims to tap into a deep ambivalence about the cultural drift taking place within Dutch and broader European society, and the fact that too few people are reflecting on what it [5]means. Whether it’s the Dutch foreign minister stating explicitly

that Islamic culture will become part of Dutch culture, or the Archbishop of Canterbury stating that Sharia should be made part of British common law, there is the sense that European leaders are simply surrendering to political correctness without asking basic questions about what it is to be Dutch, British, European or—for that matter—Muslim.

At times, radicals on both sides of a question are needed to propel those in the center forward—to shake them from their lethargy and lift their heads from the sand. But almost all of the radicals, Wilders notwithstanding, have been on the Islamic side. Ever since 9/11, Western societies have responded to rising radicalism by doing all of the soul-searching, adjusting and accommodating. As a result, Western governments have sought ways to connect with the Muslim communities within our own societies and sought partnerships with them to solve shared problems in a shared way. On the whole, this has been a good thing.

Unfortunately, Muslim-majority governments, especially in the Arab world, have not responded in kind. Rather than become self-critical and recognize how they have helped radicalize their populations, governments have made the situation worse by steadily accentuating the role of Islam in politics while pretending in their narratives to be secular. The reason is simple: insecure in both their ideas and their legitimacy, they have sought to borrow both from Islam, hoping in this way to secure their flank against populist Islamists. It is not working.

Egypt is a case in point. Not until 1971 did the Egyptian constitution make the principles of Sharia a source of legislation for the legislature and government to consider. In all previous constitutions, amended or otherwise, going back to 1923, this phrase was absent. Later, under pressure that likely accompanied the signing of the Camp David Accords, President Sadat in 1980 went further making Sharia the source of all legislation (Article 2). Even this was not enough to save him from a hail of bullets, however, and since then increasingly conservative Egyptian courts have had to do back-flips to justify huge swathes of secular law.

Recently, in an unprecedented ruling by Egypt's highest administrative court, the court determined that a group of Coptic Christians who had converted to Islam could have their re-conversion officially recognized. This was proclaimed by the New York Times as something of a triumph to be celebrated: "Egyptian Court Allows Return to Christianity," it [6]trumpeted.

Although a fairly radical step for Egypt, it was not a blossoming of religious freedom. Agreeing with the lower court that Islam does not envision conversion from Islam to "a less complete religion," the court required an asterisk of sorts be placed on the returning Christians' national ID cards. The cards will have added to them the brief phrase: "adopted Islam for a brief period"—marking their bearers as apostates and possibly for death.

In May of last year, Habib al-Adly, Egypt's Minister of Interior, wrote a memo urging the blanket rejection of all re-conversions to Christianity. Al-Adly insisted that Islam is the state religion, meaning that any Muslim man who abandons his faith should be killed. Happily this was not the case for women. A Muslim woman, he wrote, "should only be imprisoned and beaten every three days until she returns to Islam." What is ironic about this is that al-Adly is also charged with protecting the Egyptian state from the purported scourge of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Last year's constitutional amendments reflect the continuing confusion over the role of religion in Egyptian society. Articles 5 and 46 as amended sought to separate religion from politics by banning the formation of religious parties and by guaranteeing the freedom of religion. Both of these moves were rightly applauded in the West. Nothing was done, however, to make them compatible with Article 2—and how could they be? The Muslim Brotherhood argues that not only is a ban on its organization unconstitutional, but that Article 2 in fact mandates its existence and the use of its campaign slogan "Islam is the Solution."

Most Egyptians probably agree. The courts, too, have refused to allow Muslims who convert to Christianity to have their ID cards record the fact. Only one Egyptian has been courageous enough to test the courts on the question.

If yesterday, governments in the region, including Egypt's, sought to co-opt the symbols of Islam to legitimize their rule, today the genie they've released is out of their control. The governments have argued for years in Washington that they were the only bulwark against radical Islam. Today they say they really mean it. And yet the main strategy for dealing with political Islam seems to be repressing it with one hand while stimulating it with the other.

When Wilders' film is released, many Muslims (not all) in many countries (not all) will riot; cries will go up far and wide for the West to come to terms with Islam, and the radicals will again try to shift the ground toward them. Predictably, such violence will take place mostly in countries that are not free or only partly free by Freedom House's standards.

When this happens, it should be more than another occasion for the West to apologize for its irresponsible politicians. Western governments, particularly the United States, should challenge Arab "allies" to adopt policies that begin to reverse the long trend. Unless and until these governments become convinced that tolerance is something to be resolutely cultivated—not for the West but for the health of their own societies—it is they who will bear much of the responsibility for the violence unleashed as a result of a (yet unseen) 15-minute film.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j\\_scott\\_carpenter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j_scott_carpenter/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/fitna\\_and\\_the\\_euoweenies/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/fitna_and_the_euoweenies/)
3. <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=3369102968312745410>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/overcoming\\_fitna/#comment-361](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/overcoming_fitna/#comment-361)
5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/02/islam\\_in\\_europe\\_cycle\\_of\\_controversy/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/02/islam_in_europe_cycle_of_controversy/)
6. [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/11/world/africa/11egypt.html?\\_r=1&ref=world&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/11/world/africa/11egypt.html?_r=1&ref=world&oref=slogin)

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Bernard Haykel (2008-03-02 14:50:21)

I agree with Scott Carpenter that this film will be used instrumentally and opportunistically by Islamists and Arab/Muslim governments to push their agendas and bolster their legitimacy, respectively. I don't see this film as encouraging voices of religious skepticism and tolerance in the Islamic world. Rather, it will be used to inflame sentiments and push for greater measures of intolerance as well as to reify the divide between the West and Islam. The director, however, has every right to produce this film and to push the limits in Europe as to what being European means and what values undergird its societies. It is in Europe, not in the Islamic world, that I would be watching for meaningful political discussion and change. This will no doubt center on the place and role of Muslims in Europe.  
*[1]Bernard Heykal is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bernard\\_haykel/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bernard_haykel/)

Lee Smith (2008-03-02 18:47:18)

In his [1]post forecasting the imminent uproar over Geert Wilders' film about Islam, Scott Carpenter makes an elegant case for why our Muslim, especially Arab, allies should share our interest in not radicalizing the societies they rule. Instead, as he writes, "insecure in both their ideas and their legitimacy, [Arab regimes] have sought to borrow both from Islam, hoping in this way to secure their flank against populist Islamists. It is not working." It's true, as Carpenter writes, that there was nothing in Egypt's 1923 constitution about Sharia, and that it only started to creep into the document during Sadat's presidency. But it's worth remembering that constitutions are a relatively recent development in the Muslim Middle East, while Islam is not. Egypt has been Muslim since the 7th century, and the country's "liberal" era—roughly 1923-52—is but a sigh in Middle Eastern time. Islam really is an authentic source of

political legitimacy and the regimes are right to try to outflank the Islamists on this count because it almost always works, especially in tandem with a ruthless application of force. Sure, the Muslim Brotherhood only dates back to 1928, but Muslim rulers have been fighting off pretenders since the earliest days of the *umma*, and both the incumbent and the challenger (e.g., Sunni, Shia, among others) invariably ground their claims to legitimacy in Islam. Many of us may wish it were otherwise, including the Bush administration, whose democratization program sought to import a form of political legitimacy derived not from Islam (or violence) but popular sovereignty. It seems that Carpenter locates the problems with Arab governance in the same place the White House did: with the regimes, for it is they, in this reading, who are responsible for radicalizing their own populations. In fact, this is a fairly common conceit in U.S. policy circles, that even our Arab allies incite anti-American, and anti-Israeli, feeling through the media, mosques and educational system. And thus the thesis posits an Arabic-speaking Muslim citizenry that would be moderate—and naturally predisposed toward the United States and Israel—if only it weren't for cynical Arab leaders who rile them up for their own political ends, largely to scare the United States into thinking that only the regime stands between Washington and chaos. I also used to believe that the regimes were the issue, but three events changed my mind. First there was the Iraq war. As Hazem Saghieh has been saying since 2003, the Arabs believed the problem with the region was the Americans, and the Americans believed the problem was the regimes. As the decapitation of Saddam Hussein's regime and the subsequent bloodshed showed, the fundamental problem was not the Americans or the regime. It was the pathologies of Arab society. Next was the July 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel. I was in Damascus during the second week of fighting. Yes, there was martial music blaring on the radio all day long, but the regime had to push very few buttons to convince Syrians across the sectarian spectrum to fly the yellow Hezbollah flag from radio antennae and store fronts. What the Syrians really want is Arab reform, we are told by those who are trying gloss over the obvious fact that what the Syrians really love is Arab resistance. And no one is shoving it down their throats. Finally there was this, a brief discussion I had with the head of a small Arab state with excellent and longstanding ties to the United States. We were talking about the pace of reform in the region. "It's a process," he said. "Every country's got to set its own pace. You know you can't say, alright everybody by such and such a date has to have free media—I wish we had a free media." That last comment caught me off guard. What did he mean that he "wished" his country could have a free press? Why, if the ruler wishes it, can't he make it so? Because even in a relatively moderate Arab state, large sectors of the populace hold radical views—views that are not encouraged by the regime, but, as the ruler intimated, censored by it. The regimes may be overselling their case a bit when they claim they are a bulwark against radical Islam—sometimes they merely ignore the issue or even deflect it—but they're not the problem. Arab regimes are merely a part of the Arab societies from which they issue. [2]Lee Smith is a visiting fellow at the Hudson Institute.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/overcoming\\_fitna/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/overcoming_fitna/)

2. [http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff\\_bio&eid=LeeSmith](http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff_bio&eid=LeeSmith)

Adam Garfinkle (2008-03-03 17:51:10)

Scott Carpenter's [1]post on Wilders' film *Fitna* was truly edifying, and shows *inter alia* what a loss to the U.S. Government Scott's having left the State Department really is. But more to the point, Scott's comment begs some reflections. First, I have always thought it interesting that while Islamic societies have historically been reasonably tolerant (because they have been irremediably heterogeneous from the get-go for the most part), mainstream Islamic theology (i.e., not Sufi, not Ahmadi) has not. As the "seal" of the Abrahamic faiths, it has been downright chauvinist. On the other hand, Christian societies have historically been more intolerant, but Christian theology arguably has been more disposed to toleration. One sees this in the "turn the other cheek" and "render under Caesar" tropes, but also in the more recent kind of structural theological humility characteristic of much of Protestantism, especially Anglo-American Protestantism. If the Arab public sphere is becoming less tolerant, this suggests that what we are seeing, very broadly drawn, is a theologicalization of Islamic societies, defined as the process whereby the status of religion as a legitimate carrier of the public weal grows and the status of politics of a legitimate carrier of the public weal declines. (Just the opposite has been going on in Europe for about two or three centuries.) The reason for this, I think, is clear: The pressures of modernization, greatly increased over the past few decades, are accentuating the internal divisions within most Muslim societies between secularists and nativists/fundamentalists, with traditionalists and the neo-orthodox (Gellner's definition meant here) squeezed in between, and the vocabulary of dispute becoming increasingly moralist, in this case Islamic. Which leads to a second reflection. One understands Wilders' motive to put a charge into his "I'm-OK, you're OK" oblivious, supine European neighbors. But this kind of provocation plays right into these Islamic societal divisions, and does so in a negative way. It helps the nativist radicals to mobilize fence-sitters in their direction. In my view, the West is mainly a prop for the playing out of these internal divisions and the violence characteristic of them, not the main target. That goes for the Danish cartoons episode and for 9/11

itself. The problem for sentient Europeans is how to rouse the spirit of the Continent from its wildly asymmetrical tolerance for the intolerant without aiding precisely those Muslims who are most dangerous to it. I wish I knew the solution. And third, finally, of course we all wish that authoritarian Arab regimes would stop feeding intolerance as a way to protect themselves from their own societies. They won't stop, however, because religious and social tolerance bear far too much of a resemblance to the toleration of political dissent. Someone might get some "ideas." Arab state elites will only relax and allow, if not promote, tolerance if and when their states become stronger, by which I do *not* mean more efficient *mukhabarat* states but precisely the reverse. I mean states that, as noted above, are socially authentic carriers of the values of the public weal, states whose legitimacy will then rise as the need to exercise random coercion will fall. Arab states will only achieve that blessed ideal when they can do two things: contain radical nativist violence without apologizing for it, and at the same time genuinely reflect social mores. That's a delicate operation, and untutored Westerners viewing it are liable to misread what is going on. It is possible for Arab state elites to venerate Islam without giving in to radicals pretending to speak for tradition. The Jordanians seem to have the balance about right, for example. Conclusion? If *Fitna* produces riots, it'll be bad news if state authorities are complicit in fomenting them; it'll be good news if state authorities bust some heads in the name of protecting genuine Islamic values. But open appeals to social toleration? We'll not hear them. Scott, that's the best we can hope for right now. [2]Adam Garfinkle is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/overcoming\\_fitna/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/overcoming_fitna/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)

Correction (2008-03-28 05:57:52)

*From a Dutch reader:* Small correction: "Whether it's the Dutch foreign minister stating explicitly that Islamic culture will become part of Dutch culture..." It was not our foreign minister, Mr. Verhagen (Christian Democrats), but minister for integration Ms. Vogelaar (Labour party) who made this remark. Verhagen is a strong defender of Dutch *Leitkultur*, and was one of the first to propose a ban on wearing a *burqa* in public space.

J. Scott Carpenter (2008-03-31 23:24:20)

It's taken me a while to get to it but I've just finished watching *Fitna* and have to say that I was thoroughly underwhelmed. What was all the threatened violence about? Except for the multiple use of the infamous Muhammad cartoon—now with an animated fuse—and the off-screen sound of a torn page of what the filmmakers make explicit is *not* the Quran being torn, there is little newly controversial—or even wrong—here. In fact, the juxtaposed images and text, even when graphic, are tame when compared to the extremists' own cutting-edge use of the same words and worse images to detail their barbarity and its excuse. In contrast to their highly emotive recruitment videos, Wilders' film seems sophomoric, even boring, in comparison. His rather prosaic though reasonable point, made at the end of the film, is that it is up to moderate Muslims to excise the violent and intolerant from their midst. Hardly the product of a well-known agent of intolerance the Dutch government (and to a lesser extent our own) was preparing for. For whatever reasons, Wilders clearly pulled his punches, and yet the whole of official Europe is bending over backwards to distance itself from this mildly provocative film. Foreign ministries (and our own State Department) are urging calm in Arab capitals across the region. And yet on the same day *Fitna* was released, a puppet show aimed at kids [1]aired on Hamas TV in which a small boy kills President Bush with a knife and turns the White House into a mosque. As far as I can tell no outrage has been expressed to our Arab allies and they certainly have not publicly condemned the puppet show. All of this serves to reinforce the essential thrust of [2]my original post: all of the hand-wringing over the impact of a short, rather inconsequential film in Europe and the West cannot eclipse the need for "moderate" Arab governments to be compelled to do more to reverse decades of misusing Islam to prop up their own faltering regimes. That they will not does not mean that Western governments, including our own, shouldn't call them on it. [3]J. Scott Carpenter is a member of MESH.

1. <http://www.memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=SD188208>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/overcoming\\_fitna/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/overcoming_fitna/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j\\_scott\\_carpenter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j_scott_carpenter/)

Michael Radu (2008-03-28 14:20:59)

Wilders is a self-proclaimed provocateur, and *Fitna* provokes. That said, the film raises, as intended, more questions for the Dutch and, by extension, the Europeans, than for Muslims. Perhaps Adam Garfinkle's worries that it may encourage radicals are correct, although it is hard to see what additional encouragement they need. The problem is

that Europe and its tolerance have transformed it, during the past decades, from a refuge of Islamists like Abu Qatada, Abu Hamza, and the like, into an exporter of jihadism—to the United States, Kashmir, Israel, Yemen, etc.—and, since 2004, into a target. Throughout, the “moderate” Muslims in Europe have been either quiet or, more often, in denial, giving the impression that solidarity with fellow Muslims, criminal as they may be, trumps any serious self-examination, and that alleged victimhood is a more important topic than common security and active defense of a version of Islam which is compatible with the 21st century. As for the Europeans, their attempts to muzzle Wilders suggest that they have learned the wrong lessons from the Rushdie and Danish cartoons affairs—and that, perhaps, Wilders has a point. [1]Michael Radu is a Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia and Co-Chairman of FPRI's Center on Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism, and Homeland Security.

1. <http://www.fpri.org/about/people/radu.html>

## West Bank in maps (2008-03-04 13:24)

From MESH Admin

Two recent maps are useful guides to aspects of the present situation in the West Bank. To view each map in full, click on the thumbnail (a pdf file will open).



[1] The first map, prepared by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, is entitled “West Bank: Access and Closure, December 2007.” This very detailed map shows checkpoints coded according to type as well as other physical barriers (e.g., earthen mounds, trenches, etc.) There is a table breaking down the location of these by governorate. On the right side of the map are photographs illustrating the different kinds of barriers. The map also shows Palestinian-inhabited areas, Israeli settlements, military areas, roads, the Green Line and separation barrier route, and Areas A, B, C, and H2 as designated in the Oslo Agreement. Data is current as of November 2007.



[2] The second map, prepared by the Foundation for Middle East Peace, is entitled “Settlements Established and Evacuated 1967-2008.” It maps Israeli settlements coded according to the

decade in which they were established, settlement outposts established before and after March 2001, and settlements evacuated in September 2005 (this map includes Gaza). The larger settlements are named.

1. [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps\\_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/968C7B002996C08E85257401004E9B70/\\$File/ocha\\_ACC\\_pse080106.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/968C7B002996C08E85257401004E9B70/$File/ocha_ACC_pse080106.pdf)
2. [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps\\_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/E75C8388391FEB01852573E20076305A/\\$File/fmep\\_SET\\_pse080201.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/E75C8388391FEB01852573E20076305A/$File/fmep_SET_pse080201.pdf)

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### Iran's nuclear program: more evidence (2008-03-05 09:06)

From [1]Mark T. Clark



On Monday, March 3, the Security Council adopted its third resolution imposing sanctions on Iran for its refusal to cease enriching uranium. The Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, in a classic understatement of the problem, announced in part that:

Our task in Iran is to make sure that the Iranian nuclear programme is exclusively for peaceful purposes. We are at it for the last five years. In the last four months, in particular, we have made quite good progress in clarifying the outstanding issues that had to do with Iran's past nuclear activities, with the exception of one issue, and that is the alleged weaponization studies that supposedly Iran has conducted in the past.

Several reports ([2]here and [3]here) indicate that Iran continued its nuclear weapons program beyond 2003 when it was “estimated” to have stopped, according to the December 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE).

The reports mention that the U.S. and undisclosed allies presented several documents, including videos, to the Security Council in late February. Some of the evidence presented to the Security Council, which Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, Mohammad Khazee, declared as “baseless,” included:

- An Iranian report on nuclear activities that could be related to its weapon program past 2003;
- An Iranian video depicting mock-ups of a missile re-entry vehicle configured in such a way so as to carry a nuclear warhead, according to the IAEA Deputy Director General Olli Heinonen;
- Other documents showing the Iranians experimenting with warheads and missile trajectories where the altitude of the explosion made no sense for conventional weapons;
- A “fairly detailed set of illustrations and descriptions of how you would build a nuclear warhead, how you would fit it into a delivery vehicle, how you would expect it to perform”; and
- Material showing details of warhead design and how it would fit in a Shahab-3 missile.



The Shahab-3 is based on the North Korean No-dong missile and has a range of about 1300 km, which would encompass Israel, Turkey, and Afghanistan. The evidence presented to the Security Council contradicts repeated statements by Iranian officials that the Shahab-3 was only for peaceful purposes, not weapons, according to numerous reports found [4]here.

This third round of sanctions was weakened in order to get consensus, according to these reports, because the December 2007 NIE made it far more difficult for the Bush administration to make a compelling case to other Council members. As one [5]analyst put it, “The NIE put a stake through the heart of diplomacy on Iran.” The saga of Iran’s nuclear program and the U.S. “estimate” continues.

Comments are limited to MESH members

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_t\\_clark/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_t_clark/)
2. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7264636.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7264636.stm)
3. [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080225/ap\\_on\\_re\\_eu/nuclear\\_iran&printer=1](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080225/ap_on_re_eu/nuclear_iran&printer=1)
4. <http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/man/militarysumfolder/shahab-3.html>
5. [http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2008/03/04/uns\\_nuclear\\_sanctions\\_against\\_iran\\_extended/?rss\\_id=Boston+Globe+---+Today's+paper+A+to+Z](http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2008/03/04/uns_nuclear_sanctions_against_iran_extended/?rss_id=Boston+Globe+---+Today's+paper+A+to+Z)

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Michael Horowitz (2008-03-07 18:26:38)

Mark Clark’s post is a helpful update on the increasingly complicated situation surrounding Iran’s nuclear weapons program. One key takeaway from the post and articles cited within it is that the NIE undercut the attempts by the Bush Administration to place significant pressure on Iran. But another way to look at the NIE and the resulting watered-down sanctions resolution is that they have given Iran quite a bit of rope with which to hang itself. The Bush Administration and the next administration can claim that they have not assumed the worst about the Iranian nuclear program and the Iranian regime. They have monitored the situation, but not pushed for excessive actions without evidence. Now if those who support a more coercive policy towards Iran are correct, Iran will undoubtedly continue its efforts to acquire nuclear weapons regardless of U.S. or UN actions. If that occurs, presumably the evidence for those efforts will pile up over time. And having shown restraint on Iran this time, a future administration would probably have an easier time building a stronger international consensus for more coercive actions. This would make the success of those measures, whatever their content, more likely. Alternatively, if Iran really is not pursuing nuclear weapons, no harm done. In other words, the NIE and the watered-down sanctions resolution could make it easier to pursue a more proactive coercive strategy against Iran in the future, presuming Iran continues to move towards acquiring nuclear weapons. My idea could be invalidated if Iran is actually getting close to acquiring nuclear weapons now, or if delaying a tougher sanctions resolution now causes Iran to cross a point of no return with its nuclear program. In that case, we would be trading a tougher sanctions regime now (which perhaps could have convinced Iran to end its program), for military action later (since it would be more difficult to dissuade them from continuing once they pass certain benchmarks). True, most estimates seem to suggest Iran is still several years away from acquiring nuclear weapons. But this is something to keep in mind. If Iran could acquire nuclear weapons in secret, delaying tougher actions might also be a mistake. It might simply buy Iran more time to debut a nuclear weapon. Tougher actions now, before acquisition, might be the best chance of stopping them, etc. In sum, under a certain set of conditions, the current approach taken by the United States and the international community may make it easier in the future to block Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons, or gain an international consensus for coercive actions. That’s so, provided Iran cannot be dissuaded from acquiring nuclear weapons or could only be dissuaded now; that an Iranian nuclear weapon is several years away; and that Iran can’t successfully acquire nuclear weapons in secret. The question is, do those conditions obtain? [1]Michael Horowitz is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_horowitz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_horowitz/)

## U.S. success in Iraq and the global jihad (2008-03-06 03:58)

From [1]Daniel Byman



While it is far too early to say that the United States and its allies have permanently “crippled” Al Qaeda in Iraq (as claimed by some U.S. officials), clearly the terrorist organization has suffered grievous blows in the last year. Indeed, U.S. officials are so pleased they hope to use the “Anbar model” in Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as elsewhere in Iraq. Beyond its benefits for Iraqi stability, what does this success mean?

For many years, politicians and pundits (including me) have devoted painful attention to the ramifications of failure in Iraq for the future of Al Qaeda and the broader salafi-jihadist movement. The prognostications have ranged from pessimistic to calamitous, with predictions that Iraq will be “the new Afghanistan” commonplace. Attention has not yet focused, however, on how the decline of Al Qaeda in Iraq could affect the future of the salafi-jihadist movement in the greater Middle East and throughout the world. To be clear, any judgment is speculative at this point: Al Qaeda in Iraq is not dead, and the situation in Iraq is in such flux that today’s certainties could seem laughable tomorrow.

As I’ve written [2]elsewhere, the U.S. decision to invade and occupy Iraq was a lifeline for Al Qaeda, which had been battered since losing its haven in Afghanistan and suffering from a global manhunt after the 9/11 attacks. The popularity of the Iraq resistance led Al Qaeda’s popularity to soar among young angry Muslims around the world. Al Qaeda is now back in Afghanistan and is stronger than ever in Pakistan.

Yet today Al Qaeda in Iraq—though not the Al Qaeda core—is on the run. Sunni tribes and “concerned local citizens” groups are killing or arresting many of its cadre and transforming parts of Iraq from sanctuaries to hunting grounds. In addition to improving the chances for a semi-stable Iraq, these blows have tremendous implications for the future of the organization outside Iraq. At the very least, Iraq will be a less useful base for salafi-jihadists to plot attacks in neighboring countries such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia, which they have done for several years now. Iraq will also be less of a draw and training ground for young radicals from the Middle East and Europe, who have flocked to Iraq since the 2003 invasion to fight the United States. Would-be fighters may come to see Iraq as a place where local Sunnis will pursue them mercilessly rather than as the center of the anti-U.S. struggle.

Less tangible but perhaps most important, Iraq might come to symbolize the organization’s lack of appeal and gross mistakes rather than triumph against the “crusaders.” The salafi-jihadists’ credibility has suffered. Since 2003, Al Qaeda has made Iraq the center of its propaganda, and for years has encouraged its supporters and taunted America with each report of a U.S. setback. Recent statements from Zawahiri and bin Laden suggest the leaders recognize the missteps Al Qaeda in Iraq has made and how much this has cost the organization. This will have long-term consequences for recruitment and the movement’s constant competition with rivals within the radical Islamist community. Indeed, the debate about “who lost Iraq” could eventually be harsher in salafi-jihadist circles than in the United States. In addition, the Iraq struggle was moving the organization’s fighters more and more against the Shi’a, but Al Qaeda in Iraq’s defeat came at the hands of Sunnis, suggesting that the “enemy within” may again consume the movement.

Yet the genie cannot go completely back into the bottle, for the Iraq struggle has fundamentally changed the salafi-jihadist movement. Fighters who went to Iraq learned a new set of capabilities that are now dispersed

to the far corners of the earth. Techniques like checkpoint evasion, urban warfare, and particularly the use of sophisticated IEDs and suicide bombing all are now part of the arsenal of salafi-jihadists elsewhere. Salafi-jihadists are now exceptionally skilled info-warriors, able to create and disseminate sophisticated propaganda in the blink of an eye. Salafi-jihadist military successes also shattered the sense of U.S. invulnerability created after Washington quickly ousted the Taliban. Recent U.S. gains offset this slightly, but we will never be ten feet tall in salafi-jihadist eyes. Finally, the sectarian conflict in Iraq has energized many salafi-jihadists against the Shi'a, a focus that may diminish but will not go away.

Success also has its dark side. Although Bush administration officials were widely criticized for claiming “we’re fighting them over there so we don’t have to fight them here,” clearly Iraq did divert many radicals who would seek to fight elsewhere. (The fallacy of the administration’s argument was not diversion per se but rather ignoring that outrage over the invasion inspired many young Muslims to take up arms, thus increasing the overall pool.) Some of these individuals may stay home and foment trouble, raising the risk of greater regional instability. Such unrest is particularly likely in Saudi Arabia, for which the Iraq conflict was a safety valve where many angry salafi-jihadists went to shoot Americans instead of staying home and plotting against the Al Saud.

More important, many of the foreign fighters in Iraq will go home, and even small numbers of fighters may radicalize and change the orientation of existing local groups, as happened with Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon. Finally, Al Qaeda in Iraq could again revive: U.S. and Iraqi successes against it are real, but the organization is tenacious and U.S. successes are fragile.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel\\_byman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel_byman/)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0471788341/>

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### Iran’s opposition punished—by us (2008-03-07 09:43)

From [1]Raymond Tanter



Since December 2006, the UN Security Council and the United States Government have rightly used designation lists to counter the Iranian regime’s terrorist activities and pursuit of nuclear weapons. Ironically, Washington also designates as terrorist the regime’s main opposition, although it is a prime source of vital intelligence about Iran’s nuclear programs.

On December 23, 2006, Security Council Resolution 1737 sanctioned Iranian entities involved in Iran’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs. Among entities and individuals sanctioned was the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran. A high-profile name was Maj.-Gen. Yahya Rahim Safavi, Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), whom the regime replaced as a result of the designation. The *raison d’être* of the IRGC is to produce nuclear weapons and export the regime’s revolutionary ideology via terrorism.

Because of the Iranian regime’s refusal to comply with UN and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) demands to halt its enrichment and ballistic missile programs, the Security Council stepped up sanctions in a second resolution on March 24, 2007. Resolution 1747 expanded the list of ballistic missile and nuclear

entities to banks funding Iran's nuclear weapons program, including Bank Sepah, which was designated by the U.S. Treasury Department in January 2007. The Resolution also listed entities and individuals of the IRGC, including Qods Aeronautics Industries and Qods Force Commander Qasem Soleimani.

Despite Resolutions 1737 and 1747, the Iranian regime accelerated its uranium enrichment during 2007, prompting the Departments of State and Treasury to issue unilateral sanctions against regime entities. On October 25, 2007, State placed the Revolutionary Guards on its list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations, "to counter Iran's bid for nuclear capabilities and support for terrorism."

On January 9, 2008, Treasury imposed yet another round of sanctions on individuals and entities responsible for fueling violence in Iraq, including Qods Force Brigadier General Ahmed Foruzandeh, who "leads terrorist operations against Coalition Forces and Iraqi Security Forces, and directs assassinations of Iraqi figures." Tehran's failure to comply with Resolutions 1737 and 1747 led to a third UN Resolution to extend sanctions, on March 3, 2008.

The irony of the designations against the Iranian regime over the past year is that the Iranian opposition that provided intelligence to help make such designations possible, is itself designated by the United States as a terrorist entity: the [2]National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), the parliament-in-exile based in France with a network of supporters in Iran.

President Clinton designated the NCRI as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in 1999. There is evidence that the U.S. listings were part of a politically-motivated effort by the Clinton administration to appease the clerical regime in Tehran, and research by the [3]Iran Policy Committee (of which I am President) concludes that the Clinton administration's allegations, which were used to designate the groups, are baseless.

Not only has the Bush administration continued the designation of the NCRI, which failed to appease Tehran; the State Department also designated the NCRI-US in 2003, in exchange for a promise from the Iranian regime not to subvert Iraq following the takedown of Saddam Hussein. The regime broke its promise, yet the NCRI and NCRI-US inexplicably remain designated.

It is nonsensical for the United States, Europe, and the UN to sanction the Iranian regime, while simultaneously designating as terrorist brave Iranian oppositionists who risk their lives for intelligence that makes sanctions against the regime possible. Lifting unwarranted terrorist designations of the Iranian opposition would remove contradictions that plague U.S. policy, jumpstart stalled diplomacy, and avert the need for military action against the Iranian regime. Contradictions weaken targeted sanctions, allow the regime to perfect uranium enrichment, and increase the likelihood that President Bush's successor, whether Clinton, McCain, or Obama, will be left with the difficult choice of an Iranian bomb or bombing Iran.

Comments are limited to MESH members

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_tanter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_tanter/)
2. <http://www.ncr-iran.org/>
3. <http://www.iranpolicy.org/>

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Matthew Levitt (2008-03-07 16:48:19)

Ray Tanter is right to point out that the Mujahedeen-e Khalq Organization (MEK, what he refers to as the NCRI) has provided some very useful intelligence on Iran's nuclear program. They've also provided some less useful information, but—to be fair—that is the nature of intelligence. It should not be assumed, however, that all or much or even a significant amount (if any) of the information the U.S. government has relied upon as the evidentiary basis for its various actions targeting Iran came from the MEK. But that was not the main thrust of Ray's posting. It was just the

hook for the real point: that the MEK should be de-listed because it targets an adversary of the United States. On that point I disagree. We lose the counterterrorism high ground if we only call out and designate those terrorists who target our friends and allies. As long as the MEK—a radical, cult-like group—continues to carry out acts of terrorism and political violence, it should remain on the U.S. list of designated terrorist groups. True, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) has [1]de-listed the MEK as a terror organization, and the European Court of First Instance [2]ordered MEK's funds unfrozen. But the European Court decided in the end to [3]maintain the blacklisting of the MEK, and so should the United States. The history of the MEK aside, the group's ongoing violent activities—and its financial support activity here in the United States—clearly place the group well within the definition of a terrorist group worthy of being so designated by the United States. Consider [4]this, from the State Department's *2006 Country Reports on Terrorism*, released in April 2007 (the 2007 report is expected to be released next month):

In April 2000, the MEK attempted to assassinate the commander of the Nasr Headquarters, Tehran's interagency board responsible for coordinating policies on Iraq. The pace of anti-Iranian operations increased during "Operation Great Bahman" in February 2000, when the group launched a dozen attacks against Iran. One of those attacks included a mortar attack against a major Iranian leadership complex in Tehran that housed the offices of the Supreme Leader and the President. In 2000 and 2001, the MEK was involved in regular mortar attacks and hit-and-run raids against Iranian military and law enforcement personnel, as well as government buildings near the Iran-Iraq border. Also in 2001, the FBI arrested seven Iranians in the United States who funneled \$400,000 to an MEK-affiliated organization in the UAE which used the funds to purchase weapons.

As I have [5]written on this blog before, Iran poses a variety of threats to its neighbors, the international community, and the international financial system. From support for terrorist groups, to nuclear proliferation, to the use of deceptive financial practices to hide its support for these illicit activities, Iran maintains a threatening posture that must be addressed. But forgiving the MEK its acts of terrorism simply because they target an adversary is not the answer. Indeed, today's targeted financial measures against Iran are focused on Iran's illicit activities and those most directly involved in those activities. That is the same standard we should apply to the MEK. [6]Matthew Levitt is a member of MESH.

1. [http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2006/12/13/01003-20061213ARTFIG90180-terrorisme\\_la\\_justice\\_attaque\\_la\\_liste\\_noire\\_de\\_l\\_europe.php](http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2006/12/13/01003-20061213ARTFIG90180-terrorisme_la_justice_attaque_la_liste_noire_de_l_europe.php)
2. <http://curia.europa.eu/en/actu/communiques/cp06/aff/cp060097en.pdf>
3. <http://www.ncr-iran.org/content/view/2831/69/>
4. <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2006/82738.htm>
5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2007/12/sanctions\\_on\\_track/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2007/12/sanctions_on_track/)
6. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew\\_levitt/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew_levitt/)

Raymond Tanter (2008-03-11 16:11:53)

Matt Levitt is correct to [1]insist that Washington be vigilant in targeting groups that engage in terrorist activity, regardless of whether they target our friends or enemies. But the MEK simply isn't a terrorist organization. And Matt Levitt is incorrect to equate the Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MEK) with the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI). The MEK is an opposition group based in Iraq; the NCRI is the Iranian parliament-in-exile, based in Paris, of which the MEK is one member. While the MEK, or People's Mujahedin of Iran (PMOI) as it's known in Europe, is listed as a terrorist group by the EU, the NCRI is not. This contradiction with U.S. policy, where both groups are listed, was one inspiration for my initial post. Levitt also mistakenly claims that the European Court of Justice "decided in the end to maintain the blacklisting of the MEK." In fact, the European Council, the executive body of the EU, decided to maintain the listing, in defiance of the Court. In addition to these factual inaccuracies, Matt Levitt mischaracterizes my position as, "The MEK should be de-listed because it targets an adversary of the United States." Levitt responds to this straw man by asserting that the United States should not turn a blind eye to those terrorists who target our enemies, in which category he places the MEK, because doing so would cede the counterterrorism high ground. My actual position is that it is in the U.S. interest to delist the MEK because it not only opposes a principal adversary, *but also* because the group does not engage in terrorism. Accordingly, in a May 2003 *New York Post*[2]op-ed, Daniel Pipes and Patrick Clawson posed the following question and answer: "Is the MEK a terrorist group? No." Levitt refers to 2001 attacks inside Iran cited by the State Department *Country Reports on Terrorism*, but Levitt and the State Department would be hard pressed to find an example of an attack since then, because there

have not been any such attacks. Consistent with the Pipes-Clawson conclusion and extensive Iran Policy Committee research, on November 30, 2007, the Proscribed Organizations Appeals Commission (POAC) of the United Kingdom ordered the Government to delist the PMOI. It is notable that this court made it very clear that delisting the PMOI was not ordered because of any larger foreign policy context involving Iran as an adversary of the UK, which Levitt incorrectly supposes to be my justification for delisting:

We were not persuaded by the Appellants that it was unlawful for the Secretary of State not to take into account that, on their case, the system of government in Iran is undemocratic and repressive. The Secretary of State was and is entitled to conclude that there is no right to resort to terrorism, whatever the motivation.

Instead, the UK court ordered the delisting of the PMOI because the group was found to not be a terrorist organization:

[T]here is no evidence that the PMOI has at any time since 2003 sought to re-create any form of structure that was capable of carrying out or supporting terrorist acts. There is no evidence of any attempt to "prepare" for terrorism. There is no evidence of any encouragement to others to commit acts of terrorism. Nor is there any material that affords any grounds for a belief that the PMOI was "otherwise concerned in terrorism" at the time of the [deproscription] decision in September 2006.

Under the section of the U.S. Code that sets forth the criteria for designation of Foreign Terrorist Organizations, the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, it must be the case that the group so designated is "foreign," "engages in terrorist activity," and "the terrorist activity of the organization threatens the security of U.S. nationals or the national security of the United States." If the judgment of the UK court were applied to U.S. law regarding designation, the MEK listing would clearly be unwarranted. I concur with Levitt's conclusion that the MEK should be held to the same standard as the Iranian regime. Doing so finds unimpeachable evidence of Tehran's terrorist activity, as well as equally valid evidence that the MEK does not engage in terrorist activity. [3] *Raymond Tanter is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/iran\\_opposition\\_punished/#comment-263](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/iran_opposition_punished/#comment-263)
2. <http://www.meforum.org/article/pipes/1100>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_tanter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_tanter/)

## Geography of chaos (2008-03-09 02:21)

From MESH Admin

This past November, [1]Le Monde diplomatique published a map (in English) entitled "Geography of Chaos," illustrating conflicts in the Middle East. The map shows major conflicts; areas of high tension; states or territories at war, in fragmentation, or lacking central authority; arrows indicating the possible spread of chaos; states aligned with the United States; U.S. and British military presence; and energy reserves and strategic passages. Click on the map image below for a full view (a pdf file will open).



[2]

1. <http://mondediplo.com/>
2. [http://mondediplo.com/maps/IMG/pdf/LMDnov07\\_Middle\\_East-2.pdf](http://mondediplo.com/maps/IMG/pdf/LMDnov07_Middle_East-2.pdf)

### Amalek: What's in a name? (2008-03-10 11:52)

From [1]Raymond Ibrahim

During the eulogy of the eight slain students of the March 6 terrorist attack at Mercaz HaRav yeshiva school in West Jerusalem, highly-respected Rabbi Ya'akov Shapira made, for the average gentile, a rather elusive allusion regarding the attack: “The murderer did not want to kill these people in particular, but everyone living in the holy city of Jerusalem. The murderers are the Amalek of our day, coming to remind us that Amalek has not disappeared, just changed its appearance.” In similar terms, Jerusalem’s mayor Uri Lupolianski said: “They [the victims] came to grow stronger in the Torah and in the course of their studies they were murdered by the present day Amalek, who came back in [the Hebrew month of] Adar to remind us he has not gone. He has simply changed his face.”

This otherwise obscure biblical figure holds great symbolism in Jewish history. In Jewish scriptures and later Talmudic writings, he is often depicted as the archetypal enemy of the Jewish nation. Accordingly, the greatest enemies of the Jewish people—such as Hitler—are often referred to as “Amalek.”

During the Egyptian exodus, the nation of Amalek, the “Amalekites,” attacked the Hebrews; the latter won: “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.’ And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The Lord is my banner, saying, and ‘A hand upon the throne of the Lord! The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.’” (Exodus 15-17.)

Some Israeli Jews have seen the surrounding Palestinians as the descendants—literal or spiritual makes no difference—of the Amalekites, who are to be fought “from generation to generation.” This has been a minority view, often held by ultra-orthodox extremists, but evocations of King Amalek and his nation are becoming more commonplace.

The other day I had an interesting conversation with Gershon Greenberg, co-editor of [2]Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses During and After the Holocaust and an authority on Jewish symbolism and what he calls “meta-history.” I discussed with him the significance of this latest terrorist strike—claimed or endorsed by a number of terrorist organizations—and the increasing use of the word “Amalek.” According to Greenberg, that the epithet “Amalek” is becoming more mainstream in describing the “enemy”—particularly by highly authoritative religious figures such as Rabbi Shapira—is indicative of a coalescing of the different political leanings into a more unified, long-term “right-wing” response. This could translate into more popular support for aggressively dealing with the Palestinians.

This may be even more ominous when we consider that many allusions to mass killing in the Jewish scriptures often pertain to the Amalekites: “Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.” (1 Sam. 15:2-3.) Failure to literally obey this purging cost Saul his kingship (1 Sam. 28).

If these biblical excerpts appear ruthless, boding of mass killing, it is well to remember that Islam has (and Islamists often quote) similar texts directed at the Jews. The difference, however, is that whereas Hebrew scriptures speak of Amalek—not Arabs or Palestinians per se, leaving room for interpretation—Islamic texts are unambiguously directed at the Jews, such as the famous apocalyptic hadith that states that the End Times shall only be ushered in when the Muslims fight and kill the Jews (Sahih Muslim, [3]B40N6985).

On both sides, the significance of words and their allusions should not be overlooked or underestimated in everyday politics, particularly when uttered by people who not only take them seriously, but wield power.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_ibrahim/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_ibrahim/)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0195300157>
3. <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/muslim/041.smt.html>

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Adam Garfinkle (2008-03-10 14:49:01)

Raymond Ibrahim’s interesting post leaves out one detail: Amalek is especially on the mind of Rabbi Shapira and others because the Jewish holiday of Purim is coming soon. Purim is based on the Scroll of Esther, and in the scroll the villain, Haman, is linked to Amalek though his clan name—the Agagite. (So, in any event, the rabbinical tradition has always held.) Hence Mayor Lupolianski’s reference to the month of Adar, for that is the month of Purim. [1]Adam Garfinkle is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)

Joshua Jacobs (2008-03-11 14:42:40)

Raymond Ibrahim’s post regarding the allusions to Amalek in the eulogies for the slain Yeshiva students is fascinating, and his interpretation of it as representing a larger right-wing coalescence shows that he is an apt observer of the currents that shape public and ultimately governmental opinion. However, I believe he may be somewhat misguided in characterizing the references as a cause for concern and apparently equivalent to the directives given in the Quran for Muslims to kill Jews. As a graduate of Ner Israel Rabbinical College, one of the foremost institutions of right-wing Orthodox Judaism in the United States, I have done much research and study on the topic of Amalek. Frequently it was intoned in lectures that various enemies of the Jewish people constitute Amalek. This is also reflected in numerous Jewish rituals and observances, as well. During the Passover Seder, we say that “in each generation one rises up against us to destroy us,” as a reference to the prototypical Jewish enemy, Amalek. The topic, though, is far more complex than a simplistic demonization of our enemies as a justification for Jewish action against them.



Orthodox Judaism speaks about Amalek in much more symbolic terms, using the *hashkafik*, or philosophical approach to Amalek to delineate the essential battle between the forces of good and evil, a battle which is almost completely waged in the spiritual, as opposed to the physical realm. For example, the spiritual essence of Amalek is already found to exist, according to some prominent works, in the guise of the Snake in the Garden of Eden. This ties the destruction of Amalek to the much broader theme of *Tikun Olam*, 'Repair of the World' that is essentially the goal of Judaism in its entirety—to bring the world through observance of God's commandments and loving-kindness to the state of being before the Fall of Man. The Zohar and Medrash state that God's throne cannot be 'complete' until Amalek's influence is eradicated. Therefore, it is important to recognize that the battle with Amalek is figurative. The literal Biblical statement is that "Amalek chilled you." This "chilling" is overwhelmingly interpreted as a spiritual tainting of the Jewish nation that needs to be repaired completely. Even the Biblical narrative of Saul's war with Amalek and the destruction of the entire Amalekite nation (save for Agag, the king, who was let to live long enough to impregnate a woman who would eventually bear the grandfather of Haman, the antagonist of the Jewish story of Purim, which takes place this month, in Adar), is quite clear that it is far more than a physical battle, as it involved only choice fighters, not the whole nation; required the destruction of all of the possessions of the Amalekites (which is only found in Jewish Law regarding the physical possessions of an irreversibly idolatrous city); and seemed to depend on Moses' lifting his hands heavenward, unique in all the battles recounted in the Bible. In modern Jewish legal discussion, one is not allowed to 'kill an Amalekite' for this reason, and also because we simply do not know who for certain is one, and murder that is based on ambiguity is vehemently opposed by all Torah sources. I will conclude, therefore, that it is not possible to interpret the eulogies as having a practical effect for policy purposes on Israeli society. The Palestinians represent Amalek only in that they deliberately targeted the spiritual essence of the Jewish people by killing rabbinic scholars, students of the Torah. It is not a call to physical arms, but to spiritual redress—as the essence of the eulogy was about doing *teshuva* (repentance) and becoming better Jews on the spiritual plane. The comparison with the Quran's directive to kill Jews, an unambiguous text that is currently being used to justify murder, is absurd in this light. Muslims have not been injured based on the idea of Amalek. To imply so does a great disservice and only gives fuel to those who seek to legitimize the murder of Jews based on demonizing Jewish belief so that they become the enemy of Muslims. *Joshua Jacobs studies law at New York University School of Law.*

Raymond Ibrahim (2008-03-11 19:36:30)

I did make it a point to distinguish that Amalek allusions are definitely open to interpretation and need not even apply to Arabs, whereas Islamic scriptures—as I often point out—do single out Jews by name and leave no room for interpretation. Comparison is a legitimate exercise. False parallels are another matter, and I did not draw one. The ultimate purpose of my post, after all, was to make a prediction—not engage in exegesis. [1] *Raymond Ibrahim is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_ibrahim/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_ibrahim/)

## Globalized jihad, then (1993) and now (2008-03-11 02:40)

From [1]Matthew Levitt



Fifteen years from now, when classified documents produced today begin to be declassified, we will surely look back with some discomfort and see just how far off some of our

judgments were when written in 2008. Such is the nature of intelligence assessments. What would be worse, however, would be for us to look back fifteen years hence and find ourselves stuck in much the same place we are today.

This reflection is prompted by reading a recently declassified August 1993 [2]report, "The Wandering Mujahidin: Armed and Dangerous," written by the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR). Its subject was the possible spillover effect of Afghan Mujahidin fighters and support networks moving on to fight in other jihad conflicts, alongside other militant Islamic groups worldwide. Much of the report could be applied to the themes Daniel Byman raises in a recent [3]post on this blog, about Al Qaeda in Iraq.

For example, writing in 2008 Byman notes that "fighters who went to Iraq learned a new set of capabilities that are now dispersed to the far corners of the earth." Compare that to the 1993 report, which found that "the support network that funneled money, supplies, and manpower to supplement the Afghan Mujahidin is now contributing experienced fighters to militant Islamic groups worldwide." When these veteran fighters dispersed, the report presciently predicted, "their knowledge of communications equipment and experiences in logistics planning will enhance the organizational and offensive capabilities of the militant groups to which they are returning."

Writing in 2008, Byman very rightly noted that "many of the foreign fighters in Iraq will go home, and even small numbers of fighters may radicalize and change the orientation of existing local groups, as happened with Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon." A section of the 1993 report, entitled "When the Boys Come Home," noted that these veteran volunteer fighters "are welcomed as victorious Muslim fighters of a successful jihad against a superpower" and "have won the respect of many Muslims—Arab and non-Arab—who venerate the jihad."

At that time, these Mujahidin returned to Yemen, Egypt, Sudan, Algeria, Libya and beyond, where they trained local militants and further radicalized local groups. Libya, the 1993 report notes, was once one of the largest backers of Afghan warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (since then [4]designated a terrorist by the United States and the UN) but "now fears the returning veterans and has lashed out publicly against them." Indeed, several of these Libyan veterans formed the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) and became senior members of core Al Qaeda. In 2006, the U.S. government would [5]note that "The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group threatens global safety and stability through the use of violence and its ideological alliance with al Qaida and other brutal terrorist organizations."

The 1993 report describes several trends that remain issues of serious concern today, including some of the same streams of financial support that continue to finance today's militant Islamist groups. To the present-day reader, who will digest this 1993 report with an eye towards the conflict in Iraq, perhaps the most disturbing analytical judgement (which could have been pulled out of a current National Intelligence Estimate), is this:

The war-era network of state sponsors and private patrons which continues to support the mujahidin has no rigid structure and no clearly defined command center, but receives guidance from several popular Islamic leaders and financial support from charitable Islamic organizations and wealthy individuals. Key figures who have emerged as the mentors of the mujahidin provide one another with the contacts and conduits needed to keep the militant groups they support in business.

The network circa 1993 was not an exact parallel to today's combination of Al Qaeda operatives (a smaller but no less committed cadre) and like-minded followers of a virtually-networked, leaderless jihad. But the

1993 warning of an unstructured network of jihadists moving on from their current area of operations to other battlefronts could have been written this morning.

Comments are limited to MESH members

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew\\_levitt/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew_levitt/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/03/wandering\\_mujahidin.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/03/wandering_mujahidin.pdf)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/success\\_in\\_iraq\\_global\\_jihad/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/success_in_iraq_global_jihad/)
4. <http://www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/actions/20030219.shtml>
5. <http://www.ustreas.gov/press/releases/js4016.htm>

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Daniel Byman (2008-03-11 10:32:01)

Matt Levitt's incisive [1]take on the 1993 INR report reminds us of two obvious but often-ignored points. First, much of what is supposedly "new" in terrorism today has historical parallels. Scholars and analysts thus have much to add to our understanding of current trends, and it is a shame that relatively few are willing to offer their insights to policymakers. Second, the intelligence community often gets it right, or at least gets it pretty close. The 1993 report does not read exactly like prophecy, but history should judge it as a remarkably prescient look at a trend that at the time was difficult to discern. The salafi-jihadist movement became both stronger and more centralized as the 1990s wore on—and much more dangerous as a result. (Compare, say, the amateurish nature of much of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing with the coldly and brutally professional strikes in 2001.) Since the post-9/11 ousting of the Taliban and global manhunt for Al Qaeda operatives, the organization has had to decentralize more, a shift that has many consequences but that, on the whole, is positive from a U.S. counterterrorism perspective. The reestablishment of a safe haven in parts of Pakistan, however, throws this accomplishment into jeopardy. [2]Daniel Byman is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/globalized\\_jihad\\_then\\_1993\\_now/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/globalized_jihad_then_1993_now/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel\\_byman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel_byman/)

Martin Kramer (2008-03-11 13:45:54)

I wouldn't rush to give too much credit to INR for producing this document, interesting though it is. The trend wasn't *that* difficult to discern, and by August 1993, the backwash from Afghanistan was a major topic of discussion in the media. Steve Coll was doing some landmark reporting for the *Washington Post* on precisely these topics. For example, on August 2, almost three weeks before the INR paper, the *Washington Post* ran a front-page story under the headline "Radical Movements Thrive on Loose Structure, Strict Ideology." The next day, another front-page story appeared under the headline "Global Network Provides Money, Haven." (Coll, in Egypt and Israel, did most of the reporting on both stories.) The August 3 story, by the way, had an early and very interesting account of bin Laden, reported by Steve LeVine out of Khartoum. Excerpt:

Binladen himself declined to be interviewed. A Sudanese state security officer posted at his office in Khartoum said Binladen fears arrest or assassination by Egyptian, Saudi or Western government agents. Arguably, the best way to think about Binladen's multistory Khartoum guest house is not as a centralized, string-pulling headquarters of Egyptian or other radicalism, but rather as one among many scattered centers of gravity where militant Islamic radicals may find haven, succor or support. Binladen is a rich radical with a following. "They don't believe in organizations," said Hamza Hasan, an exiled Saudi who edits an anti-government magazine in London. "They think they are a jamaa (an Arabic word that means "group" or "society" and often connotes loose organization but firm commitment to religion)."

That same summer, basing myself entirely on media reports, I wrote an article for the 1992 *Middle East Contemporary Survey* entitled "The Global Village of Islam," where I devoted a section to "The Afghan War Veterans," with subsections on Egypt and Algeria. The 1993 World Trade Center bombing provided a tremendous impetus for journalistic investigation. There was plenty of material out there, and the open sources pretty much had the story, at least at the level of resolution needed for broad-trend analysis. Between 1993 and 2001, most people lost interest. It was never a question of not knowing. It was always a matter of not understanding. [1]Martin Kramer is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)

**Please note: ASMEA (2008-03-12 23:13)**

From [1]Mark T. Clark

✖ As some of you may know, I am currently serving as president of a new, interdisciplinary academic association that promotes the highest standards of research and teaching in the fields of Middle Eastern studies, African studies and their related disciplines.

The [2]Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa (ASMEA)—a non-profit, non-partisan academic society—was formed under the leadership of Bernard Lewis and Fouad Ajami to advance research and discourse through programs, publications and services that support its members and the international community of scholars.

Our membership—which spans 180 campuses around the globe—is comprised of professors and students in a wide array of academic disciplines related to Middle Eastern and African studies. This new coalition of scholars encourages a robust exchange of ideas and promotes new research in both regional issues (politics, conflict, history, cultures, etc.) and functional issues (terrorism, crime, strategic issues, etc.)

ASMEA will protect academic freedom and promote the search for truth by challenging scholars to reach new heights in inquiry and providing them with some of the tools necessary to achieve these goals. Through our annual conference, journal, newsletter, and website, ASMEA hopes to become the professional association of choice for discerning scholars and will strive for excellence in all of its many pursuits.

ASMEA's first major event to showcase our members' research will be our inaugural conference this spring. Set for April 24-26, 2008 at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, D.C., ASMEA's first annual conference is entitled: "The Evolution of Islamic Politics, Philosophy, and Culture in the Middle East and Africa: From Traditional Limits to Modern Extremes." It will feature a combination of [3]panels and roundtables with academics and policymakers focused on the profound Islamic influence in these regions. We will also host a keynote speech from Bernard Lewis, entitled "Studying the Other: Different Ways of Looking at the Middle East and Africa."

Information on membership (which is free for the remainder of the 2008 academic year), our services, and our upcoming conference can be found at our [4]website.

It is my hope that you will consider joining us in this new endeavor.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_t\\_clark/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_t_clark/)
2. <http://www.asmeascholars.org/>
3. <http://www.asmeascholars.org/LinkClick.aspx?link=661&tabid=592>
4. <http://www.asmeascholars.org/>

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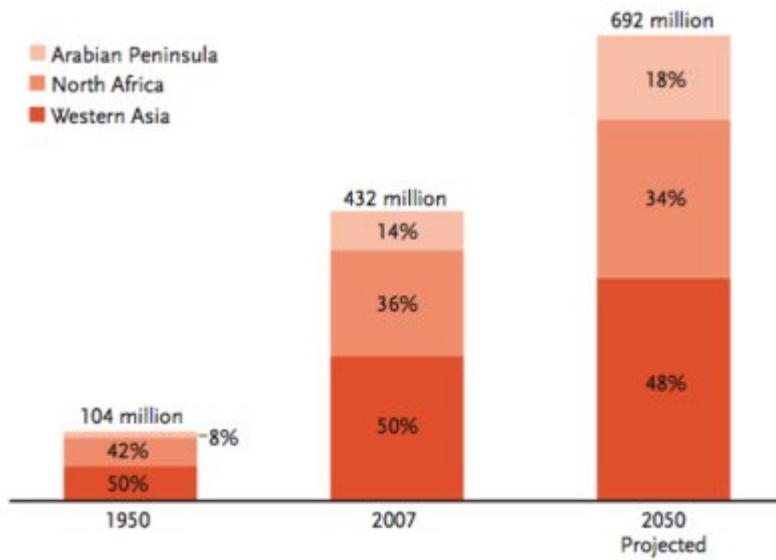
**MENA population: 1950, now, 2050 (2008-03-14 01:00)**

From MESH Admin

Last June, the Population Reference Bureau published [1]Challenges and Opportunities—The Population

of the Middle East and North Africa, a concise summary of demographic trends. This graph and table neatly summarize population growth since 1950, and also project growth to 2050, based on United Nations data.

**Population Growth in the MENA Regions: 1950, 2007, and 2050**



MENA: Middle East and North Africa

Source: UN Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision* (2007; <http://esa.un.org>, accessed April 7, 2007).

**Population Size and Growth in the Countries of the Middle East and North Africa: 1950, 2007, and 2050**

Country and region	Population in thousands			Ratio of population	
	1950	2007	2050*	2007/ 1950	2050/ 2007
<b>Middle East and North Africa (MENA)</b>	<b>103,886</b>	<b>431,587</b>	<b>692,299</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>1.6</b>
<b>MENA–Western Asia</b>	<b>51,452</b>	<b>215,976</b>	<b>332,081</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>1.5</b>
Iran	16,913	71,208	100,174	4.2	1.4
Iraq	5,340	28,993	61,942	5.4	2.1
Israel	1,258	6,928	10,527	5.5	1.5
Jordan	472	5,924	10,121	12.5	1.7
Lebanon	1,443	4,099	5,221	2.8	1.3
Palestinian Territory	1,005	4,017	10,265	4.0	2.6
Syria	3,536	19,929	34,887	5.6	1.8
Turkey	21,484	74,877	98,946	3.5	1.3
<b>Arabian Peninsula</b>	<b>8,336</b>	<b>58,544</b>	<b>123,946</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>2.1</b>
Bahrain	116	753	1,173	6.5	1.6
Kuwait	152	2,851	5,240	18.7	1.8
Oman	456	2,595	4,639	5.7	1.8
Qatar	25	841	1,333	33.6	1.6
Saudi Arabia	3,201	24,735	45,030	7.7	1.8
United Arab Emirates	70	4,380	8,521	62.9	1.9
Yemen	4,316	22,389	58,009	5.2	2.6
<b>Northern Africa</b>	<b>44,099</b>	<b>157,068</b>	<b>236,272</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>1.5</b>
Algeria	8,753	33,858	49,610	3.9	1.5
Egypt	21,834	75,498	121,219	3.5	1.6
Morocco	8,953	31,224	42,583	3.5	1.4
Libya	1,029	6,160	9,683	6.0	1.6
Tunisia	3,530	10,327	13,178	2.9	1.3

\* Projected

Source: UN Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision* (2007); <http://esa.un.org/>, accessed April 10, 2007; table A.2.

1. <http://www.prb.org/Publications/PopulationBulletins/2007/ChallengesOpportunitiesinMENA.aspx>

## Tough times for Turkey's generals (2008-03-14 14:22)

From [1]Malik Mufti

Turkey's democracy has long rested on a delicate equilibrium between the guardians of the unitary secular-nationalist paradigm who dominate the civilian and military state bureaucracies on the one hand, and the populist politicians who appeal to the particularistic sub-identities of Turkey's diverse civil society on the other. The proper functioning of this dynamic depends on the quality of leadership on both sides, for imbalances can lead to "corrective measures" such as the military interventions of past decades. While Turkey's elected leaders have exhibited highly variable levels of statecraft, moreover, the remarkable corporate identity and professionalism of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) in particular have yielded—especially since the 1970s—commanders of generally impressive judgment and prudence. This has been a major factor in keeping Turkey, occasional hiccups notwithstanding, democratic at home as well as a stabilizing regional influence and American ally abroad.

Recently, however, two episodes have highlighted the challenge TAF commanders face balancing the conflicting pressures from Turkish public opinion and from their own ideological constituency, including in the junior officer ranks.

The first episode arose when President Ahmet Necdet Sezer's term reached its end last year. Aware that the governing Islamic-based AK Party (whose members dominated the parliament that elects Turkey's presidents) would likely field one of its own as a candidate, Chief of Staff Yaşar Büyükanıt said that Sezer's successor must uphold secularism "in both word and deed." When the AK Party went ahead and nominated

Abdullah Gül anyway, the TAF General Staff posted a statement on its website on the eve of the first round of parliamentary voting warning that "no one should doubt" the military's resolve to carry out its mission as the "unequivocal defender of secularism." Simultaneously, the TAF lent its support to a series of massive anti-AK Party demonstrations in major cities, even as the equally secularist state judiciary threw legal obstacles in the path of Gül's election. Seeking to break the impasse, the AK Party called for early national elections.

The results of the July 22 elections indicated a significant popular backlash against the TAF's campaign, with the AK Party raising its vote from 34.3 percent in 2002 to 46.6 percent—a crushing landslide by Turkish electoral standards. Even so, on the eve of the last round of the new parliament's vote for president on August 28, General Büyükanıt posted another note on the TAF website warning against "centers of evil" seeking to erode secularism. Gül won and became president anyway. A series of subsequent public snubs by TAF commanders of Gül and his headscarf-wearing wife further highlighted the growing gulf between hardline secularists and a public opinion in which, according to one poll, over 70 percent have no problem with Gül's wife covering her hair.

The second episode centered on Turkey's other main internal cleavage, between the unitary and multicultural views of Turkish society. The TAF command, alarmed by the consolidation of Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq after 2003, and confronted by the resumption of the PKK insurrection in 2004, began pressuring Prime Minister Erdoğan for military action. In a series of press conferences during the summer of 2007, General Büyükanıt insisted that an incursion into northern Iraq was necessary, and mused whether it should target just PKK elements or the Iraqi Kurdish leadership there as well. The TAF, despite evident reluctance on the part of both Erdoğan's government and the United States, finally launched air and artillery attacks in December, followed by a land incursion on February 21, 2008.

On February 29, however, just one day after U.S. Defense Secretary Gates arrived in Ankara to urge a rapid end to the incursion, it ended. The Turkish public, led by a sensationalist media into expecting a decisive victory over the PKK, was taken wholly unprepared. Opposition leaders Deniz Baykal and Devlet Bahçeli—whose parties have been closely aligned with the TAF, and who had accused the AK Party of treason for advocating a political solution to the Kurdish question—also expressed disappointment, and drew a link between American pressure and the incursion's abrupt end. This prompted General Büyükanıt to deny any such linkage, to claim that the incursion had limited objectives all along, and to post yet another note on the General Staff website denouncing the criticisms as "ignoble attacks... that have caused more damage than the [PKK] traitors" themselves. This extraordinary polemic between the TAF and its traditional allies continued as the latter asserted their democratic right to question any aspect of Turkish policy.

As gingerly as possible (given laws against insulting the military), several Turkish commentators have lamented what Lale Sarıbrahimoğlu, writing in *Today's Zaman* on March 13, called "the dangerous, self-damaging course the [TAF] is taking." The dilemma is that both recent episodes reflect a deeper evolution in Turkey's political development that is placing unprecedented stresses on the unitary secular-nationalist paradigm championed by the TAF command and its allies—stresses that cannot simply be suppressed. To the extent that the TAF allows its discourse to appear at odds with popular sentiment, whether on the expression of religious or ethnic identities, it will undermine its own still-necessary function as a counterweight in Turkey's fragile democratic equilibrium. That in turn could have very destabilizing consequences for Turkey's role abroad, which explains why in recent days American officials have been emphasizing the need for compromise solutions to Turkey's problems.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/malik\\_mufti/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/malik_mufti/)

Steven A. Cook (2008-03-18 10:35:47)

Both Malik Mufti and Michael Reynolds make incisive points about the role of the military in Turkish society and the current stresses on Turkey's officially secular political order. Two of Reynolds' points should be amplified primarily because I don't believe he went far enough. First, observers should be deeply skeptical of any claims that the Turkish armed forces are or have been committed to the principles of liberal democracy. Although supporters of the officers are quick to remind that the TAF returned the government to civilians after each of the four coups d'état between 1960 and 1997, each episode coincided with the officers' successful efforts—through some shrewd institutional engineering—to narrow Turkey's political arena. Second, the portrayal of the officers as deeply opposed to Islam is, as Reynolds suggests, erroneous. Turkey's commanders have used Islam for what they perceived to be political advantage. For example, in order to gain support from religiously conservative notables in the Anatolian interior during the nationalist struggle, Mustafa Kemal himself used Islam as a mechanism of political mobilization for his project. After the 1980 coup, the officers went on a mosque- and imam-hatip school-construction binge in a misguided endeavor to depoliticize Turkish society after a decade of left vs. right violence. Finally, to the larger point that Mufti and Reynolds have made about the stresses on Turkey's secular system: Dare I suggest that these strains are the result of the failure of Kemalism to achieve ideological hegemony? Turkey has become too complex and differentiated for the drab conformity that Kemalism demands. In the end, AKP and DTP may be shut down, but these efforts reveal that the principles of Kemalism can only be enforced through coercion, which is the least efficient means of political control. The avatars of Turkish secularism like Yaşar Büyükanıt and Abdurrahman Yalçınkaya are, despite themselves, presiding over Kemalism's deathwatch. [1]Steven A. Cook is Douglas Dillon Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

1. [http://www.cfr.org/bios/10266/steven\\_a\\_cook.html](http://www.cfr.org/bios/10266/steven_a_cook.html)

Michael Reynolds (2008-03-17 23:23:41)

Malik Mufti very nicely [1]describes the conflicting pressures facing the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF). I would add that those same pressures—societal challenges to the conventional Kemalist understandings of secularism (religion strictly subordinated to the state) and national unity (a unity based on a universal and homogenous Turkish identity)—are subjecting the Kemalist establishment as a whole to stress. And like the military, the other parts of that establishment are at a loss as to how to respond. But they do know they don't like what they see. Turkey's chief prosecutor, Abdurrahman Yalçınkaya, is now asking the Constitutional Court to ban the ruling Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party) on charges of undermining secularism. As Malik noted, when the military warned the AKP-led parliament not to elect Abdullah Gül president of the republic, the AKP called early elections and won in a landslide. Now the chief prosecutor is upping the ante and trying to have the party shut down and 71 of its members banished from politics for five years. Last November Yalçınkaya asked the court to shut down Turkey's "Kurdish" party, the Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi). No decision has yet been made. Another point I would like to make is that the reason why the TAF distrust any politics that smacks of Islam is not so much because they see Islam as an illiberal force inimical to democracy or corrosive of Turkey's putative pro-Western orientation but for a simpler reason: they see doctrinal Islam as a source of crippling weakness. Foreign commentators typically portray the TAF as a bastion of pro-Western sentiment and values in Turkey. Although not entirely incorrect, this depiction is oversimplified. The Turkish Republic was not borne out of an experiment to realize the ideals of liberal democracy but instead out of a desperate effort to salvage for Ottoman Muslims a chunk of territory—Anatolia—from a crumbling empire under long-term assault by the Great Powers. That attempt was successful, and the forerunners to today's TAF played the key role in it. It was also exceptional. It is worth remembering that only two major countries in the Middle East have escaped European occupation: Turkey and Saudi Arabia. In their search for an explanation for their once invincible empire's inability to beat back the European powers, the Young Turks at the turn of the century identified Islam as a reactionary force that had impeded their society's ability to match European advances in technological, economic, and military might. Many Ottoman military officers, including but by no means limited to Mustafa Kemal, subscribed to this general view, which drew heavily upon the materialist and positivist philosophies then considered cutting-edge in Europe. Thus when they established the Turkish Republic, they were determined to subordinate Islam to the state and contain its influence over society. An ancillary reason why the TAF are deeply suspicious of Islam in politics is that it might suggest a loyalty to something beyond the Turkish state and in particular an affinity to Turkey's Middle Eastern neighbors, and Arab neighbors especially. The Turkish Republic's officer corps has, by and large, traditionally been allergic to closer ties to the Arab world, seeing it as at best a geopolitical quagmire to be avoided and at worst a source of cultural contamination that would undermine the republic should it be embraced too closely. To return to Malik's point, the TAF and Turkey's secularist establishment as a whole



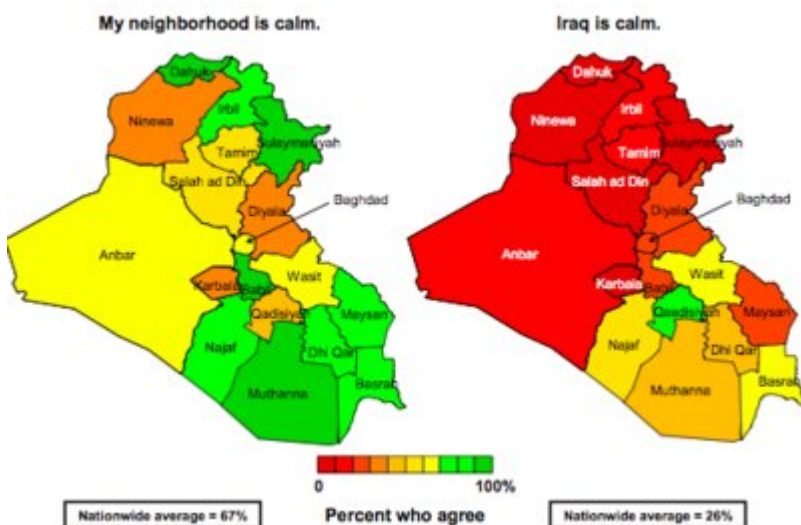
will continue to find itself under stress. The current environment is a confusing one for the TAF as an institution. The TAF rests on a world view that is not only obsolescing but that is today arguably counterproductive to its two main goals, the perpetuation of a modern and unified society. Sharp minds within the TAF recognize this, although the war in Iraq renewed the Turkish military’s nightmare of separatism (in this case Kurdish) backed by neo-imperial powers (read the United States and the EU) and jolted the TAF to revert to its instincts and templates of threat assessment it inherited from the late Ottoman period. But even when confused and under stress, the TAF remains a remarkable and powerful institution, and one which should not be discounted or underestimated. [2]Michael Reynolds is a member of MESH.

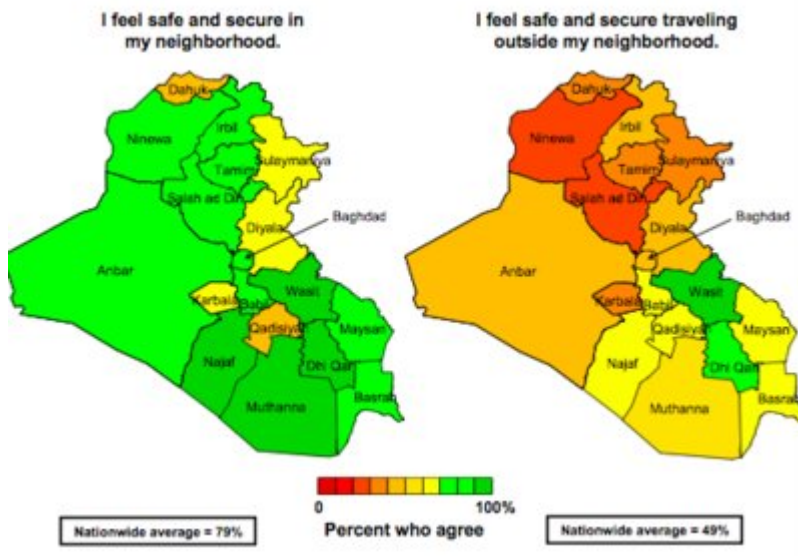
1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/tough\\_times\\_for\\_turkeys\\_generals/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/tough_times_for_turkeys_generals/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_reynolds/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_reynolds/)

### Feeling safe in Iraq (2008-03-16 18:26)

From MESH Admin

This past Tuesday, the Department of Defense released its quarterly report to Congress, [1]Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq. The report documents the continuing decline in violence, but it also includes the results of a January Iraq-wide opinion poll, indicating a divergence of perception among Iraqis. Most Iraqis believe that while their own neighborhoods are relatively calm, safe, and secure, they feel that the rest of the country is not. As the report notes, the polls "continue to show that Iraqis believe the security situation is better locally than nationally."

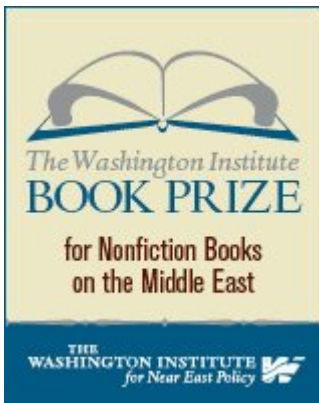




1. <http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/Master%20%20Mar08%20-%20final%20signed.pdf>

### Is your book worth \$30k? (2008-03-17 21:15)

From [1]Robert Satloff



[2] Attention all authors! If you have been toiling away in obscurity, frustrated that a Field Guide to the Birds of the Middle East is in the Amazon top ten of Middle East books instead of your just-published masterpiece, then The Washington Institute has the answer: [3]The Washington Institute Book Prize.

For more than two decades, our Institute has focused not just on producing original policy-relevant research but on helping our nation's leaders distinguish between the "noise" that emanates from the Middle East and the truly important facts, trends and developments that have an impact on American interests. The avalanche of books that has emerged on Middle East politics and U.S. regional policy in recent years has compelled us to expand our scope. The result is The Washington Institute Book Prize for non-fiction books in English on the Middle East. The purpose of the prize is to identify the most outstanding new works and give them the attention they deserve. To do that, we have established the world's most lucrative awards in the field of Middle East studies, with a top prize of \$30,000 to the gold-medal winner chosen by an independent jury of impeccable scholars. (Win a Pulitzer and you only get \$10,000...)

So, contact your publisher. You have until May 1 to enter your book in the competition. Only new books

(published since May 1, 2007) are eligible. And if you don't have a submission for this year's competition, now is the time to start writing to make our deadline for 2009!

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_satloff/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_satloff/)
2. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC11.php?CID=479>
3. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC11.php?CID=479>

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### Iraq: two scenarios revisited (2008-03-18 11:36)

In November 2002, the Chronicle of Higher Education asked a number of scholars this question: "What will the world be like five years after a war with Iraq?" To mark the fifth anniversary of the Iraq war, MESH asked all of the respondents to revisit their predictions. This week, MESH will post the responses it has received.

Joseph S. Nye, Jr. is University Distinguished Service Professor at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, where he was formerly Dean. In 2002, he wrote: "When I served as chairman of the National Intelligence Council, which prepares national intelligence estimates for the president, I used to remind my staff that there are many futures, and their probabilities often depend on what we do. I offer two futures that vary by whether the war is unilateral or multilateral." Read his scenarios [1]here.)

From [2]Joseph Nye



Thanks for this reminder to look back. It is always useful to revisit predictions if the exercise makes us more humble and less dogmatic about our views of the future. As I warned in my Chronicle article, there is never one future and what transpires is partly affected by our own actions. Instead of predictions, I offered two scenarios, one optimistic and one pessimistic, to test the effect of whether our actions were multilateral or not. My policy preference at the time was that we should not go to war without the benefit of multilateral legitimacy. Overall, I still think this was the correct position.

My pessimistic scenario was generally correct but too pessimistic. Fortunately, the Hashemite Kingdom and the Karzai presidency proved more robust than I portrayed. Turkey refused to allow the Fourth Infantry Division to cross its territory, but did not restrict our access to its airspace. We did fall into Bin Laden's trap and Iraq proved a powerful recruitment device for Al Qaeda. As the CIA and MI-6 have estimated, the number of terrorists have increased, but their major activities have been in the Middle East and Europe rather than inside the United States as the scenario feared. Nonetheless, the overall thrust of the scenario still seems correct and there is ample evidence that we squandered a great deal of our soft power in the Iraq War.

My optimistic scenario was too optimistic, but it is impossible to test since the assumption of multilateral intervention was not fulfilled. It is interesting to reread it, however, and note the widely held assumption that some form of WMD (chemical or biological) would be found. That, of course, turned out to be wrong, and the United States is weaker, not stronger in the region.

1. <http://chronicle.com/free/v49/i11/11b01002.htm>
  2. <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/about/faculty-staff-directory/joseph-nye>
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### Iraq, Israel, Arabs: weak linkage (2008-03-19 07:44)

In November 2002, the Chronicle of Higher Education asked a number of scholars this question: “What will the world be like five years after a war with Iraq?” To mark the fifth anniversary of the Iraq war, MESH asked all of the respondents to revisit their predictions. This week, MESH is posting the responses it has received.

Tamara Cofman Wittes is a member of MESH. In 2002, she wrote: “If the Iraqi threat is eliminated, the Arab-Israeli conflict will again loom large.... The long-term interests of the United States demand a successful peace process; that is why, five years after a war with Iraq, its long-term and short-term interests are likely to align to push aggressively for a stable and equitable settlement to this century-old conflict.” (Read the full prediction [1]here.)

From [2]Tamara Cofman Wittes



On the whole, my in-five-years predictions for the state of play in the Arab-Israeli conflict hold up pretty well. The prolonged U.S. military presence in Iraq did sour (further) regional opinion of the United States, and did lend greater strength to those regional forces that feed on the concepts of “occupation” and “resistance.” The crisis of post-Arafat Palestinian leadership has indeed dragged on, and dragged down the prospects for peace. The Bush Administration, despite its intentions to the contrary, did indeed find itself pulled (by the escalating violence and by pleas from Arab allies) into a new effort at Israeli-Palestinian conflict resolution.

What I didn’t foresee was the Beirut spring that ousted Syria from Lebanon and added a new complexity to regional diplomacy. The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli war clarified the rise of resistance-based Islamist militancy as a significant threat, not only to Israel and America, but also to Arab regimes. Today, most Arab states are boycotting the planned Arab League summit in Damascus, and Washington pushes against new Syrian-Israeli negotiations in order to preserve its interest in Lebanese sovereignty. That’s an American priority I don’t think anyone would have predicted in 2002.

But, Lebanon aside, I think I called it pretty well—and not because I’ve got a crystal ball. In point of fact, the dynamics of the Arab-Israeli conflict were then, and remain today, fairly independent of the American engagement with Iraq. That’s why my predictions were safe to make five years ago.

1. <http://chronicle.com/free/v49/i11/11b01101.htm>
  2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara\\_cofman\\_wittes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara_cofman_wittes/)
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**Iraq: price of negligence (2008-03-19 07:44)**

In November 2002, the Chronicle of Higher Education asked a number of scholars this question: “What will the world be like five years after a war with Iraq?” To mark the fifth anniversary of the Iraq war, MESH asked all of the respondents to revisit their predictions. This week, MESH is posting the responses it has received.

Robert Zelnick is Journalism Professor of National Security Studies at Boston University and a Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution. In 2002, he wrote: “The best way to envision Iraq five years removed from a successful American military effort is to envision an Iraq five years hence if the United States undertakes no such campaign. Then the regime of Saddam Hussein or his son and handpicked successor, Uday, will maintain the family stranglehold on the Iraqi people.... A reasonably free, justly governed, prosperous Iraq may or may not be able to transform the entire Middle East. But five years down the road, it appears a far better gamble than inaction.” (Read his full counter-scenario [1]here.)

From [2]Robert Zelnick



Had the initial occupation of Iraq been conducted with the insight and dedication of the Petraeus period, we would today be celebrating a successful and substantially completed operation, with the failure to find WMDs recognized as being more a function of Saddam’s tactical trickery than a serious failure of western intelligence.

Alas, we failed early on a number of well-documented fronts. We sent too few troops to mobilize a successful occupation, failed to restore order early, were oblivious to the availability of massive unattended weapons caches, engineered the dissolution of indigenous military and local security forces and failed to insist on a controlled reinstatement of all but the most incorrigible Baath Party veterans. Our negligence contributed to swelling partisan militias—many with links to the government—responsible for bloody acts of murder, terror and the panicky evacuation of entire neighborhoods.

The price for this negligence has been great in terms of life and treasure, U.S. international standing and the evaporation of the post-Cold War sense of national purpose and optimism.

But washing our hands and pulling out now would in my view compound the felony. For all our mistakes we have still dealt a heavy blow to Al Qaeda, disposed of Saddam and his chaos-generating regime, and engineered a nifty switch in allegiance by a large number of Sunnis. The notion that somehow we could “transform the region” does seem a bit excessive. But we may still be able to help stabilize it.

1. <http://chronicle.com/free/v49/i11/11b01302.htm>

2. <http://www.hoover.org/bios/zelnick.html>

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**Iraq: America in Muslim eyes (2008-03-20 07:40)**

In November 2002, the Chronicle of Higher Education asked a number of scholars this question: “What will the world be like five years after a war with Iraq?” To mark the fifth anniversary of the Iraq war, MESH asked all of the respondents to revisit their predictions. This week, MESH is posting the responses it has

received.

John L. Esposito is University Professor and Director of the Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University. In 2002, he wrote: "Five years after a U.S. war with Iraq, it is likely that the Arab world will be less democratic than more and that anti-Americanism will be stronger rather than weaker." (Read his full prediction [1]here.)

From [2]John L. Esposito



It is both satisfying and yet depressing that my predictions five years ago have in fact been realized. Anti-Americanism has grown exponentially in the Muslim world as it has in many other parts of the world. Thus, the question "Why do they hate us?" remains important to ponder. Likewise, while the spread of democracy has been the stated goal of the Bush administration, the charge that America is does not seriously support democracy and really operates under a double standard continues to be strongly leveled against us.

As we follow up on such issues after five years, what have we learned? To begin with, we have a new tool to enhance our understanding. Rather than depending upon the opinions and predictions of "experts," we can listen to the people in the regions themselves by using data from the [3]Gallup World Poll, which has been conducted since 2001 around the world.

Through 50,000 hour-long, face-to-face interviews with residents of more than 35 nations that are predominantly Muslim or have substantial Muslim populations, we have the largest and most comprehensive poll of the Muslim world, representing the voices of more than 90 percent of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims, young and old, educated and illiterate, female and male, living in urban and rural settings

Responses to both closed and open-ended questions tell us a lot. For example, starting with anti-Americanism, our answers to the common question, "Why do they hate us?" have often been "They hate who we are—our way of life, freedoms, democracy, and gender equality." However, if we listen to the voices of Muslim respondents, they contradict these views. When asked what they admired most about the West, the top response was the West's technology, its value system of hard work, responsibility and rule of law and its fair political systems, democracy, human rights, free speech and gender equality.

On the other hand, when asked what they admire least about the West, among the top responses was "hatred or degradation of Islam and Muslims." And when asked what the most important thing the United States could do to improve their quality of life, the most common response after "reduce unemployment and improve the economic infrastructure" was "stop interfering in the internal affairs of Arab/Islamic states," "stop imposing your beliefs and policies," "respect our political rights and stop controlling us," and "give us our own freedom."

Thus, while we continue to talk about the importance of democracy and self-determination for the Muslim world, majorities in Jordan, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and Morocco disagree that the United States is serious about spreading democracy in their region. In fact, looking at those we will call "Muslim democrats"—those who believe that democracy is important to their progress and future—we find that this group is more concerned about better relations with the West, but at the same time, more likely to view the United States unfavorably. Only 5 to 10 percent respond that the United States is trustworthy, friendly or treats other countries respectfully.



What of the future? A major concern for the foreseeable future will center on stopping the growth of global terrorism. While the military will continue to be needed to capture, kill and contain terrorists, the broader challenge is to limit radicalization. As data from the Muslim world reveals, while majorities are moderate, the number of politically radicalized is significant.

The Gallup Poll identified moderates and radicals by looking at those who said the 9/11 attacks were completely justified and also had an unfavorable view of the United States. Moderates, the vast majority (93 percent), said the 9/11 attacks were unjustified. The politically radicalized and thus potential supporters of extremism—7 percent—said the attacks were completely justified and view the United States unfavorably. Identifying respondents as “politically radicalized” does not mean they commit acts of violence, but rather that they are a potential source for recruitment or support for terrorist groups.

Although concern among respondents about bias and Western political interference in their affairs was widespread, the politically radicalized were far more intense in their belief that Western political, military and cultural domination is a major threat. When asked to define their greatest fears about the future of their country, the politically radicalized most frequently cite interference in their internal affairs by other countries, national security, colonization, occupation, and fear of U.S. dominance.

Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of the politically radicalized compared to 48 percent of moderates disagree that “the U.S. will allow people in the region to fashion their own political future as they see fit without direct U.S. influence.” Surprisingly, 50 percent of the politically radicalized feel more strongly that their progress will be helped by “moving toward governmental democracy” compared to 35 percent of moderates. And even more surprising, the politically radicalized (58 percent) are more likely than moderates (44 percent) to associate Arab/Islamic nations with an eagerness to have better relationships with the West.

In a post-9/11 environment in which many are caught between the contending and contentious views of the battle of experts and pseudo-experts, we now have data that can lead the discourse and to guide future policies aimed at reducing the threat of global terrorism.

More about mutual misperceptions and developing policies and programs designed to “win the minds and hearts” of Muslims around the world can be found in the just-published book based on the Gallup World Poll, [4]Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think, which I have co-authored with Dalia Mogahed.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees

1. <http://chronicle.com/free/v49/i11/11b01001.htm>
2. <http://explore.georgetown.edu/people/jle2/>
3. <http://www.gallup.com/consulting/worldpoll/24046/About.aspx>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1595620176>

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Martin Kramer (2008-03-20 10:41:27)

John Esposito was prescient to predict that the Iraq war would damage America’s standing in the eyes of Muslims. There are different measures of the damage, and the Gallup World Poll is just one of them. But it’s indisputably the case that the Iraq war represented a blow to U.S. prestige in Muslim public opinion. Contrast this with the ideological [1]view of Jimmy Carter: “Even among the populations of our former close friends in the region, Egypt and Jordan, less than 5 percent look favorably on the United States today. That’s not because we invaded Iraq; they hated Saddam. It is because we don’t do anything about the Palestinian plight.” Perhaps Esposito should send a copy of his new book to the sage from Plains, Georgia, inured though he may be to all evidence. Even the leading Palestinian intellectual in America, Rashid Khalidi, would concede Esposito’s point. “Iraq has changed everything,” he has [2]written. “In

Washington, a city obsessed with the present, it was easy to forget that as recently as a few years ago, the United States was not particularly disliked in the Middle East and that al-Qaeda was a tiny underground organization with almost no popular support.” In other words, the Iraq invasion did much more damage to U.S. standing than decades of U.S. support for Israel and its occupation of Palestinian territories. It’s an important point to remember, as people search for ways to restore U.S. prestige. But on Esposito’s other key prediction, he missed the mark. It isn’t so that the Arab world is “less democratic” than it was on the eve of the Iraq war. According to Freedom House, one Arab country, Lebanon, made a full-category upward move in this period, from “not free” to “partly free.” There were significant improvements in the scores of Iraq (and, looking next door to the Arabs, Turkey), and mild improvements in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Yemen. Egypt, bucking the trend, went down a notch in civil liberties. Overall, the Arab Middle East looks more democratic today than it was before the Iraq war—to some extent, because of it. Esposito was at least partly wrong on another score. In 2002, he wrote that the United States “will want compliant allies and governments in the Arab world—and will fear open elections that might bring Islamist enemies to power. As a result, the United States will be forced, at the end of the day, to support strong, authoritarian governments that will rely on their security forces, political repression, and American aid.” In fact, in Iraq and the Palestinian territories, the United States promoted elections that empowered Islamist parties. True, the Bush administration has pulled back after witnessing the main consequence of its folly: the electoral legitimation of Hamas. But on balance, this administration has done more to empower Islamists than any of its predecessors. Esposito deserves some credit there. As I once noted in a [3]speech at Georgetown, many of the ideas that he championed in the 1990s made their way into administration thinking. These include the diversity of Islamism and its openness to moderation through inclusion in the political process. Both of these notions, I believe, are flawed, and my own criticism of Bush administration policy has focused precisely on their adoption as core policy assumptions. But John has had more of an influence on this administration than I have, so he really should give himself a pat on the back. He contributed his small share to the emergence of the string of Islamist principalities that now dot the Middle East—and that bedevil U.S. policy. [4]Martin Kramer is a member of MESH.

1. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nathan-gardels/jimmy-carter-takes-on-isr\\_b\\_36134.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nathan-gardels/jimmy-carter-takes-on-isr_b_36134.html)
2. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/11/09/AR2007110901568\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/11/09/AR2007110901568_pf.html)
3. <http://www.geocities.com/martinkramerorg/Georgetown.htm>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)

### Iraq: still no easy answers (2008-03-21 07:54)

In November 2002, the Chronicle of Higher Education asked a number of scholars this question: “What will the world be like five years after a war with Iraq?” To mark the fifth anniversary of the Iraq war, MESH asked all of the respondents to revisit their predictions. This week, MESH is posting the responses it has received.

Barry Rubin is a member of MESH. In 2002, he wrote: “A post-Saddam Iraq seen as reasonably democratic, independent of American control, and improving its people’s lives might become a model, promoting the cause of representative government and human rights in the region. If so, the United States would get credit and not blame for its actions.” (Read his full prediction [1]here.)

From [2]Barry Rubin

✖ I was quite [3]worried at the time about the decision to invade Iraq. There was no doubt that the United States and its allies could win the war militarily, but the key problem was what would happen afterward. Why should one believe that Iraq would become democratic—and stable as well—virtually overnight? Given the country’s history, political culture, and divisions this seemed unlikely.

And there was also the problem of risk. What if things went wrong? The existing situation was about as good as one could expect. The failure of the Arab-Israeli peace process, due to Syria and the



Palestinian leadership, as well as September 11 and other events had led many more people in America and the West to understand how the region actually worked. They came to comprehend that the region's problems were not the fault of the United States or Israel, but were due to the nature of the regimes and their ideologies.

I thought—and so did almost everyone in Israel I heard on this issue—that there was a huge amount of naiveté in the U.S. policy. The general consensus was that as long as sanctions remained on Iraq, Saddam was not going to be much of a threat. The real concern was Iran. Yet if things went wrong in Iraq, America's political capital would be squandered and Israel would be called upon to pay a large part of the price.

But there were two other factors to be considered. First, there was the situation of the Iraqi people. How could one in good conscience advocate a policy in which they continued to live under such a brutal dictatorship, especially if an alternative was available? The other was the point that America was at war. And while this should not still criticism, it should also engender support.

How do things look five years later? It is easy to reach a conclusion but hard to be sure it is the right one. Would it have been better if the invasion had never taken place? I can see arguments on both sides. Regrettably, my worst fears about the cost in American prestige and credibility, as well as a return to the old, bad analysis of the region, have come true.

I don't think the United States can really win in Iraq, though it also cannot lose. What I mean by this is that the U.S. effort, most recently the Surge, has improved the situation within Iraq, a state of affairs that many see as a victory. Yet all U.S. forces can do is to create a situation of relative calm after which the Iraqi political system and military capability will decide what happens next. The United States can only create suitable conditions for this—and it has—but how is the turnover to take place? If U.S. troops cannot be withdrawn or even significantly reduced, what does this tell us?

And there is also another question about who will ultimately reap the benefits of victory within Iraq. Does the added aspect of heightened Iranian influence mean the whole policy was a mistake? The internal situation is difficult, not only in terms of Sunni-Shia divisions but also due to internal Shia splits, the strength of Islamist sentiments, the ability of Iran and Arab neighbors to disrupt the society, and many more.

What of the regional situation? The war in Iraq has had close to zero effect on the Arab-Israeli conflict, as the removal of Iraq as a factor is in part balanced by the increase of Islamist power, though this might well have happened any way. Nor did it have any meaningful effect on Iran's drive for nuclear weapons, the next big issue in Gulf security.

My prediction at the time was that the attack, if successfully carried out, would lead Arab governments to see the United States as a more dangerous enemy—and hence one not to be trifled with—and a more serious security asset. If one looks at public opinion polls, it would seem the United States is more unpopular in the Arabic-speaking world. But popularity is not the point. It makes us feel better or worse, but is simply not the way Middle East politics work where it counts. And regarding what counts, I am not sure one can say that these events have materially worsened U.S. relations with Arab regimes at all. The ultimate result will depend on whether American intervention seems successful and if the United States is seen as steadfast.

Finally, consider the tremendous irony of the situation and U.S. policy: the United States is supporting an Iraqi government whose number-two ally is Iran while fighting proxies of its own allies, the Sunni countries who oppose an expansion of Iranian influence!

There were no easy answers in 2003; there are none now.

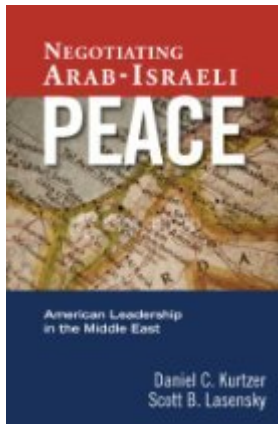
1. <http://chronicle.com/free/v49/i11/11b01003.htm>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry_rubin/)
3. <http://www.tomgrossmedia.com/mideastdispatches/archives/000681.html>

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### 'Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace' (2008-03-24 12:12)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Daniel Kurtzer, former U.S. Ambassador to Egypt and Israel, is the S. Daniel Abraham Professor of Middle East Policy Studies at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. His new book (with Scott Lasensky) is *Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace: American Leadership in the Middle East*.

From [1]Daniel Kurtzer



[2] Two related questions have bothered me for many years. First, if the prospects for progress toward a Middle East peace settlement looked so promising in the early 1990s, why did the situation turn so bleak by the end of the century and even until today? Second, could/should the United States have done anything more or different in order to affect the prospects for Middle East peace during this period? Since the collapse of the Camp David summit in 2000, a number of memoirs, academic studies and articles have been published in an effort to shed some light on these questions. While providing some answers to the first question, these publications, in my view, fell short in dealing with U.S. policy and diplomacy.

After retiring from the Foreign Service in 2006 and joining the faculty of Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, I devoted some attention to these issues. In the summer of 2006, I offered two public lectures on the subject, exploring some of the factors related to U.S. decision-making and diplomatic practice in the period after the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference. During the summer of 2006, Ambassador Richard Solomon, President of the United States Institute of Peace, approached me and asked if I would chair a study group to examine U.S. involvement in the peace process since the end of the Cold War. The vehicle with which to pursue my interests was thus offered, and allowed me to do a systematic study of the issue, not a memoir.

Working closely with Scott Lasensky of USIP, who served as co-director of the Study Group, we assembled what can only be described as the “dream team” of academic/practitioner experts on U.S. policy and the Middle East peace process: William Quandt of the University of Virginia, Shibley Telhami of the University of Maryland, and Steven Spiegel of UCLA. Over the next year, we interviewed 100 current and former

policy makers and officials from the United States and the region. We also traveled to the region to meet with Israeli and Arab officials who were not able to come to Washington. The result of these interviews and the background research associated with the interviews is the book we just published, *Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace: American Leadership in the Middle East*.

The Study Group and I have had several target audiences for the book. Most importantly, we aimed to have the book influence the policy choices and behavior of the next U.S. Administration, in the belief that the next Administration would be looking for ways to improve upon the rather dismal peace process performance and results of its predecessors. In the meantime, the Bush '43 Administration launched the Annapolis process, and so we shared our findings, before publication, with senior Administration officials, in the hope that the process today could benefit from our findings.

We have also had in mind a larger audience for the book, among academics and the policy community. The book focuses on the Middle East peace process, but it offers lessons that we believe have value in conducting U.S. diplomacy and negotiations elsewhere. Thus, the book is appropriate not only for university-level courses on the Middle East, but also for courses on negotiations theory and practice and on U.S. foreign policy since the end of the Cold War. Early reviews of the book have been very positive and have validated our view that it has appeal for a wide policy and academic audience.

Can this book alone provide a magic key to resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict? Surely not, for the primary onus for resolving the conflict continues to rest with the parties themselves. However, as we assert in the book, there is no doubting the importance of resolving the conflict for U.S. national security interests. Since we know we can do diplomacy far better than we have done during the past fifteen years, the book may make a modest contribution to a more successful U.S. approach to Arab-Israeli peacemaking.

[3]Press Kit | [4]Excerpt | [5]Order from Publisher | [6]Amazon

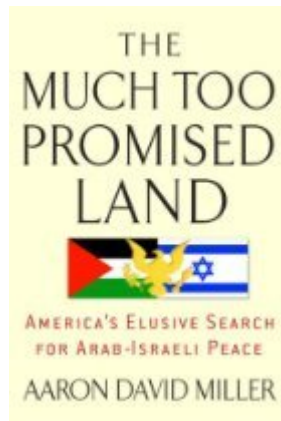
1. [http://wvs.princeton.edu/people/display\\_person.xml?netid=dkurtzer&display=Core](http://wvs.princeton.edu/people/display_person.xml?netid=dkurtzer&display=Core)
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51B-RM6YtYL.jpg>
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5. <http://bookstore.usip.org/books/BookDetail.aspx?productID=183320>
6. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1601270305>

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### 'The Much Too Promised Land' (2008-03-25 12:54)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Aaron David Miller is currently a public policy scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, where he wrote his new book, *The Much Too Promised Land: America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace*. He served as a Middle East negotiator in both Republican and Democratic administrations.

From [1]Aaron David Miller



[2] The Much Too Promised Land had a strange birth. Originally I had no intention of writing it. I resigned from the Department of State in January 2003 after twenty years of working on Arab-Israeli issues, much of them spent in American efforts to broker a negotiated peace. I left the State Department not because I had lost faith in the power of American diplomacy, but because the end game for Arabs and Israelis seemed years into the future. Having wrestled with the older generation of Arabs and Israelis, I went off to head Seeds of Peace, a nonprofit NGO dedicated to fostering better understanding among the younger generation.

But things changed. In the years after 9/11, I watched America struggle (and fail) in a Middle Eastern world that was becoming more important than ever to our national interests and to our national security. American failures grew largely out of a dysfunctional region where an authority deficit in places like Iraq, Palestine, and Lebanon combined with the emergence of a virulent and extremist strain within Islam, the potential proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and rage at America for its presence in Iraq which threatened American interests and credibility.

At the same time, American policy seemed to be making matters worse. It seemed to me we didn't understand the world in which we were now embroiled. America was in an investment trap in the Middle East: we couldn't fix the region; and we couldn't extricate ourselves from it.

Whatever else caused our Middle East predicament, it seemed to me that our challenges were made worse from two self-inflicted wounds: first, we didn't pay attention to the past, let alone learn from it; second, we persisted in seeing the world not the way it was, but the way we wanted it to be. Our analysis of the region, at least that on which the policy makers based their policy, seemed to flow more from ideology, short-term goals and domestic politics. This was not a Republican or Democratic problem; it was an American problem. In eight years under Bill Clinton, we seemed to stumble at peacemaking; in eight years under George W. Bush, we fumbled badly at making war.

The Much Too Promised Land is an effort to look at American policy toward the Arab-Israeli negotiations and to identify the reasons behind our successes and failures during almost fifty years. It's not intended as an "I told you so." I was as much a cheerleader for unworkable policies as anyone during my time in government. Drawing on experiences and anecdotes from my twenty years at the negotiating table under six secretaries of state and on interviews with key principles (including Gerald Ford, Henry Kissinger and Jimmy Carter) who presided over the diplomacy during the earlier period, I've identified those lessons worth keeping in mind for the future. With all due respect to the British historian A.J.P. Taylor, who opined that the only lesson of history is that there are no lessons, the past can be a cruel and unforgiving teacher if it's not at least taken seriously.

My hope is that The Much Too Promised Land will create, with clarity and honesty, a new frame of reference to evaluate our policy toward the Arab-Israeli issue over the last forty years, and to identify those

key ingredients that increase the chances of successes in the future. By the looks of the situation on the ground, we'll need that and a lot more.

[3]Audio Tour | [4]Excerpt | [5]Order from Publisher | [6]Amazon

1. [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=sf.profile&person\\_id=166535](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=sf.profile&person_id=166535)
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/41CQ0GfdxeL.jpg>
3. <http://www.randomhouse.com/bantamdell/muchtoopromisedland/insidethebook.html>
4. <http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780553384147&view=excerpt&ref=rhnet&name=muchtoopromisedland>
5. <http://www.randomhouse.com/bantamdell/muchtoopromisedland/index.html>
6. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0553804901>

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## Islamism and the media (2008-03-26 08:12)

From [1]Hillel Fradkin

THIS PHOTO IS CURRENTLY UNAVAILABLE.



According to Philip Bennett, managing editor of the Washington Post, Americans lack a proper understanding of Islam. Contemporary media practice is to blame, and it is the job of the same media to fix it. His immediate proposals: hiring more Muslim journalists, better translations of Arabic words or terms and greater descriptive precision. The latter might include dropping the term “Islamist” as a characterization of certain Muslim political movements. Bennett presented these views in a talk delivered at the University of California-Irvine and it was [2]reported in the Daily Pilot, the Newport Beach newspaper.

To be sure, Americans know relatively little about Islam. They also know relatively little about Hinduism, Buddhism and Shintoism and not a few other things besides. Just why is it the special duty of American newspapers to make Americans knowledgeable about Islam? And is it really plausible that newspapers could accomplish this task? In fact, the proposals Bennett makes to address the problem are more likely to do harm than good. But he may represent a growing consensus.

The first difficulty is that newspapers are simply not intended or designed to provide a general education in any subject, let alone one like Islam, which has a 1,400-year long and complicated history. Their role is to report the news. Of course, these days newspapers supplement that with feature stories, and if these are good and long—indeed, very long—they can be helpful. But for better or for worse, if Americans are to become deeply knowledgeable about Islam, they will have to invest more time and effort than is required by reading newspapers.

Nor will having more Muslim reporters necessarily help. This assumes that Muslim reporters are both necessarily deeply knowledgeable about Islam and have no intra-Muslim biases of their own. Take

the division of contemporary Muslims into Sunnis and Shiites. The usual description of the character and grounds of the differences between them in news stories is inadequate, limiting itself at best to its origin in the quarrel about the succession to Muhammad. This is less adequate than it needs to be, and some fairly simple remedy could be proposed.

But is the remedy more Muslim journalists? Quite a few Sunnis and Shiites know relatively little about one another's beliefs and history. Moreover, the antipathy between them could lead to biased reporting—anti-Sunni or anti-Shiite respectively—of a different sort. Or does Bennett propose to have both Sunnis and Shiites on staff and limit them to reporting on their respective affiliations? If so, one might wonder why this practice should not be extended to other religions to allow for intra-Catholic, intra-Protestant and intra-Jewish differences and disputes.

It is unclear whether Bennett has thought about any of this. But what is clear is that his idea resembles an all too common and regrettable view that only members of specific religious or other societal groups are fit students and interpreters of such groups. This view has its recent American origins in American universities. It has already done a great deal of damage there, where one of its chief consequences has been to render much scholarship akin to apologetics. It would be regrettable if apologetics were to replace reporting as well.

There is some hint of this in Bennett's remarks, particularly where the report comes to the question of terms. Apparently there was some discussion of terms like "jihad," "madrassa," and "hijab," and hand-wringing about their alleged mistranslation. What this meant with regard to madrassa and hijab is not stated and is, even in the case of hijab, hard to imagine except for students like myself of arcane medieval discussions of Sufism and related matters.

In the case of jihad, there was the standard belaboring of the fact that it sometimes means warfare but also may mean "struggle and valiant attempt." Precisely because this belaboring has become so standard, it is hard to believe that "mistranslation" is today the issue or problem. The real and obvious question is how many Muslims embrace the one or the other and with what energy, and that has nothing to do with what newspapers say or do not say.

The somewhat new issue concerns the term "Islamist." The use of this term is apparently being debated in newsrooms, with some urging it to be dropped as too vague. This perhaps reflects and derives from a similar debate in the American academy, where the issue less concerns vagueness than the possibility that non-Muslims might identify Islamism—i.e., radical Islam—with Islam itself, and so identify Islam with violence.

It would be unfortunate if this term were dropped. Indeed, it would make reporting more inaccurate rather than less, and if accuracy is genuinely the concern of newspapers it should be retained. Although the term Islamism is not free of ambiguities (neither is the word Islam itself, so should we stop speaking of it as well?), it is not simply vague. It refers to the radical ideological and political movement which arose upon the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928. To be sure, this movement now embraces a variety of organizations, including Al Qaeda, which disagree and diverge from one another (often with great hostility). But they still retain enough in common to be describable with the same term, and such distinctions among them as are necessary can be appropriately made. (A case also can be made for Salafism, but its present disadvantage is that, at best, it would cover only Sunni and not Shiite groups.)

At all events, the great utility and advantage of the term Islamism is precisely that it makes a distinction between Islam as such and its contemporary radical offshoots. In fact, so far as I'm aware its first usage in English about forty years ago was by the late Pakistani theologian and scholar Fazlur Rahman.

(For full disclosure, he was my teacher.) His purpose was precisely to draw this distinction and to protect Islam from being confused with radical groups. Since this seems also to be the purpose of Mr. Bennett and others, they would be well advised to continue using it. Otherwise they will contribute to that which they fear: anti-Muslim bias.

Comments are limited to MESH members

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/hillel\\_fradkin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/hillel_fradkin/)
2. <http://www.dailypilot.com/articles/2008/03/04/religion/dpt-bennett03042008.txt>

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Martin Kramer (2008-03-27 15:55:53)

Ironically, the term "Islamism" was first adopted by the mainstream media in an effort to show sophisticated discernment. In the 1970s and 1980s, most of the major newspapers described the same phenomenon as "Islamic fundamentalism." Because "fundamentalism" had such negative connotations in editorial boardrooms, editors were happy to phase it out in favor of the seemingly more neutral Islamism. (For the complicated history of the word "Islamism," which is found even in the first edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, see this [1]article I wrote five years back.) Increasingly, we have come to realize that the Islamists themselves would rather just be called Muslims since, to their minds, they are merely professing true Islam. So while the demand for Muslim journalists to cover Islam is about the notion that only like can represent like, the business of the terminology is about not imposing external categories on those who are represented in scholarship and the media. Of course, if we were really to do that, we might as well throw out the social sciences altogether. Politically, though, this has more to do with the intellectual effort to separate Hezbollah and Hamas from Al Qaeda. This is because Hamas and Hezbollah are (supposedly) social movements, whereas Al Qaeda is (supposedly) just a terrorist group. Having one term that puts them in the same category is a problem, since [2]some in Washington would like to "engage" Hamas and Hezbollah. In fact, even Al Qaeda has a social base, and Hezbollah and Hamas both practice terrorism. A real distinction is that Hezbollah and Hamas kill mostly Israelis, whereas Al Qaeda kills mostly Americans. But this does seem like a rather thin reed on which to rest an entirely different vocabulary of categorization. Hillel Fradkin is right: "They still retain enough in common to be describable with the same term," with nuance to follow. If the media do ever jettison Islamism, the effect will be to privilege political considerations over analytical ones. [3]*Martin Kramer is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://www.meforum.org/article/541>
2. [http://blogs.state.gov/index.php/entires/should\\_the\\_us\\_engage\\_hamas\\_in\\_the\\_peace\\_process\\_between\\_the\\_israelis\\_and\\_pa/](http://blogs.state.gov/index.php/entires/should_the_us_engage_hamas_in_the_peace_process_between_the_israelis_and_pa/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)

Michael Young (2008-03-27 21:53:02)

I agree with [1]Hillel Fradkin that it is not up to the media to instill a proper understanding of Islam in the United States, or anywhere else. In fact, that's exactly contrary to what media should set as an objective for themselves. To take on the role of educating the public has a profoundly positivist intonation to it; and journalists, infused with a positivist duty to somehow instruct, may find themselves pursuing an educational mission rather than news stories that might contravene that mission. Certainly, however, journalists today can use hefty crash courses in Middle Eastern politics, culture and, most important, language. The absence of a functional knowledge of Arabic among most correspondents in the region is a handicap whose disastrous consequences have yet to be properly gauged. That's where media should put their weight—not in altering the terminology in articles or translating Arabic terms more accurately. Such steps may be welcome, but they are also, at best, superficial remedies for the deeper problem of inadequate knowledge. Having said that, knowledge is not enough to be a good foreign journalist in the Middle East. Common sense can be a useful antidote. As many alleged specialists have repeatedly shown in the United States, too much cultural sensitivity can be an obstacle to understanding, or highlighting, the unpleasant realities of the region. Hillel Fradkin worries about this in the case of Muslim journalists. I'm far less worried about them than I am about Western journalists or academics who inject their indignation or parochial dislikes into the debate over events in the Middle East. Most disturbing to me are those who will breezily use a liberal template to analyze and predict the behavior of Islamist groups that, both in their actions and rhetoric, openly express the most violent intentions. From my own experiences here in Lebanon, for example, I've repeatedly found that the most perceptive, curious, and critical, even brutally critical, analysts of Hezbollah have been young Shiite journalists who don't have a cultural chip

on their shoulder when it comes to discussing the party. In contrast, rare are the Western journalists or academics who apply a critical eye to Hezbollah (critical not in the sense of criticizing the party, but merely in evaluating, unpacking and analyzing its motives). Instead, many will assess Hezbollah on the basis of a deep-seated perception that Western states, particularly the United States, have historically behaved unjustly in the Middle East. In the shadow of such Western cruelty, even radical Islamists come out looking good—unfortunate victims of Western intolerance. In fact, there is a cottage industry manufacturing that particular tendency with respect to Hezbollah, whose devotees never bother to ask the easy question: Why it is that Western media outlets, which supposedly mirror a corporate culture innately hostile to justice and emancipation for Muslims, are so hopelessly fascinated by Hezbollah, to the detriment of other Lebanese subjects of equal importance? For example, when was the last time you saw a report in a Western outlet on Lebanon’s Maronites—or at least one that didn’t use the word “fascist” to describe the community? When was the last time you read something on the transformation of the Sunnis in Beirut? Or about youth emigration from Lebanon? Trust me, probably never. But a Hezbollah story will sell in a second. So much for the perceived Western inclination to deny giving the party a voice. Rarely has an autocratic, armed, religious group been so well covered by the secular, democratic, largely pacifist West. How does this relate to Philip Bennett’s argument? The real problem is that news editors will instinctively eliminate a wide variety of fascinating topics from Middle East coverage because these are deemed not important enough for a U.S. audience. Americans don’t understand the region not because there aren’t enough Muslims in newsrooms or because “hijab” has been mistranslated; they don’t understand it because (a) they usually don’t need to, and (b) media are selective in what they address. I have no great illusions that things will soon change. As I noted earlier, it’s not up to media to offer us a syllabus on the Middle East. I believe in the functionality of news, and if most Americans don’t see a need to follow up on regional politics, then it might very well be useless to force the issue. But I also think that markets create themselves. Among the things that would help interest more readers is to push journalists to be better informed about what it is they’re writing about, to learn Arabic, which would forcibly expand the range of topics covered, and to get rid of that perennial sense of Western guilt that makes many of those writing about the Middle East hesitate to call a spade a spade. [2]Michael Young is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/islamism\\_and\\_the\\_media/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/islamism_and_the_media/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_young/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_young/)

## MESHNet is coming (2008-03-26 10:20)

From [1]Stephen Peter Rosen and [2]Martin Kramer

### Message Board - Welcome! Sugges

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	<a href="#">Stephen</a> Co-Con

[3] From the inception of this public website, we imagined that



it would have a companion forum for the exchange of ideas among persons with a professional interest in U.S. strategy and foreign policy. We call that companion MESHNet. MESHNet is a members-only message board, ideal for hosting open and structured discussions. We plan to develop MESHNet as a place where established and budding experts can express views among their peers, and where we can quickly congregate to enlighten and update one another during the crises that inevitably punctuate the affairs of the Middle East.

MESHNet will be launched next Tuesday, April 1. If you think you might qualify for membership, we urge you to apply. Read more about MESHNet [4]here, and apply [5]here.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)
3. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/meshnet/>
4. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/meshnet/>
5. <http://forums.mideaststrategy.net/tool/register/meshnet/register>

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### Anti-Wahhabism: a footnote (2008-03-27 15:07)

The U.S. Department of Defense has released translations of a number of Iraqi intelligence documents dating from Saddam's rule. Most of them deal with the regime's support for terrorism. One of them is a General Military Intelligence Directorate report from September 2002, entitled "The Emergence of Wahhabism and its Historical Roots." (The translation may be downloaded [1]here.) The report made the claim that the grandfather of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, founder of the school, was a merchant from Bursa in Turkey who was a [2]Dönme—that is, a crypto-Jew. According to the intelligence report, his name, Sulayman, was originally Shulman. (Al Kamen [3]writing yesterday in the Washington Post: "Of course! The Saudi Shulmans!") —MESH

From [4]Bernard Haykel



The Iraqi document echoes a well-known Turkish conspiracy theory—probably fabricated by one Ayyub Sabri Pasha—which claims that the British sought to weaken the Ottoman empire by creating the Wahhabi movement. The British sought to sow dissension among Muslims and the Wahhabis obliged by anathemizing (takfir) the Ottomans and making licit rebellion and the waging of warfare against the Sultan in Istanbul. The British accomplished this through a British spy named Hempher. His story has been published in a little pamphlet entitled [5]Confessions of a British Spy. It is a neat little tale, not unlike the Protocols.

The fact that an Iraqi officer was recapitulating it in 2002 in a "top secret document" indicates how desperate the Iraqi regime was to vilify the Saudis and Wahhabis. It perhaps also indicates that the Iraqi regime could not have been colluding with the Salafis (e.g., Al Qaeda) because the latter would not take kindly to a blanket attack on the Wahhabis, with whom they identify and for who they have considerable affinity, as a pre-modern reformist movement.

1. <http://www.fas.org/irp/eprint/iraqi/wahhabi.pdf>
2. <http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DRIT=5&DBID=1&LANGID=1&TMID=111&FID=388&PID=1666&IID=>

1669&TTL=The\_D%C3%B6mes:\_Crypto-Jews\_under\_Turkish\_Rule

3. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/25/AR2008032503055.html>

4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bernard\\_haykel/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bernard_haykel/)

5. <http://www.hakikatkitabevi.com/download/english/14-ConfessionsOf%20ABritishSpy.pdf>

## Why the 'return' to Islam? (2008-03-29 11:12)

From [1]Philip Carl Salzman



I would like to take up and elaborate somewhat Adam Garfinkle's [2]point (in a comment on an earlier post) about "a theologicalization of Islamic societies, defined as the process whereby the status of religion as a legitimate carrier of the public weal grows and the status of politics of a legitimate carrier of the public weal declines."

The reason for this, I think, is clear [writes Garfinkle]: The pressures of modernization, greatly increased over the past few decades, are accentuating the internal divisions within most Muslim societies between secularists and nativists/fundamentalists, with traditionalists and the neo-orthodox... squeezed in between, and the vocabulary of dispute becoming increasingly moralist, in this case Islamic.

The tribal population of Iranian Baluchistan that I studied in the 1970s had, prior to conquest (or "state consolidation") by Reza Shah in the 1930s, been entirely independent and had enthusiastically engaged in predatory raiding of Persian peasant populations. Since their "encapsulation" by the Persian state, they were forced to face the fact that they were militarily, politically, economically, and culturally weaker than the Persians, and that their pride as independent warriors and nomadic livestock owners could no longer be sustained.

Who were they now (after the conquest) and what could they take pride in? They turned to religion, not least because they were Sunni, and religion is a diacriticum between them and the Shia Persians. Religious intensification included increased and collective praying, going on the Hajj, and sending children to madrasses in Pakistan. The chief was no longer addressed as Sardar, his political title, but as Hajji, his earned religious title.

Perhaps this process of religious intensification in Baluchistan can serve as a miniature of what has transpired in the Middle East more generally. The Arabs, and Persians, and to a degree the Turks, have fallen in status, power, and prestige—and perhaps most important, in honor—as the West has ascended. (We must remember that honor in the Middle East rests with no less than full independence, and even better, with domination of others.) Middle Easterners were faced with trying to recover and reassert their position and standing. They tried nationalism, which failed (as shown in Fouad Ajami's brilliant account, [3]The Dream Palace of the Arabs), and they tried socialism, which, aside from transfers from the USSR, also failed.

What was left to them to try? How could they assert their equality, or, better, superiority? The answer, of course, is a turn, or return, to religion, for which it is ever possible to claim superiority. Religion

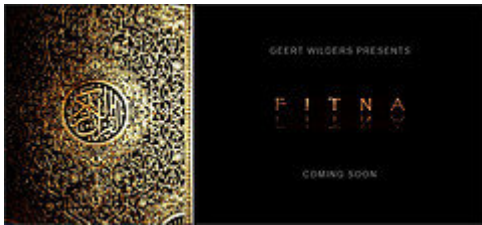
of course is a diacriticum that distinguishes the Middle East from the West, and readily available is the non-refutable claim that Islam is superior to Western religion or non-religion, and therefore that the Middle East (and the Islamic world in general) is superior to the West.

It thus appears that a critical factor in "theologicalization" or religious intensification in the Middle East is Middle Eastern identity and its wounds under Western military, political, economic, and cultural superiority. The heartrending call among Arabs to save their honor is highly indicative. The re-turn to Islam and hope for redemption is the obvious consequence.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/overcoming\\_fitna/#comment-258](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/overcoming_fitna/#comment-258)
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0375704744>

### 'Fitna' and the 'Euroweenies' (2008-03-29 12:24)

From [1]Josef Joffe



[2] The British website LiveLeak.com has removed Fitna, [3]intoning that it had to "place the safety of its staff above all else." You would have thought that this is a typical reaction for all those "Euroweenies," as the satirist Peter O'Rourke once called America's cousins from across the sea: Let's cave in to the mere threat of violence. In fact, the debate is a lot more thoughtful and diverse.

This is all the more significant because European constitutional practice does not share the American tradition of the "heckler's veto." First enunciated by Justice Douglas in *Terminiello v. City of Chicago*, 337 U.S. 1 (1949), the basic idea is that utterances, works of art or rallies must not be suppressed just because they might arouse uncontrollable anger on the part of those who take offense. (The actual term "heckler's veto" was first invoked in *Brown v. Louisiana*, 383 U.S. 131, 1969.) The most dramatic recent case was a planned demonstration by American Nazis in Skokie, Illinois in 1978, a home to many survivors of the Holocaust. An Illinois appeals court lifted the ban. That episode gave rise to the immortal scene in *Blues Brothers*, where John Belushi and Dan Akroyd plow their car into the Nazi ranks, hurling them into the lake below.

Yet in Europe, the mere expectation of communal violence against hateful speech routinely leads to bans and prohibitions. Significantly, the Dutch government has imposed no such sanctions on Geert Wilder's *Fitna*. The Hague as well as the EU have merely condemned the 16-minute film. On the other hand, no television station would air it, so Wilders had to "premiere" it on the Internet.

*Fitna* is the kind of montage that can be applied to anything in order to disgrace it. The familiar tools are selectivity, suggestive juxtaposition, incendiary commentary. In that, *Fitna* resembles your basic anti-semitic tract where quotes from the Hebrew Bible are used to depict Jews as murderous fanatics and their god as a vengeful, cruel deity—never mind what else is in the corpus and how revelation has been changed by two millennia of interpretation.

Come to think of it, as the respected NRC *Handelsblad* [4]reminded its readers, the agitprop produced

by Sergei Eisenstein or Michael Moore used the very same techniques. And what about Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*, which oscillates between manipulation and mendacity, but profits from its obeisance to contemporary standards of correctness?

The Dutch have not forgotten the murder of politician Pim Fortuyn and the filmmaker Theo Van Gogh, and so this haven of multiculturalist *laissez-faire* has become a lot less tolerant of militant self-righteousness in the name of Allah. So have the French in the aftermath of bloody riots by young Muslims in their squalid suburbs. The Germans, always willing to turn the other cheek, given their murderous racism in the Nazi years, have been shocked by foiled terrorist plots as well as "honor killings" in their midst. Perhaps, Europeans are also afflicted by a nagging sense of shame, having left little Denmark in the lurch while the country faced boycotts and burning embassies in the wake of the Muhammad cartoons.

This time, Europe is walking the fine line between appeasement and self-assertion. The Dutch are a perfect example. No, they would not ban *Fitna*. Instead, they went into full defensive mode. The government dispatched faxes to the municipalities: Beware, *Fitna* is on the Net. The police were placed on alert throughout the land. Embassies in Islamic countries were instructed to ready emergency procedures planned long ago, all the way to preparing for evacuation.

On the other hand, the Dutch bent over backward to assuage Muslim rage, knowing full well that such fury is never spontaneous, but a convenient pretext for scoring another Big One in the "clash of civilizations." Dutch diplomats were dispatched to assure Muslim regimes that *Fitna* was strictly a private affair—and by no means condoned by the powers that be. Alas, so the line went, we Westerners have a tradition of free speech that keeps governments from enforcing an official truth.

What these emissaries did not cite, one surmises, is another, now safely banished part of our history. This is those three centuries of million-fold annihilation in the name of the One True God, be he the Lord or a secular Deity, as in the guise of Stalin or Hitler. To invoke this bloody past in defense of free speech would have been totally incorrect, the kind of cultural *hauteur* that would assign to the West a higher perch on the scale of civilizational progress.

MESH Updater: Visit [this additional post and thread](#), [5]Overcoming 'Fitna', for more commentary on the prelude and aftermath of the film. The film may be viewed [6]here.

So far, so good. In their Friday sermons, Muslim clerics in Holland called for reasonability and restraint. So far, the government's "counter-insurgency" apparatus is just idling. Islamic bloggers are keeping the flames of rage low. Have these good folks been intimidated by the harsher mood in Europe? A note of caution: In the wake of the Danish Muhammad cartoons, it took a few weeks before the propaganda engines in Libya, Pakistan and Egypt kicked in.

Next stop is Germany, where a municipal theater in Potsdam, a suburb of Berlin, will premiere Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* on Sunday. Recall that this led to Khomeini's death fatwa against the author in 1989 and innumerable eruptions of Muslim rage throughout the world. Recall also the submissive response by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie: "Only the utterly insensitive can fail to see that... Salman Rushdie's book has deeply offended Muslims both here and throughout the world."

This time, twenty years later, submission and self-assertion, rage and restraint are more balanced. For

now.

Comments are limited to MESH members.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef\\_joffe/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef_joffe/)
2. <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=3369102968312745410>
3. [http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=7d9\\_1206624103](http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=7d9_1206624103)
4. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,544059,00.html>
5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/overcoming\\_fitna/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/overcoming_fitna/)
6. <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=3369102968312745410>

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Barry Rubin (2008-03-30 15:27:53)

I disagree with Josef Joffe. First, *Fitna* isn't merely the application of propaganda that could be used on any topic. The problem is that those committing the violence explicitly base themselves on the doctrines described in the film. Second, several Islamists have remarked that they have no problem with the film's presentation except for the cartoon of Muhammad and the implied threat (not carried out) to tear a copy of the Quran. Third, even the Dutch Muslim community has had to admit that there is nothing slanderous in the film, nothing that gives them any basis for action under the kinds of laws that Joffe cites. No, the film is accurate. And let's face it, the makers were careful *not* to live up to the pre-release hype about the film. There is room for an interesting debate regarding several points, but the filmmakers demonstrated their main theme: that radical Islamist terrorists base themselves on tradition and respect for Islamic texts, and this is a key reason for their legitimacy and growth. The question, then, is what to do about it. Wilders makes a hardly extremist suggestion: moderate Muslims should challenge these readings. True, if Wilders is saying they should revise the Quran itself, this is an unlikely approach and not the best strategy to follow. But it is no stretch to say that they must offer alternative interpretations. Very little of this debate has gone on in the Muslim world. To demonize the film is to contribute to avoiding that needed discussion. One can easily win popularity in the West by misstating what is in the film or the issues that are at stake. This serves nobody's interest except the revolutionary Islamists. Here is how I would state the problem from the European standpoint: The European reaction was probably justified on the basis of what they thought would be in *Fitna*, based on Wilders' own previous statements. It is not at all justified on the basis of the actual film. There is no need to ridicule or insult Europeans on this issue, but clearly if people are going to react to this film, they should look at its actual content and come to grips with the real and important issues it raises. [1]Barry Rubin is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry_rubin/)

## America in the Middle East (2008-03-31 08:02)

From [1]Bernard Lewis



One hears a great deal in the Middle East, and to some extent elsewhere, of American imperialism. This is a term which is both inaccurate and misleading; it reveals a lack of understanding both of what America is about and of what the word 'imperialism' means.

For a better understanding, I can go back to the history classes in my primary school where my education in history began. When the Romans came to Britain some two thousand years ago, and when the British went to India a few hundred years ago, an exit strategy was not uppermost in their minds. They had quite a different purpose, a different intention, and they stayed for a long time.

If one looks at the more detailed criticism that is leveled against America and American policies in the Middle East, the particular charge is not so much that America is engaging in imperialism as that America is failing to meet its imperial responsibilities. In other words, the assumption is that there has to be an imperial power, a successor to the British and French empires. That is the role in which history has cast America, and the Americans are failing to fulfill it.

In considering the possible role of America, I am inevitably reminded of a remark made by a Turkish general at a dinner party in Ankara very shortly after Turkey joined NATO in 1952, I believe. He was asked how he felt about this new alliance, and he said (and I recall it vividly), "The problem with having the Americans as your allies is you never know when they'll turn round and stab themselves in the back." I have often been reminded of that wise saying, particularly in recent years and months and days, in following the course of events in the region, and more particularly in the United States.

The future role of America in the Middle East is difficult to predict. I would say that, on the whole, America is unlikely to play a major, still less a dominant role in the region. I see a growing American reluctance to become involved in this troublesome region, and a growing anxiety to ask first and foremost how do we get out of there. It seems to me therefore that the U.S. role in the Middle East will be limited to certain interest groups, to certain specific interests and to one or two other factors.

Let me just enumerate these as a reminder. Specific interest groups obviously include the Jews. But the famous (or infamous) Israel lobby is by no means the only lobby; there are other lobbies that have been much more active though much less talked about. Another group with an interest in this area is the Christian Evangelicals, and to these we may now increasingly add a third: the growing Muslim population in the United States who will have their own interests, their own concerns about what is happening in this part of the world.

What specific interests does America have in the region? Oil immediately comes to mind. Trade is not vastly important; there are other regions of much greater commercial importance. Strategy? That was very important during the Cold War but since then, the Middle East has lost most of its strategic importance, except of course for Middle Easterners.

There is another element of American influence, and that is what those who dislike it call 'cultural imperialism': the enormous impact of American popular culture in the region, which grows day by day, affecting people in even the most unlikely settings. I am told for example that in Iran, where satellites are forbidden, the *basij*, the young revolutionary guards who go around with orders to destroy any satellites, are bribed to tolerate satellites, the price being a free seat to watch their favorite program—and the most popular program is *Baywatch*. American cultural imperialism, as its critics call it, is an important and rapidly growing—one might almost say overwhelming—factor in much of the region, and that will probably remain as the most important single American involvement.

Bernard Lewis made these remarks in a speech at Tel Aviv University on January 21.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bernard\\_lewis/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bernard_lewis/)

## Nuclear transfers: comparing Iran and Pakistan (2008-03-31 13:30)

From [1]Daniel Byman

✖ U.S. and world attention is focused understandably on the Iranian nuclear program. The list of reasons to worry about an Iranian bomb is exceptionally long and, for the most part, legitimate.

One area where I disagree, however, is on the question of whether it is likely that Iran would transfer a nuclear weapon to a terrorist group such as Hezbollah. As I argue in a [2]recent article for *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, I believe that this is unlikely. On the demand side, Iran has exercised considerable care with what it has not transferred to Hezbollah. For example, the Lebanese group has not received chemical weapons despite their being part of Iran's arsenal for over two decades. In addition, Iran remains concerned about escalation and appears to recognize that unconventional weapons transfers to terrorists in general, to say nothing of passing on a nuclear weapon, is a true red line. Finally, and perhaps even more important, Hezbollah itself has evinced little interest in a nuclear weapon. The group has achieved remarkable political and military successes with its current weaponry and tactics, and it is not clear how a nuclear weapon would help it advance its agenda.

The bigger danger is Pakistan, including (or perhaps even more so) under a civilian government. Pakistan is vulnerable to both a deliberate transfer of a nuclear weapon from a lower-level military official to jihadist organizations, including domestic ones, as well as theft and corruption. In addition, the Pakistani government's possible (I would say probable) complicity with the A.Q. Khan network suggests that Islamabad is not properly cautious on the nuclear side.

Finally, Al Qaeda and its affiliates have regularly demonstrated their strong interest in a nuclear weapon. They are willing to cajole, bribe, or steal in their quest, and they have a large and growing network within Pakistan. Al-Qaeda's aims are far more ambitious and bloody than those of Hezbollah, and a nuclear weapon would serve its visions of violence and vengeance.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel\\_byman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel_byman/)

2. [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/articles/2008/03\\_iran\\_byman/03\\_iran\\_byman.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/articles/2008/03_iran_byman/03_iran_byman.pdf)

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## 2.4 April

### Disraelia (2008-04-01 00:24)

From [1]Stephen Peter Rosen and [2]Martin Kramer



Today is April Fools' Day, and no day could be more auspicious for an exercise in counterfactual history. In that spirit, MESH is pleased to offer a new paper by MESH member [3]Walter Laqueur, entitled [4]Disraelia: A Counterfactual History, 1848-2008. Laqueur, whose many books include an [5]acclaimed history of Zionism, has put together an anthology of would-be documents, predicated on the counterfactual

premise that large-scale Jewish immigration to Ottoman Palestine began in 1848. In Laqueur's controlled speculation, Disraeli occupies the place of Herzl. Laqueur writes to us:

Even a few lines of this alternative modern history of the Middle East should make it clear that there is no rivalry with [6]The Yiddish Policemen's Union. Counterfactual history—what might have happened—is no idle enterprise. What did actually happen cannot be evaluated unless it is put into some context and this includes, of course, the question what might have happened. This we shall never know for certain. But given some knowledge of history, there is room for speculation, and given the role of accident in history, developments which may seem today far-fetched might easily have taken place.

One issue which greatly intrigued me is the fact that there is no equal justice in international relations, that different standards are applied, that big powers are not treated the same way as small countries. Why belabor the obvious? Because there is such great reluctance to call a spade by its name. There is the pretense of equal rights and standards, but in fact... I tried to provide a dispassionate outline in this essay.

So as not to spoil the pleasure, we won't say more. [7]Download here (pdf), read, and reflect.

This also inaugurates our new e-publication, Middle East Papers. These are planned as occasional studies distributed via this site, on any subject we believe might interest our readers. Middle East Papers have their own [8]page, and new numbers will always be announced on this weblog.

MESH Update: See Martin Kramer's [9]comment on Disraelia, at his Jerusalem Post blog.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_laqueur/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_laqueur/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/04/disraelia\\_laqueur.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/04/disraelia_laqueur.pdf)
5. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1567311008>
6. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0007149824>
7. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/04/disraelia\\_laqueur.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/04/disraelia_laqueur.pdf)
8. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/papers/>
9. [http://cgis.jpost.com/Blogs/kramer/entry/disraelia\\_posted\\_by\\_martin\\_kramer](http://cgis.jpost.com/Blogs/kramer/entry/disraelia_posted_by_martin_kramer)

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Amnon Rubinstein (2008-04-07 14:36:30)

Walter Laqueur's [1]brief exercise in "what if" history is fascinating, highly original and totally authentic. The counterfactual documents are so convincing that one is tempted to believe in their authenticity. Indeed, the main argument is totally valid: had Zionism appeared half a century earlier, things would have been totally different and Israel, or rather Disraelia, would have become a power to be reckoned with, immune to the bash-Israel propaganda which is aimed at it now. This is a powerful point—although I doubt that even given this premise, there would have been a Nazi ambassador to Tel Aviv. [2]Amnon Rubinstein is professor of law and former president of the Inter-Disciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya, Israel. He was also a member of the Israeli Knesset.

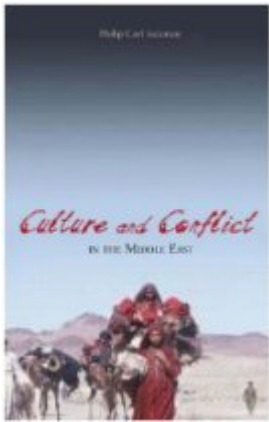
1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/pages/laqueur\\_disraelia/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/pages/laqueur_disraelia/)
2. <http://www.idc.ac.il/staff/cv/ArubinsteinCVEng.pdf>



## 'Culture and Conflict in the Middle East' (2008-04-02 12:01)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Philip Carl Salzman is professor of anthropology at McGill University and a member of MESH. His new book is *Culture and Conflict in the Middle East*.

From [1]Philip Carl Salzman



[2] Scientifically-inspired anthropology, to which I optimistically but anachronistically adhere, aims not only to describe cultures around the world, but to explain the causes and consequences of particular cultures. It is an immodest goal, perhaps, but a worthy endeavor. *Culture and Conflict in the Middle East* attempts to explain why, in the Middle East, we so reliably find relentless partisanship, unending conflict, and conscienceless repression of those not holding power.

I argue that a major influence is Arab culture, grounded in Bedouin culture—understanding “culture” as cognitive frames which serve as “models of” the way the world is, and “models for” action in the future. Two major characteristics of Arab culture are particularist group loyalty, and balanced or complementary opposition. These models serve well for decentralized social control and security in segmentary tribal settings, but are uncongenial to inclusive polities and universalistic legal regimes.

This analysis is a vision seen from afar, a long way from my grounded ethnographic field research among the nomadic tribes of Iranian Baluchistan. During the 1960s and 1970s, I lived and carried out research for 26 months mainly but not exclusively among the Yarahmadzai (Shah Nawazi) tribe in the Sarhad highlands and Maskel lowlands. In fact my main research was even more particular than that, as I resided for most of the time with one herding camp of the Dadolzai lineage, although I visited many other camps and some other tribes and settlements. My full report, *Black Tents of Baluchistan* (Smithsonian, 2000), gives a fairly reliable picture of many aspects of tribal life in the Sarhad.

The challenge was how to draw on a detailed case study to gain a more general understanding of a broad and diverse region; that is, how to base an understanding of the Middle East, and particularly the Arab Middle East, on my study of Iranian tribes in Baluchistan. As the late Clifford Geertz said about his project in *Islam Observed*, “Merely to state such a program is to demonstrate a certain lack of grasp upon reality. What results can only be too abbreviated to be balanced and too speculative to be demonstrable.... [We] court superficiality and confusion at the same time.”

But I have perhaps misled you in seeming to suggest that I must jump, on my own, from the study of Baluchistan to that of the Middle East. In reality, anthropology, no less than other academic disciplines, is not a solitary, individualistic endeavor. Rather, it is a collective enterprise: we stand on the shoulders of our

intellectual ancestors, hone our skills and understandings against our coevals, and draw on the accumulated knowledge of our fellows. So while I depend on my research in Baluchistan for an insight into the workings of tribes, my leap from the Iranian world to the Arab world lands me on a solid foundation of findings by Arabist anthropologists, and beyond them of findings by sociologists, political scientists, literary analysts and other experts, whom I draw upon and quote extensively and shamelessly in the book. Even so, any such synthesis is a stretch, and risky. Yet how else can we reach general understandings?

My argument, that Arab culture influences people's outlooks and decisions, raises the question how reliably cultural principles are manifested in behavior, in action. The answer is: generally, but not always. Culture is one influence, but there are others; and any culture consists of a variety of principles, not all of which are entirely compatible with all of the others. So the results are more statistical than mechanical; that is, moral norms generate statistical norms, but the tails on the distributions are both morally and statistically abnormal.

Postcolonial theorists, inspired by Edward Said's *Orientalism*, take a harder line, arguing that no generalization about the Middle East is valid, because such generalizations suppress the variety and diversity of reality, essentialize where no essence exists, and imposes disparaging interpretations in the service of imperialism and colonialism. But my judgment is that these postcolonial arguments are unsound and without foundation. First, all concepts and categories, without which thinking is impossible, are abstractions, encompassing the many variations of the unique individuals (whether trees, camels, or cultures) included. So abstraction and generalization are not only not the wrong things, they are the only things possible. Second, all peoples and societies are not the same; they are different, and differ significantly. Ignoring these indisputable differences is not good manners; it is ignorance or denial.

It is not news that just about anything significant said about the Middle East will be controversial, or, as we like to say now, contested. In writing this book, I have gone out on a long limb. Some readers will like it, while others will be reaching for their saws. For example, Marwan Kabalan [3] argues that reference to tribalism is simply finding another way to blame Arabs for Western misdeeds. As for other readers, I hope that tough-minded assessments of the evidence will prevail over partisan fervor.

[4]Excerpt | [5]Publisher | [6]Amazon

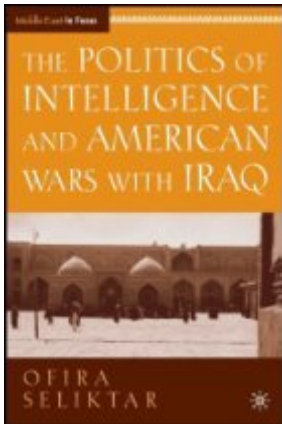
1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/413LN8t0mML.jpg>
3. <http://www.alarabiya.net/views/2007/12/28/43474.html>
4. <http://www.meforum.org/article/1813>
5. [http://www.prometheusbooks.com/catalog/book\\_1951.html](http://www.prometheusbooks.com/catalog/book_1951.html)
6. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1591025877>

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### 'The Politics of Intelligence and American Wars with Iraq' (2008-04-04 16:54)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Ofira Seliktar is a professor of political science at Gratz College and adjunct professor at Temple University, specializing in predictive failures in intelligence. Her new book is *The Politics of Intelligence and American Wars with Iraq*.

From Ofira Seliktar



[1] The genesis of my book *The Politics of Intelligence and American Wars with Iraq* is rooted in my experience teaching a class on the Middle East at Texas A &M University during the revolution in Iran in 1979. Most of my students were ROTC cadets who hoped to serve in intelligence, yet had difficulty understanding how a country could opt for what they defined as a regressive revolution. After having researched a [2]book on the Carter administration’s failure to predict the fundamentalist revolution in Iran, I realized that such problems transcended my classroom, as they represent a more general difficulty in comprehending foreign societies and, especially, the Middle East.

Some of these problems relate to the pervasive influence of realist theory in international relations; countries are considered to be rational unitary actors which are said to share our view of what a nation’s interest is. Naturally, realist theory does not accommodate non-state actors like Al Qaeda or rogue regimes (like Syria and Iran) which have collaborated with terrorist organizations to destabilize the region and, in the process, incurred the high cost of international isolation and sanctions.

Another source of misperception stems from the writings of many Middle East experts who have downplayed the impact of the virulent strand of Islam which gave birth to terrorism on the scale practiced by Osama bin Laden. Indeed, my book documents in great detail how—until 9/11—most observers dismissed the possibility of a mega-terrorist attack and argued that bin Laden was a cold war-style bogeyman.

More to the point, *The Politics of Intelligence* draws attention to the perils of intelligence gathering and analysis in Iraq since 1980, a country notorious for its secretive ways, a byzantine political system and a hard-to-decipher dictator with a penchant for bizarre behavior. The Carter drive to “clean up” the intelligence community, coupled with the equally energetic Clinton era “scrub,” hobbled the few remaining intelligence assets of the CIA with legal limitations that rendered the operational branch highly risk-averse. All this occurred while the specter of WMD in the Middle East made the issue of Islamist terrorists with murky ties to state sponsors more urgent.

When Clinton bombed the Al Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum in 1998, he acknowledged this linkage, for the CIA had determined that Iraqi engineers had developed chemical weapons for Al Qaeda at that site. Yet, criticism of the “wag the dog” presidency made the administration reticent either to pursue bin Laden or to target Iraq. Obtaining evidence about Hussein’s nonconventional weapons program was equally difficult given the virtual lack of American intelligence on the ground. After Iraq expelled UNSCOM in 1998, the United States was forced to rely on assorted sources, including allied intelligence services, Arab leaders, defectors and former inspectors. The resulting CIA Iraq estimate contended that Hussein had retained parts of his WMD program and was intent on enlarging its scope.

The 9/11 attack and the anthrax scare added urgency to the issue of Islamist terrorism and rogue states. The CIA, which had failed to predict the attack, was further disgraced when evidence of an Al Qaeda chemical weapons program was uncovered in Afghanistan and northern Iraq where Saddam Hussein sponsored

a terrorist group allied with Al Qaeda. The realization grew that—in the murky world of WMD, Islamist terrorists and less than rational rogues like Iraq—there may not be enough “smoking gun”-grade evidence, a standard for action. Thus, the Bush administration embraced preemption and invaded Iraq.

The failure to find WMD and the high cost of the war have generated tremendous criticism, including the allegation that a group of Jewish neoconservatives in the administration, acting on behalf of the state of Israel, manipulated the intelligence in order to trick the United States into an unnecessary war. The backlash has also rehabilitated the realist idea that the Middle East is populated by rational state actors that play by universal rules.

I hope that *The Politics of Intelligence and American Wars with Iraq* will contribute to the debate about the difficulties of understanding the highly complex nature of the Middle East regimes. The Iraqi estimate revealed numerous problems: verification of nuclear proliferation, questionable rationality of state actors and their terrorist proxies, difficulty of penetrating such networks, murky and inconclusive evidence. These will continue to plague the United States in the years to come.

[3]Order from Publisher | [4]Amazon

1. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/519Hf70gjaL.jpg>
2. <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=28605650>
3. <http://www.palgrave-usa.com/catalog/product.aspx?isbn=0230604536>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0230604536>

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## No peace without victory (2008-04-07 00:01)

From [1]Philip Carl Salzman



“America’s current policies represent a fundamental departure from [America’s] centuries-old tradition,” concludes Michael B. Oren in a [2]recent op-ed. In previous interventions in the Middle East, “American military action was seen as an ancillary to—rather than as a substitute for—diplomacy. And in no case did U.S. troops remain on Middle Eastern soil longer than their missions required.”

Oren cites Jefferson’s military invasion of the Barbary states in 1805, Theodore Roosevelt’s military intervention in Morocco in 1904, and Eisenhower’s military expedition to Lebanon in 1958 as precedents. “Many of America’s interests and objectives in the Middle East have remained consistent since Jefferson’s day, but the means to attaining them have changed.” As these means do not seem to have succeeded and have brought American into disrepute, Oren recommends that “Americans must return to the traditions established by their forebears,” specifically:

- “Use military might to defend basic interests but know when to cease fighting and negotiate.”
- “Support Israel but spare no effort to forge peace agreements between it and the Arab world.”

- "Most importantly, heed the advice proffered by George McClellan, the former Union general and Middle East traveler, in 1874: Americans must learn to 'weigh (the Middle East) by (its) own rules.'"

But reflecting on some of the precedents Oren cites, it appears that, in his advice, he has forgotten another element in historically successful interventions: defeating the enemy. This worked for Jefferson and in other major U.S. military engagements, too well known to recite here. These precedents offer an "operational" criterion to apply to Oren's advice that we "know when to cease fighting and negotiate." It is this: cease fighting when you have defeated the enemy.

Oren's similar advice to Israel is to jump to negotiation and press a "peace" agreement home. But if, following Oren's precedents, defeat of enemies is the path to successful negotiation and agreement, how can a peace agreement be made prior to imposing a defeat on Israel's enemies?

Finally, and "most importantly," weigh the Middle East by its own rules—always good advice, and, if I may say so, an approach usually advocated by anthropologists, of which I'm one. What, then, are "Middle Eastern rules"? Cultural analysis (e.g. Charles Lindholm's [3]The Islamic Middle East) suggests that Middle Eastern rules come down to these:

- "People choose the strong horse over the weak horse" (as [4]suggested by a prominent Middle Eastern informant).
- The goal is always to dominate your enemy and dominate the peace.
- Respect comes from strength and fortitude.

If these are the Middle Eastern rules, what will Middle Easterners think of governments and peoples who are not willing to fight to conquer, who want peace so much that they will sue for it and beg for it, and who will not back up their diplomacy with strength and fortitude?

Osama bin Laden, who told us about horses, has asserted that the West is too decadent to defend itself. Is our and our allies' obsession with "disproportionate" strikes against enemies and our apparent reluctance to contemplate defeating them evidence that bin Laden is correct?

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)
2. <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/03/17/opinion/edoren.php>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1405101466/>
4. <http://www.npr.org/news/specials/response/investigation/011213.binladen.transcript.html>

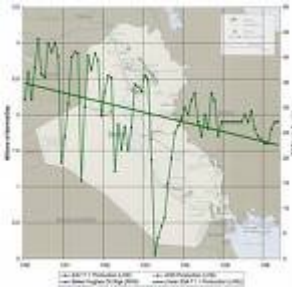
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### Iraq: options by elimination (2008-04-08 00:10)

From [1]Stephen Peter Rosen

...when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."

—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (Sherlock Holmes)



What are the alternatives available to the United States in Iraq? Three appear to be worth considering.

First, the United States might consider withdrawing its forces to the areas that produce the bulk of Iraqi oil in the south. This would enable the United States to ensure that oil is pumped and exported from the country, and to prevent Iraqi oil revenues from going to a hostile government. This would mean the defense of an enclave, supported by physical and electronic barriers, and would reduce the manpower needed to defend the U.S. position in Iraq. Periodic raids would be conducted to spoil impending attacks on those enclaves. While this would deny Iran or a hostile Iraqi government the ability to use oil revenue for hostile purposes, this would be an openly imperial seizure of territory, which would confirm every worst suspicion of the United States in the Islamic world, and perhaps lead other countries to make similar grabs of oil producing areas.

Second, the United States could withdraw U.S. ground forces from Iraq, but maintain a naval and air force presence in the Gulf and the Gulf states. We would accept whatever state emerged as dominant in Iraq, and hope that economic motives would lead it to produce and sell Iraqi oil in the world market. Though the oil revenue might flow into the hands of people we do not like, the remaining American military presence in the region would deter Iraqi or Iranian military aggression or coercion of the Gulf states. Money might flow from Iraq to terrorist organizations, and Iraq might become an area within which terrorists could be trained, but this is happening now. American air power and special forces could strike at terrorist training camps to reduce their level of operations, and to retaliate against egregious terrorist attacks.

Until 2007, this appeared to be a serious option. It now appears less attractive. The acceleration of the Iranian nuclear enrichment program and the decrease in the credibility of any American or Israeli action against Iranian nuclear weapons productions facilities mean that an American withdrawal would take place against the backdrop of a nuclear Iran. The credibility of American guarantees to the Gulf states in that context would be low. Moreover, the demographics of Iraq are such that we can expect disproportionately large numbers of young Iraqi males of military age for the next fifteen years. They are likely to be unemployed, and easy recruits for militias, street mobs, and the like.

In short, absent an effective Iraqi state that has a monopoly of force, and that can put young men to work or put them in a national army, the demographic foundation of Iraqi society seems unlikely to support any kind of social peace. Endemic war internal to Iraq would be the consequence of this option. Endemic internal war in Iraq, a nuclear Iran, and the withdrawal of American forces would seem to create the conditions for an expansion of Iranian control over Iraqi and Persian Gulf oil production and sales.

The remaining option is the continuation of current levels of American ground forces in Iraq, with an increased emphasis on building an Iraqi police force and national army from the ground up, with continued American operations to clear and secure populated areas, and continued American air and artillery support for Iraqi ground force operations against insurgents. This would have to be supported by an expansion of the Army and Marine Corps. While costly, it is not clear where else in the world the United States would need to deploy its ground combat forces. Iranian influence would be balanced by American ground, naval, and air forces. U.S. casualties would probably spike as Iran and the Shi'ite militias under their influence tried to force the United States out, but could decline if the Iraqi army improved. The end state would be

an Iraqi state built around an army, and that could keep social peace, perhaps on the model of Turkey in the 20th century.

The first two options are not impossible, but if the outcomes associated with them are unacceptable, we are left with the last remaining option—however improbable.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)

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## Iraq: assessment and recommendations (2008-04-08 22:36)

From [1]Adam Garfinkle



I was asked recently for my assessment of U.S. policy in Iraq and my recommendations. My view is that we should withdraw U.S. military forces substantially from Iraq, but do so in a way that, given vital U.S. strategic interests in the region, avoids the optic of defeat to the extent possible. The reason is that turning Iraq into a winning proposition for the United States is not within our grasp, so we must carefully reduce our reputational equity in it in order to enhance the long-run U.S. position in the region.

This conclusion rests on five intertwined judgments:

- The successes of the surge are militarily unsustainable at acceptable costs for as long as would be necessary to enable peaceful political consolidation inside Iraq.
- That is because it will take years, if it is possible at all, for the Iraqi state to cohere in a self-sustaining manner, and our babysitting Iraq's sectarian and ethnic cleavages, all else equal, will only prolong the process. I read the combination of the Sunni "Awakening" and the Battle of Basra as meaning multifactional civil war in Iraq is far more likely than a negotiated coalescence of a functional federal state. Despite some political progress in recent months, the most critical cleavages among Iraqi communities remain unresolved, and no credible process even exists for intercommunal negotiation.
- Given that reality, U.S. military efforts can never accumulate enough tactical successes to produce a strategic "win," which can only be defined and reckoned in political terms. Yet we're much too powerful to "lose" either. That's a formula for being tied down in Iraq indefinitely for no achievable purpose other than not to appear to be defeated, or to prevent the situation from becoming worse.
- But that circumstance is tantamount to defeat when seen from a broader perspective, because the longer we must stay and fight, the more we risk aiding terrorist recruitment throughout the Muslim world (and perhaps beyond), and the more Iranian regional influence will grow thanks to the manifest demonstration of our inability to use military power to achieve stated political objectives. The longer

we stay, too, the more our relations with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iran and other countries are shackled to Iraq and our policy options constrained by it. And the longer we stay the less "quality time" senior decision-makers can devote to other strategically significant stakes—the rise of Asia and the rise of China within Asia, for example, not to speak of unprecedented challenges to the stability of the international economic order that appear to be upon us.

- Still, substantial withdrawal is not risk-free. It could lead to greater violence, large new refugee flows and some unknown degree of regional sectarian instability and violence as a result. More important, the demonstration effect of withdrawal without victory represents a serious if indeterminate vulnerability for the United States, for reputational effects are critical to the profile of American power and the society it protects. Fortunately, however, we can influence how withdrawal looks to relevant actors, and we can cushion some of its potential ill effects to a considerable degree.

So, what to do? Here are a dozen things, the first four being mainly OSD/DOD concerns, the next four bearing on internal Iraqi matters, the last four concerning regional issues.

It should go without saying—but, given the record of the past five years, I'll say it anyway—that there must be unity of policy command to integrate all elements of U.S. national policy in Iraq. In any conflict in which politics is trump, a strategic concept weighted overwhelmingly toward military modalities at the de facto expense of all others will invariably fail. That is true whether we stay or leave, so it bears note that if the first four recommendations were to be implemented without the other eight, it could so maximize the downside of a withdrawal that it might become more dangerous to leave than to stay. In other words, if we do the first four, we have to do the other eight (or something like them). If we don't do the first four, we should still do the other eight, because that's the only way an even more protracted U.S. effort might succeed eventually—though in my view it's still a long shot—and render our sacrifices of blood and treasure something other than completely vain. (If we had all the time, money and soldiers in the world, I might advise doing 5-12 now, and waiting on 1-4 for a year or two. But we don't have all the time, money and soldiers in the world.)

1. Devise and implement a withdrawal schedule that will leave fewer than 50,000 U.S. troops in Iraq within 18 months, those troops devoted to two missions: destroying Al Qaeda and training the Iraqi military and police in hopes that there will one day be a genuine national political authority they can serve. We should aim to get below 25,000 within 24 months if possible (composed of Special Forces + trainers + force protection for trainers), and base many in Kurdish areas. These numbers and timelines are artificial to some degree, but they symbolize the essence of a necessary strategic adjustment to both the U.S. public and to regional actors. The argument that troop levels should be determined only by "military need" sounds good only until one realizes that the political objectives for which U.S. troops are fighting and dying cannot reasonably be achieved within an acceptable time frame and at acceptable cost, thanks to the profound entropy inherent in contemporary Iraqi politics. (Admittedly, that logic may also apply to a U.S. training mission: It's a mistake to assume we're building up stability through such a mission when we lack assurance that more capable forces will be loyal to an Iraqi national authority.)

2. Beef up U.S. regional assets in Qatar, Bahrain and elsewhere, both as a hedge against a rapid and uncontrolled collapse in Iraq, and to signal that a withdrawal from Iraq is not a withdrawal from the region. Tough positions on other issues involving Arab governments (e.g., Lebanon, Sudan/Darfur), not to exclude effective use of appropriate force, would also help magnify and clarify that signal.

3. Maintain a dominant U.S. arms-supply relationship with Iraq in order to assure access and liaison to important Iraqi elites, and to reduce troublemaking from other potential suppliers who naturally do not have U.S. interests at heart.



4. But do not negotiate a Status of Forces Agreement that leaves a large, permanent U.S. military presence in Iraq. One understands the desire to have a fixed pressure point against Iran for future use, but the negative political fallout of establishing such a pressure point in Iraq (not least undermining the nationalist credentials of any Iraqi government that would sign such a SOFA) outweighs the benefits.

5. Americans should not propose a hard or soft partition of Iraq. That's Iraqis' business since it's their country. But we, with help from others not to exclude even the UN, should help Iraqis settle their political differences—something they are very unlikely to do on their own, either before or after a civil war. And we should help them immediately to conduct a census so that a political system based on regional representation rather than sectarian-defined national lists becomes possible—an appropriate job, perhaps, for the UN in cooperation with the Arab League and Coalition forces. We must do this before Iraq's scheduled October provincial elections.

6. Meanwhile, fund generously all elements of Iraqi civil society that conduce to creating an Iraqi national identity: trade unions, professional societies, universities, schools, libraries, the arts, museums, sports teams and the rest. We cannot ordain the political outcome in Iraq, but we can use the full panoply of non-military means at our disposal to push in the right direction. There will be money for this if we're not spending \$3 billion each week on a military effort.

7. Re-imagine the effort to reconstruct and develop the Iraqi economy. The best model for this task—which is the key to preventing an Iraqi failed state ripe for future terrorist exploitation—is a corporate model, not a charity model. With help from others, the Iraqi government should create a Corporation for Iraqi Reconstruction and Development (CIRD), a government-overseen public stock company designed to attract profitable investment against the collateral of Iraqi oil-in-the-ground. It could work like this: A foreign government would buy CIRD shares with the understanding that companies from that country would get first-right-of-refusal on import tenders in specified areas of industry and services. Contracts could include provisions for having Iraqi business partners and training/hiring Iraqi workers. The investing government could redeem (or re-invest or sell to third parties) its CIRD shares from the Iraqi treasury after ten years at a certain rate of interest; higher rates for bond assets held longer. In this way, for example, Italian investments would be disbursed mainly to Italian companies working in Iraq; Iraq would have the loan of significant sums of development money; Iraqis of all communities would have added incentives to assure security for foreign companies to work; an international board of directors would assure required transparency and encourage "best practice" development techniques.

8. Bring international assets to bear to sort out property rights disputes and restitutions in Iraq that have arisen as a result of sectarian consolidation and refugee flows, or the potential for acute civil strife will be prolonged into the next generation and possibly beyond.

9. Get Iraqi refugees in Jordan quickly resettled back in Iraq: the IOM and the UNHCR should take the lead. The collapse of Hashemite Jordan would be a catastrophe for U.S. regional interests, and its refugee burden is considerable.

10. The next administration can and should change the way it speaks about Iraq: No more God-and-democracy/Freedom Agenda-talk. As suggested above, it should engage allies and international organizations to spread the optic of responsibility; it should defer rhetorically to the decisions of the Iraqi government. It should emphasize both that the Coalition effort has devastated Al Qaeda forces there, and that it has given the Iraqi people a fair chance to start anew—but that we can't want a new-and-improved, kinder-and-gentler Iraq more than Iraqis themselves. Speechwriters are clever devils; they'll know what to say.

11. If a new administration sees a way to advance Arab-Israeli diplomacy, fine; but no rhetorical link to Iraq or to the war on terror should be made—because there really isn't any causal connection unless we foolishly insist on one. We don't help ourselves to get things done by entwining already complex issues together in ways that make them more complex still; obviously, we make it harder.

12. In concert with internal Iraqi political negotiations, coordinated private U.S. diplomacy concerning Iraq should be undertaken with Turkey, Saudi Arabia + GCC, Jordan and Egypt. We would be wise to carefully brief our EU allies, Japan, China, Russia and India on what's going on in these negotiations, as well. Only after reaching an understanding with those countries, which could include prominent participation in the CIRI, should we sit with Iran and Syria. Doing so prematurely, from what might reasonably be seen as a position of at least temporary weakness, is ill-advised. An international meeting might be a suitable means for completing and/or ratifying a regional security arrangement worked out phase by phase in private; to start with such a conference, however, would be useless at best and far more likely counterproductive. Those who think that diplomacy is a substitute for the literal and implied uses of power rather than a complement to them are deeply deluded. So, however, are those who think power can achieve political ends without diplomacy, short of compelling unconditional surrender.

My analysis has benefited from the fact that I solicited and edited a [2]symposium on Iraq featured in the March/April issue of *The American Interest*. I have adapted freely if selectively from the wisdom of my authors: Joe Joffe, Paul Schroeder, Walter Russell Mead, Ellen Laipson, Richard Perle, Philip Zelikow, James Kurth, Dennis Ross, Will Marshall, Cindy Williams, Edward Gnehm, Robert D. Kaplan and Francis Fukuyama.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)

2. <http://www.the-american-interest.com/ai2/section.cfm?SIId=90&MIId=18>

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### Mubarak hangs on (2008-04-09 14:27)

From [1]Steven A. Cook



For those too caught up in the drama of on-again, off-again Israeli-Palestinian talks, the Iraq and/or Iran debates, and Lebanon's political paralysis to pay close attention, Egypt seems like the one part of the Middle East that is not teetering on the brink. The team that Husni (and Gamal) Mubarak put in place to transform the Egyptian economy has produced impressive results. Many of Egypt's macroeconomic indicators are pointing in the right direction, *BusinessWeek* included Egypt as one of its top

emerging markets in 2007 (total FDI was \$11 billion), and “Egypt Day” on the New York Stock Exchange was, by all reports, a big hit. Indeed, senior government officials have been positively buoyant about their new \$100 billion economy, arguing that Egypt was at the “takeoff stage.”

Politically, the leadership is no longer on the defensive, having weathered the Bush administration’s efforts to promote democracy, deflected the demands of Kifaya!, emerged from the judges’ protests of May 2006 relatively unscathed, and worked assiduously to undermine the Muslim Brotherhood through thousands of arrests. The record is clearly bad news for Egyptians who want to live in a democracy, but if the democracy agenda is out and Washington is back to supporting stability, then breathe a sigh of relief because President Mubarak seems to have regained his footing. The Israel-Egypt peace treaty is safe, U.S. warships will continue to be able to transit through the Suez Canal at short notice, and thousands of gallons of Egyptian jet fuel will keep the logistical tails of the war in Afghanistan and Iraq working.

Yet, while everyone was off debating what Anbar’s *sahwa* really means or the number of centrifuges the Iranians can run simultaneously or Mahmoud Abbas’s staying power or whether the violence at Nahr al-Bared would kick off a new civil war in Lebanon, they may have missed deeply troubling developments in Egypt. For example, while Sharm El-Sheikh may be the “Egyptian Riviera” (as the ads on CNN International claim), the residents of Sinai are practically in open revolt over everything from limited economic opportunities and virtually no government services to the heavy hand of the security forces. In addition, bombings in Sharm and other resort areas like Dahab and Taba suggest that a return of the low-level extremist insurgency that targeted Egypt’s tourist industry in the mid-1990s is entirely possible.

The leadership has effectively contained the political agitation of the last four years, but it has not been able to shut down or roll back the discourse concerning reform. This is a good thing. After years of stagnation, politics is clearly back in Egypt. As a result, government has had to contend with protests from the usual suspects including journalists, lawyers, intellectuals and human rights campaigners who all travel in elite circles. It’s highly unlikely that these advocates can do much to alter the orientation of Egypt’s authoritarian regime. Yet a new element has been added into the mix of activism. In recent months, petty bureaucrats from various government ministries have staged sit-ins and other job actions. This is a more powerful group than some might suspect. After all, they do the government’s bidding and have historically been a bastion of support for the National Democratic Party, such as it is. The very fact that Mubarak can’t buy off the government’s legion of bureaucrats suggests that something is afoot in Cairo.

Even more troubling for the leadership are the wildcat strikes of the state-owned industrial sector in the past 18-24 months. Indeed, Mahalla al-Kubra—the center of Egypt’s textile industry—has become a rallying cry for a wide spectrum of political activists who hope that these labor stoppages are the precursor to a wider movement demanding political change. The workers, it seems, have less lofty dreams, limiting their demands to increased wages, better working conditions, and more representation in local and national unions. It remains to be seen whether these parochial pocketbook demands will transform into broader political goals questioning the source and legitimacy of power in Egypt. If the workers do press a wider agenda, Mubarak would likely have significant trouble on his hands.

Taken separately, the defenders of the Egyptian regime clearly have the wherewithal to deal with these issues, but they are coming together as the price of bread is skyrocketing. A repeat of the 1977 bread riots seems like a distinct possibility. It is at moments like these when the gap between objective reality and the dominant narrative becomes so wide that political entrepreneurs emerge and play on the anger, hopelessness, and fears of a beaten-down population. An Egyptian analogue to Lech Walesa may yet emerge from Egypt’s Gdansk of Mahalla al-Kubra and bring down the political order.

Let’s not get carried away, though. This is Egypt after all. Although the cross-cutting pressures and

problems buffeting the Egyptian regime seem more acute than ever, it is entirely possible that we've seen some variation of this movie before. The Egyptians have a limitless ability to muddle through. Let's not forget all the calamities that analysts thought would bring down the political system founded by the Free Officers in the 1950s: massive defeat in 1967, wide-scale riots (1977 and 1986), assassination, economic stagnation, and a low-level insurgency. Indeed, given this track record it is not at all clear that the Egyptian state is on the verge of collapse.

To confront the present troubles, Mubarak has ordered bakeries under the control of the Armed Forces, Interior Ministry, and the Ministry of Investment to bake more bread. (Forget for the moment why these entities control bakeries in the first place.) If the additional baking capacity can meet demand, the immediate crisis will likely be averted. To deal with the broader problem of growing opposition to the regime, Mubarak will do what he has almost always done: resort to coercion. Sunday's threatened "general strike" was met with large numbers of paramilitary forces occupying Mahalla al-Kubra and state-run television carrying threats from the Interior Ministry for those missing work. Threats of violence and actual violence, although clearly the least efficient means of political control, do tend to work, and the leadership has few other options. Patronage only goes so far and normative appeals to support the present political order withered long ago.

Most important, however, is the fact that not a single element of the regime's central constituencies has peeled away. For big business, the political elite, regime-affiliated intellectuals, and officers of both the police and the army, the costs of defecting from the regime and the benefits of sticking with the present political order are too great. As long as Mubarak remains the master of this politically and economically influential group, it's likely that he'll hang on.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven\\_a\\_cook/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven_a_cook/)

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Michele Dunne (2008-04-11 11:14:02)

The recent bread crisis and labor riots are just the latest installment in the increasingly fractured narrative of Egypt. On one hand, there is the narrative presented by the Mubaraks and the National Democratic Party of an Egypt making rapid progress toward modernization, global economic competitiveness, and increased political participation. On the other, there is the narrative of collapsing state services, rampant corruption, and frighteningly bad public safety procedures—as seen in recent crises from bread shortages to sinking ferries to fires in trains and theaters that have killed hundreds—told by opposition movements and independent commentators. Husni Mubarak seems incapable of coping with either of these two Egypts. He stubbornly resists assertive reform measures and is likely to do so even more now out of fears about social unrest as well as the global financial crisis. (Recall how the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s derailed Egyptian economic reform for a good five years.) At the same time, his response to being confronted with the second Egypt (corruption and collapse) is always the same: deny the seriousness of the problem, take a few cosmetic measures (and maybe fire a few people), and then sweep it under the rug and move on as quickly as public sentiment permits. And so this is what we will see for the remaining Mubarak era, which will last as long as his health does (anywhere from one day to several years). The important question now is whether a new Egyptian leader can possibly look at these two Egypts realistically and put the country on a serious course toward reform and development. It is an enormously tall order in a nation of 80 million. But frankness about the nature of the problems and willingness to broaden political participation in order to solve them would help to generate good will and a more cooperative spirit inside Egypt as well as in the international community. This is the conversation U.S. officials need to be having now with Egyptians. We cannot (and should not try to) affect the succession process directly, but it is well past time to talk with current and potential future leaders about where the country is going and how Egypt and the United States can work together. This is the only answer I see to the painful situation that Steve and Tamara have [1]identified, in which the U.S. and Egypt still need to cooperate but have come to view each other as burdensome. [2]*Michele Dunne is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/mubarak\\_hangs\\_on/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/mubarak_hangs_on/)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele\\_dunne/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele_dunne/)

Vivien Pertusot (2008-04-11 17:59:24)

The bread crisis is unlikely to lead to upheaval in the country. On Sunday, I wandered through the streets of Cairo and found almost all the shops open. No massive demonstration took place; the police made it pretty impossible, especially in downtown. As mentioned above, protests arise from specific groups; demonstrations at the Lawyers' and Journalists' Syndicates rumble at a frantic pace. There have been countless articles titled "the war of bread" and "the crisis of bread" in the past few weeks. The impact on the average Egyptian remains marginal. As for the municipal elections, I talked to several Egyptians and was puzzled by the lack of interest. Some did not even know that elections were occurring. Reform is not around the corner, and unless something particularly staggering and extraordinary happens—e.g., Mubarak dies and his son Gamal is unable to take over the presidency, or tensions with the United States heighten to the point that Congress sets up conditions for the aid package that would force reforms—nothing is going to change in Egypt. Growing anger from the population favors the Brothers, but I doubt this is likely to drive reform or change. Gaining popularity and support through social involvement is one thing, and the Muslim Brotherhood has done a tremendous job. But winning elections and shaping a new landscape in Egypt would require groundbreaking changes that the leadership will never accept under any circumstances—unless a revolution breaks out. Besides, the MB is experiencing a potential life-changing crisis. Nathan Brown and Amr Hamzawy demonstrated in a recent [1]Carnegie report that the Muslim Brotherhood is at a turning point following the draft of a political platform last year. It has split the organization into two groups, by clarifying points that had previously remained vague, especially on the role of Shariah. The draft weakened the unity of the organization, and it will be interesting to see how it copes with internal dissension. No need to mention that the opposition parties are nowhere near being able to force reforms either. They have neither the funds nor the manpower nor the public support to do so. They can make the headlines now and then (as *Kifaya!* did recently) but that's about it. *Vivien Pertusot writes from Cairo for LeCourant.info. He posted this comment on MESHNet.*

1. <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=19835&prog=zgp&proj=zme>

Tamara Cofman Wittes (2008-04-10 13:20:25)

I really appreciate Steven Cook's and David Schenker's [1]analyses of the trend lines in Cairo, but I think they are both asking the wrong question. Whether or not Mubarak can "muddle through" this crisis is not a real question: the state's coercive capacity is significant and the security forces haven't even warmed up yet. The question Americans should be asking is what it costs us—and Mubarak—when his regime is compelled to fall back on coercion and the reinsertion of the military apparatus into the daily concerns (those bakeries!) of Egyptian citizens. Mubarak is falling back on coercion at a moment when U.S.-Egyptian strategic cooperation—in the peace process, in combating terrorism, in confronting Iran—is more important and more prominent than ever. And this plays right into the hands of the Brotherhood—and their more-extreme comrades-in-resistance. The narrative of the Brotherhood—that Egypt's government doesn't care about the people, but prostitutes itself to Israel and the United States—has more and more resonance to Egyptians, especially given that the regime has shut down every other political alternative. That narrative puts America squarely at the center of the problem—in Egypt and in the region as a whole. Steven says that, with Mubarak holding on to the reins, America need not worry: "The Israel-Egypt peace treaty is safe, U.S. warships will continue to be able to transit through the Suez Canal at short notice, and thousands of gallons of Egyptian jet fuel will keep the logistical tails of the war in Afghanistan and Iraq working." In fact, we should worry—because the longer Mubarak holds on through the use of force, the harder it will be for him (and for us) to sustain that kind of strategic cooperation. If things get bad enough in Egypt, we may lose even if Mubarak wins. [2]*Tamara Cofman Wittes is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/mubarak\\_hangs\\_on/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/mubarak_hangs_on/)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara\\_cofman\\_wittes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara_cofman_wittes/)

Steven A. Cook (2008-04-10 21:55:03)

Thanks to David Schenker and Tamara Cofman Wittes for taking the time to respond to my post. Since David and I essentially agree, I'll focus my attention on Tamara's [1]post. First, perhaps it's the medium or maybe I did not make myself clear, but Tamara misunderstood the profound cynicism associated with the statement, "if the democracy agenda is out and Washington is back to supporting stability, then breathe a sigh of relief because President Mubarak seems to have regained his footing. The Israel-Egypt peace treaty is safe, U.S. warships will continue to be able to transit through the Suez Canal at short notice, and thousands of gallons of Egyptian jet fuel will keep the logistical tails of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq working." I think Tamara and I are actually on the same page here. Second,

I am slightly confused when Tamara suggests that Mubarak is "falling back" on coercion. Oppression and cruelty have always been the Egyptian leadership's MO. Egyptian efforts to establish political control through normative appeals, hegemonic ideas, and patronage have long been quite limited. Remember the Liberation Rally? National Union? Arab Socialist Union? And now the National Democratic Party? To be fair, the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956 gave the regime a fair amount of ideological cover. Yet, Nasserism was a house of cards that came tumbling down in June 1967. The defeat ultimately revealed that, by its very nature, the political order the Free Officers founded in the 1950s was based on coercion. The laws, regulations, decrees—the institutions of the state—were built on the logic of compulsion, force, and intimidation. Finally, I don't understand why I am asking the "wrong question" when I inquired whether the regime is teetering on the edge, but investigating the costs of supporting Mubarak is the "right question." It seems to me that they are just different. I am interested in understanding the nature of the Egyptian regime—what makes it tick? Is it strong or is it weak? What are the conditions under which it might unravel? These are first-order issues that analysts and policymakers need to understand before they can assess costs and benefits and, in turn, formulate a policy. We didn't have enough of this in the last seven years, which is a precisely why we haven't had too much success in the Middle East. [2]Steven A. Cook is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/mubarak\\_hangs\\_on/#comment-388](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/mubarak_hangs_on/#comment-388)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven\\_a\\_cook/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven_a_cook/)

David Schenker (2008-04-09 14:33:28)

Having just returned from the better part of a week in Cairo, I share Steven Cook's [1]pessimistic appraisal of developments in Egypt. Scratch that. I think the situation is a bit worse than he portrays. Not only is there a severe food crisis, an exponential increase in construction material costs, a restive labor force, and ongoing repression of regime opposition, the state is about to embark on its first political transition in generations. These developments are occurring at precisely the same time as Egypt's Islamists are making great social and political strides. It's not just that the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) won an unprecedented 88 of 444 elected parliamentary seats in 2005 and likely would have done well in the April municipal elections if the Government hadn't intervened. The striking number of *muhajibat*—and women wearing *niqab*—in Cairo suggests that the Brotherhood is winning the battle of ideas on the ground. At least that's how MB Deputy Supreme Guide Mohammed Habib sees it. As Habib told me a few weeks ago, the increased incidence of *hijab* in Egypt is evidence that "the Dawa worked." Making matters worse is the extreme anti-American bent of the Egyptian government-controlled press, the regrettable incident in the Suez Canal last month in which an innocent Egyptian souvenir trader was killed by a U.S. contractor, the situation in Gaza, and the predominantly negative views of the Egyptian Government held by the locals. These elements exacerbate an already potentially explosive situation. As Steven notes, though, Egyptians have a "limitless ability to muddle through." Things have looked pretty bad before, and the regime has persevered. Indeed, the bread crisis isn't the first time Cairo has called in the military as the solution of last resort. In the 1960s, Gamal Abdel Nasser ordered the army to take control of the under-performing transportation sector, and armed forces served for a brief while as the country's bus drivers. But trends in Egypt—and in the region—are not what they were, and with political transition on the horizon, there is no solution in sight for Egypt's perennial maladies. Yes, Egypt has been a remarkable economic success story in recent years, generating 7 percent GDP growth over the past six years or so. But there has been no trickle-down, resulting in a heightened sense of relative deprivation among Egypt's estimated 24 million impoverished. Likewise, despite protestations to the contrary, the NDP, Egypt's ruling party, does not appear to be serious about internal reform, much less any form of power sharing. And with prominent party affiliates like Ahmed Ezz, who controls the monopoly on steel in Egypt, the NDP is not likely to soon shed its corrupt image. Meanwhile, with the notable exception of the MB, there is today no such thing as political opposition in Egypt. Political parties are co-opted, or their leaders are jailed. At the end of the day, Steven is right. Egypt is not in imminent danger of instability or collapse. But the trend line is not good. The only Egyptians today who are happy and confident of the country's direction are the Muslim Brotherhood. And that's because they take the long term view. The worse things get in Egypt, the more support the Brotherhood expects to pick up. [2]David Schenker is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/mubarak\\_hangs\\_on/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/mubarak_hangs_on/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david\\_schenker/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david_schenker/)

Chuck Freilich (2008-04-23 13:35:40)

I think the exchange on Egypt misses the truly essential question. The real issue is not whether Mubarak succeeds in riding out the current wave of domestic difficulties, through time-tested means of oppression. He will. But what happens if he fails to hand over the reigns to Gamal or some other member of the ruling junta? The consequences

of this are potentially dire, especially if, as seems likely, the result is the emergence of a radical Islamist Egypt. For the United States, this will mean the collapse of its fundamental Mideast strategy since the early 1970s, in which Egypt has been the linchpin. That strategy, an unsung success in many ways, has enabled the United States to walk a virtual diplomatic tightrope—to improve relations with moderate Arab states, contain the radicals (including two wars, numerous sanctions and more), develop a strategic alliance with Israel and promote the Middle East peace process, all at the same time. For Israel, an Islamic Egypt portends the end of the peace agreement with Egypt, which may lead to the unraveling of the agreement with Jordan, as well. This will almost certainly mean the final death knell for the “peace process,” a potential return to multi-front threats and a fundamental transformation of Israel’s entire strategic posture. For the region as a whole, it would mean a severe change for the worse in the balance between the “moderates” and “radicals,” further instability, and an end to virtually any hopes for reform. Ensuring a smooth and successful succession in Egypt is one of the preeminent issues of our time in the region, no less than the Iranian nuclear threat or Iraq, and more so than the Israeli-Arab conflict. Worrying about human rights abuses and democracy (very worthy issues in and of themselves)—which are nothing new in Egypt—is not going to solve the truly strategic issues, of historic import, that we face. [1]Chuck Freilich is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck\\_freilich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck_freilich/)

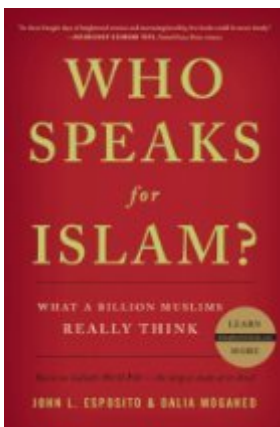
Blake Hounshell (2008-04-14 14:39:41)

I guess one question U.S. policymakers had better be asking themselves is, can we live with a Muslim Brotherhood government? Because, while I think it’s correct to say that—at least for now—Mubarak has a firm grip on power, it’s anybody’s guess what will happen when he dies. Would the MB seize the moment to mount an all-out bid for power? Will Egyptians reject Gamal en masse, assuming he follows his father? Because these questions are fundamentally unknowable, a prudent course of action would be for the U.S. government to support serious, quiet “track II” talks with the Brothers. At the same time, it would be wise think about ways to strengthen the “good” wing of the MB over the “bad” wing. The Egyptian government has a very suspicious habit of pointedly arresting folks like Essam ElErian, precisely the type of people that the United States could probably work with. The United States ought to condemn such arrests, if not by name then in general. Stop focusing exclusively on Ayman Nour. The Suez Canal is one thing, but I would also note that the Egyptians’ influence on the Israel-Palestinian front is declining by the day. I don’t think we should consider the Mubarak government such an asset there. Jet fuel can be purchased elsewhere. [1]Blake Hounshell is Web editor at *ForeignPolicy.com*, before which he spent over a year in Cairo working for the Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies.

1. <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/aboutfp/staff.php>

## Who does speak for Islam? (2008-04-10 15:59)

From [1]Hillel Fradkin



Who speaks for Islam? This question forms the title of a [2]new book authored by John L. Esposito, director of the [3]Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University, and Dalia Mogahed, executive director of the [4]Gallup Center for Muslim Studies. The book is meant to answer it. According to the authors, their aim is to settle important disputes regarding

the attitudes and opinions of contemporary Muslims on a range of pressing questions.

Of course, the most important dispute is whether terrorists, like Al Qaeda and other radicals, speak for contemporary Muslims and for Islam itself. [5]According to the authors, understanding this issue—“understanding extremists and the nature of extremism”—“requires a global perspective that extends beyond conflicting opinions of experts or anecdotes from the ‘Arab street.’” We need to go beyond dueling op-eds and books, and ground our opinions in hard facts by finding out “What do Muslims polled across the world have to say? How many Muslims hold extremist views? What are their hope and fears? What are their priorities? What do they admire, and what do they resent?” In the service of the right approach, the authors invoke no less an authority than Albert Einstein: “A man should look for what is, and not what he thinks should be.” In accord with this motto and the highest scientific standards, “the data should lead the discourse.”

Happily, according to the authors, we can now heed Einstein’s advice, through the good offices of the Gallup Organization. The book’s cover proudly proclaims that it is “Based on Gallup’s World Poll—the largest study of its kind,” and presents itself as an account of that poll.

So who does speak for Islam? Apparently, Esposito and Mogahed do. For the book does not actually present the poll. It provides a very small and partial account of the responses to some questions, but fails to include even one table or chart of data. It does not even provide a clear list of the questions that were asked. The appendix, where one might expect to find questionnaires, charts, and tables, provides only a short narrative discussion of Gallup’s sampling techniques and general mode of operation.

To a certain degree, the authors admit the bias of their presentation: “The study revealed far more than what we could possibly cover in one book, so we chose the most significant, and at times, surprising conclusions to share with you. Here are just some of those counterintuitive discoveries.” But this admission is ridiculously inadequate. After all, this is a book, not an article. In the end, the authors betray their own standard that “data should lead the discourse,” because there is no data. A reader without deep pockets cannot easily remedy this deficiency: the Gallup Organization charges \$28,500 to access the data.

If not data, then what fills the pages of this book? In effect, we are given an opinion piece by Esposito and Mogahed—one not unlike the op-eds they decry, only much longer. Like op-eds, it is buttressed by anecdotal evidence, much of which is not even drawn from the survey. Indeed, given the partiality of the material they do draw from the survey, it too must be counted as anecdotal, notwithstanding the percentage signs which are scattered here and there. Moreover, the conclusions that Esposito and Mogahed draw, as well as their policy prescriptions, are indistinguishable from Esposito’s opinions, as expressed and disseminated in his books and articles long before Gallup polled its first Muslim. As in almost every Esposito product, the book even includes a chapter devoted to a description of the religion of Islam.

But to accept this book as an extended op-ed is not quite adequate. After all, Esposito claimed to apply a higher standard—that of “a man [who] should look for what is, and not what he thinks should be.” Seen in this light, the book is a confidence game or fraud, of which Esposito should be ashamed. So too should the Gallup Organization, its publisher.

The defective character of the book makes it exceptionally risky to address any of its specific “findings” and the policy prescriptions derived from them. This is partially because the authors either misunderstand or misrepresent their “data”—or both. But overall, according to this book, Muslims turn out to be pretty much like Americans. There is no “clash of civilizations” and no need for one. Muslims are not even essentially anti-American. In fact, they admire America for its democracy, technology and prosperity, and would like to have these benefits for themselves—benefits denied to them by the authoritarian



governments under which they presently suffer. They are particularly keen on freedom of speech and other features of democratic life, including gender equality. The only issue is how they might best succeed in achieving democratic governance, and how America might assist that. The real cause of Muslim resentment against us is not our principles but our policies, which impede their progress and persuade them that we view them with contempt. Democracy and respect ("R.E.S.P.E.C.T.") are all they want.

Well, not quite. There are some wrinkles that reveal a certain confusion on the part of Muslims which may even rise to the level of self-contradictions. The authors do not regard these as major issues, perhaps because they are confused themselves.

For example, while Muslims say they are for democracy, they are repulsed by its apparent corollary in America: the corruption of personal and especially sexual morals. But no matter. The authors observe that many Americans object to such moral corruption themselves. The authors likewise lament the "well-meaning" but misguided and high-handed approach of American feminists to the status of Muslim women. (One cannot help wondering whether Esposito would lend himself to a movement for the reform of morals, and especially the restoration of "female modesty," on Georgetown's campus.)

It thus turns out that Muslims apparently want a different kind of "democracy," one which avoids moral and other kinds of risks. For example, although they would like freedom of speech, they would not like it to be unlimited, such that it might permit speech offensive to religious sensibilities. In other words, blasphemy laws should limit it.

As for other "freedoms," the authors provide no information. In particular, we do not know whether Muslims accept "freedom of religion." This is a most peculiar omission since it is essential to a clear understanding of contemporary Muslim views of democracy.

But perhaps all of this is to be understood in light of the finding that Muslims—women as well as men—want to ground their "democracy" partly or entirely in Sharia or Islamic law. The authors hasten to assure the readers that this does not mean that "Muslim democracy" would actually be a "theocracy," since their respondents largely reject the prospective rule of Muslim jurists.

But this leaves the matter totally confused. If Sharia is to be the partial or entire base of future "democratic" governments, who is constituted to decide what Sharia prescribes, other than the jurists to whom its interpretation has always been and is still entrusted? We are left totally in doubt as to whether the poll asked this kind of question. We are also left in doubt about a whole set of issues, including and especially whether or not "Muslim democracy" would permit religious freedom of the sort characteristic of American and other liberal democracies. Would the status of non-Muslims—especially Christians—be governed by traditional Sharia prescriptions for non-Muslim or dhimmi minorities, which involve various legal disabilities and inequities? Or would they be fully equal? Would non-Muslims be permitted to run for and hold public office?

We just can't know the answers from what the authors choose tell us. But we and they do know how Americans understand and practice democracy. We also know that despite discontent with this or that consequence of democracy—including moral decay—Americans have been ready to run those risks rather than alter their fundamental principles. To suggest, then, that it is only our policies and not our principles which lead to a divide with the Muslim world is entirely wrong and extremely misleading. The authors' dubious understanding of the issues, and especially the problem of "conflicts between the West and the Muslim world," is summed up laughably in the book's last paragraph. There we are told that 90 percent of Lebanese Christians and Muslims have a high regard for one another despite the long history of civil war. Perhaps this is so, but if Lebanon is a model of comity and harmony, it has escaped everyone's notice except

the authors.

And what about our policies? According to the authors, Muslims would like us to be supportive of their democratic efforts. Yet they also would like us not to interfere. This too presents a kind of confusion: they want to have their cake and eat it too. Well, who doesn't? The interference is a consequence, not a cause. To suggest, as the authors constantly do, that the main problems Muslims face stem from outside does no service to Muslims or the truth. The book encourages Muslims and non-Muslims to avoid dealing with "what is," and so ends up as a prime example of precisely that which its authors decry.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/hillel\\_fradkin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/hillel_fradkin/)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1595620176>
3. <http://cmcu.georgetown.edu/>
4. <http://www.gallup.com/consulting/worldpoll/26410/gallup-center-muslim-studies.aspx>
5. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/104941/What-Makes-Radical.aspx>

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### Jihadi studies as trivia (2008-04-11 15:33)

From [1]Raymond Ibrahim



A [2]new article by Thomas Hegghammer in the Times Literary Supplement, entitled "Jihadi studies: the obstacles to understanding radical Islam and the opportunities to know it better," lives up to its title—not so much by delineating what these obstacles are, but rather by being representative of them. Regrettably, the author evokes the same old mantras prevalent in modern academia's study of jihad and jihadists.

First, even though one may suppose that the article at the very least would touch upon ideology, doctrine, or theology—after all, the words "jihad" and "radical Islam" are in the title—it all but ignores these concepts.

Instead, it focuses on "people"—the jihadists themselves. Hegghammer assures us that, with the availability of new primary sources, our knowledge of what makes a jihadist tick is destined to improve. He would like us to better appreciate "the importance of mundane and non-ideological factors in individual recruitment to jihadist activity." He then explains the great need to learn the biographies of men like Osama bin Laden.

But what do we learn from this approach? Much ink is spent over biographical trivia about bin Laden—"Was Bin Laden really a playboy in 1970s Beirut, and a CIA stooge in 1980s Afghanistan? Did he really attend

arsenal matches in London and sex orgies in Morocco in the 1990s?”—without once ever explaining the significance of such gossipy queries. After positing these questions, Hegghammer is quick to inform us that, “Just for the record, Bin Laden was never a playboy in Beirut; he was a shy and pious young man. He attended no arsenal matches or sex orgies.” Again, as if any of this trivia—pro or con—has anything to do with jihad and radical Islam. While this “people-first” approach is entertaining, it is unclear how, practically speaking, a “nuanced portrait of bin Laden” is supposed to help combat him.

The author next moves to *Messages to the World*, a compilation of 24 statements attributed to bin Laden. Based on this collection, Hegghammer assures the reader that “those who expect religious ranting will be surprised. There are no complex theological arguments.”

Again, Hegghammer errs by making bin Laden the spokesman for jihad. Had he only turned to the writings of Ayman Zawahiri—long known for being the ideologue of Al Qaeda—which are available in [3] *The Al Qaeda Reader*, he would have encountered over two hundred pages of treatises dealing with the subjects of jihad, martyrdom (suicide-bombings), and even the legality of killing women and children, and fellow Muslims, during the jihad, the need to always bear enmity for all non-Muslims, and various doctrines of deception (e.g., *taqiyya*)—all as articulated through *usul al-fiqh*, or Islam’s “roots of jurisprudence.”

Declarations and communiqués directed by Al Qaeda at fellow jihadists are much more valuable—in that they are much more revealing—than the communiqués directed at the United States. The former are directed at fellow Muslims and thus couched in familiar Islamic terms and concepts; the latter, intentionally articulated through a Western epistemology—an epistemology that is utterly at odds with radical Islam.

Consider the disparity of the following two quotes, both by bin Laden, one directed to Americans, the other to Muslims. To Americans, he says: “Reciprocal treatment is part of justice; he who initiates the aggression is the unjust one.” However, in an obscure essay entitled “Moderate Islam is a Prostration to the West,” directed at fellow Muslims—his Saudi kinsmen, to be specific—bin Laden celebrates his understanding of Islam’s aggressive nature:

[O]ur talks with the infidel West and our conflict with them ultimately revolve around one issue, and it is: Does Islam, or does it not, force people by the power of the sword to submit to its authority corporeally if not spiritually? Yes. There are only three choices in Islam: either willing submission [i.e., conversion]; or payment of the *jizya* [poll-tax paid by non-Muslims], thereby bodily, though not spiritual, submission to the authority of Islam; or the sword—for it is not right to let him [an infidel] live. The matter is summed up for every person alive: either submit, or live under the suzerainty of Islam, or die.... Such, then, is the basis of the relationship between the infidel and the Muslim. Battle, animosity, and hatred—directed from the Muslim to the infidel—is the foundation of our religion. (*The Al Qaeda Reader*, p. 42.)

Hegghammer goes on to tackle the notion that theology or ideology could ever inspire a would-be Muslim suicide bomber. He concludes they could not. Instead, he is somewhat sympathetic to one particular [4] study that finds “that the root cause of suicide terrorism is not religion, but foreign occupation.” But Hegghammer is more inclined to believe that “It is probably not occupation, but nationalism, that generates suicide terrorism.”

The problem with the territory theory is the fact that Arab Christians—whether in Palestine or Iraq—have yet to blow themselves up during a suicide attack against Israel or U.S. forces in Iraq. As for Hegghammer’s own notion that nationalism generates suicide terrorism, Arab Christians have traditionally been at the fore of the Arab nationalist movement. According to his theory, then, one would logically expect them at the

van of martyrdom operations, which they are not. Indeed, Christian and Muslim Arabs are identical: they look the same, live in the same place, speak the same language, and consider themselves "Arabs." The only thing that differentiates them is religion. So, if all things—minus religion—are equal, is it not only logical to conclude that it is religion, or "ideology," that is responsible for the suicide-bomber, as that is the only variable that Christian and Muslim Arabs do not share?

Early in his essay, Hegghammer indicates that one of the failures of Middle East scholars has been their "tendency to rely on simple grievance-based explanations of terrorism." Yet his entire essay is a testimony to this model. He constantly tries to humanize bin Laden. He insists that doctrine or ideology has nothing to do with terrorism. And finally, in his conclusion, he, like many a Middle Eastern scholar before him, stresses only the need for us to comprehend our own shortcomings, before we condemn the terrorists—all in the platitudinous language we have come to expect (emphases added):

But the most important reason [for our lack of understanding "jihadism"] is no doubt that the emotional outrage at al-Qaeda's violence has prevented us from seeing clearly. Societies touched by terrorism are always the least well placed to understand their enemies. It is only when we see the jihadists not as agents of evil or religious fanatics, but as humans, that we stand a chance of understanding them.

If this isn't ultimately a "simple grievance-based explanation of terrorism," what is?

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees, and include a response by Thomas Hegghammer.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_ibrahim/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_ibrahim/)
2. [http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts\\_and\\_entertainment/the\\_tls/article3667505.ece](http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/the_tls/article3667505.ece)
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/076792262X>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0812973380>

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Thomas Hegghammer (2008-04-12 12:01:39)

Raymond Ibrahim is [1]disappointed with my [2]review essay because it "evokes the same old mantras prevalent in modern academia's study of jihad and jihadists." It is unclear to me what exactly these mantras are, but from what I can tell, Ibrahim raises five main points. First is that the review allegedly ignores ideology and doctrine. Well, the essay may not be entirely devoted to Al Qaeda's declarations, but to say that I ignore ideology is simply not true. One of the five main books reviewed is *Messages to the World*; I highlight a main theme in bin Laden's statements (Palestine); I speak of the ideological differences between socio-revolutionary Islamists, classical jihadists and global jihadists, and I offer an interpretation of Al Qaeda's ideology as extreme pan-Islamic nationalism. All this is analysis of ideology; it is just emphasizing its political as opposed to its theological dimension. Ideology is not the same as theology, and it is perfectly possible to analyze Islamist ideology without using Arabic theological terms in every sentence. Ibrahim's second point is that the utility of studying individuals is overrated and that I focus too much on bin Laden trivia. Of course the gossipy queries are insignificant; I think most readers apart from Ibrahim understand that the rhetorical questions were tongue and cheek. Instead of attacking me, Ibrahim should address those (like Adam Robertson, Yonah Alexander or Kola Boof) who have probably made more money than I ever will by spreading false bin Laden trivia in their books. If Ibrahim thinks bin Laden is not worth studying, that is fair enough, but I would strongly disagree. Bin Laden is the single most influential individual in the global jihadist movement, and the thorough historiography of writers like Peter Bergen and Lawrence Wright has helped the war on terror. Third is my alleged failure to mention the Qaeda texts that do contain religious ranting. My point is simply that bin Laden's discourse is more political and less irrational than the average Western reader thinks. Of course there is religious discourse in Al Qaeda's statements, but there is also a lot of politics, including those directed at Muslim audiences. Ibrahim's fourth complaint concerns my partial support for Robert Pape's theory, which I admit is a minority view.

Ibrahim holds the majority view in the terrorism research community, which is that Pape has it completely wrong and that religion is driving suicide terrorism. Of course there are nationalist movements in many parts of the world that do not use suicide bombings—just like there are secular groups that do. I am interested in the observable patterns of behavior among Islamist groups, which is that Islamists involved in struggles against non-Muslims have executed many more suicide attacks than have Islamists fighting their local regimes. There is a clear and observable tendency in the empirical data which the advocates of the religion or cult hypothesis cannot explain. I am not suggesting that nationalism alone accounts for all instances of suicide bombings, but it certainly seems to increase the probability that an Islamist group will resort to such tactics. The fifth and final criticism is that my emphasis on seeing jihadists as humans and not as fanatics constitutes a “simple grievance-based explanation of terrorism.” This is a very curious interpretation. By highlighting the role of individuals and the power of their agency, I am going against those who see jihadism as the linear expression of poverty, state repression or Western imperialism. However, this also—and I suspect this is what bothers Ibrahim—challenges the view that the behavior of jihadists is determined by religion and ideology. Here we are at the crux of the matter. Ibrahim’s critique is motivated by a profound and honest disagreement about the role of religion and ideology in Islamist militancy. I happen to hold the view that ideology is only one of the factors that determine the timing, level and form of Islamist violence. I am also of the view that there are limits to the study of the theological dimension of Islamist ideology, and that we can better predict the behavior of militant Islamist groups by looking at the political preferences expressed in their texts. Ibrahim seems to suggest that the study of jihadist ideology is a forgotten or underestimated line of inquiry in academia. This may have been the case five years ago, but not any longer. There now exist several edited compilations of Al Qaeda texts (Ibrahim published one in 2007; I published three others in 2003 and 2005). There is at least one academic journal devoted solely to studies of jihadist ideology, while other journals regularly feature articles on the same subject. This is not to mention the numerous blogs and websites that monitor jihadi propaganda. There is no shortage of exegeses of jihadi ideology. What we need is new ways of analyzing it. Ibrahim’s alternative to my “mantras” seems to be that jihadists are driven by religious ideology. Fine; I don’t disagree. But what exactly does this help us explain? It does not explain chronological or geographical variations of violence; nor relative differences in popularity between radical ideologies; nor differential recruitment; nor the timing of key ideological permutations. The “yes-or-no” debate over whether or not religious ideology causes Islamist violence is in my view futile and intensely boring. I am interested in understanding why Islamists use violence when, where and in the way they do. In this quest, Raymond Ibrahim’s mantra does not get me very far. [3] *Thomas Hegghammer is a postdoctoral research associate at Princeton University.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/jihadi\\_studies\\_as\\_trivia/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/jihadi_studies_as_trivia/)
2. [http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts\\_and\\_entertainment/the\\_tls/article3667505.ece](http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/the_tls/article3667505.ece)
3. <http://hegghammer.com/>

Assaf Moghadam (2008-04-13 12:39:58)

I would like to weigh in on two aspects of the important and interesting [1]exchange between Raymond Ibrahim and Thomas Hegghammer: Robert Pape’s occupation thesis and the importance of ideology for the study of terrorism. I have stated my disagreement with Robert Pape’s central thesis in a long review article published in late 2006 ([2]here). Although I do not argue in this article that Pape has it completely wrong, I think his thesis that suicide terrorism is mainly a response to foreign occupation is less valid for suicide attacks by Salafi-Jihadist groups—the predominant pattern of suicide attacks today—than it is for the suicide attacks of the 1980s and 1990s. It may be true that Islamists fighting ‘non-Muslims’ have executed many more suicide attacks, but I would take issue with Hegghammer’s belief that there is a clear and observable tendency in that regard. I believe that the tendency is actually pointing in the other direction. Increasingly, suicide attacks occur in countries—and against regimes—that are Muslim, such as Algeria, Iraq, Pakistan, or Afghanistan. Yes, many of the attacks in these countries are targeted at foreigners, but a growing number target Muslims who are regarded as ‘apostates’—with the attack against Benazir Bhutto being the most prominent example. As to the relationship between ideology and terrorism, I share Raymond Ibrahim’s sense that the discussion of the role of ideology in the emergence of terrorism is extremely important. But Thomas Hegghammer asks a legitimate question nevertheless: does it matter? My personal take is that ideology does matter, but we should not be under the impression that it explains everything. I have examined the interplay between ideology and suicide attacks in my dissertation (forthcoming as a book in September 2008) by looking at the ideological orientation of over forty groups that conducted nearly 1,270 suicide attacks between 1981 and April 2007. In my study, I found that unequivocally, Salafi-Jihadist groups have assumed the leadership among groups that employ this modus operandi in a number of respects, including in terms of numbers of organizations, numbers of attacks, and even in the average and overall lethality of suicide missions. In 1997, for example, not a single Salafi-Jihadist group perpetrated a suicide attack. In 1998, 17 percent of groups that conducted these attacks adhered to Salafi-Jihadist ideology, followed by

25 percent in 1999 and 67 percent in 2000. In 2006 and 2007, that percentage peaked at 70 percent and 67 percent, respectively. Moreover, suicide attacks by Salafi-Jihadist groups carried a much higher lethality than attacks by non-Salafi-Jihadist groups. Although Salafi-Jihadist groups are responsible for only 15 percent of attacks in the time frame of 1981 to April 2007, I found that they were responsible for at least a third (34 percent) of all fatalities caused by suicide attacks in that period. So what about the 'so what' question Hegghammer asks? Although I tend to disagree with Hegghammer that further inquiry into the role of ideology is futile, I share his judgment that there are limits as to what ideology helps us explain. Most importantly, I found no evidence that ideology is 'the cause' of suicide attacks per se. The causes of suicide attacks are complex, and must be found in the interplay of personal motivations, strategic and tactical objectives of the sponsoring groups, as well as the larger societal and structural factors affecting the bomber and the group. In addition, ideology is acquired by individuals for reasons having to do with emotions and beliefs—a topic that is highly complex, but well deserving of more scholarly attention. If ideology is not 'the cause' of suicide attacks per se, then what is its role? I believe that ideology plays an important role in that it helps reduce the suicide attacker's reservations to perpetrate the act of killing and dying. Specifically, ideology fills three roles: • First, it helps the suicide bomber justify the act by articulating why this act is called for, and why every 'true' Muslim must participate in it. The ideology describes—and statements by suicide bombers reflect—the need to defend Islam from attack as an individual duty for each and every Muslim; the participation in jihad as the ultimate proof of one's worthiness as a Muslim; and the failure to participate in jihad as an act of heresy. • Second, Salafi-Jihadist ideology shapes the mental framework of the suicide attacker by constantly repeating the West's real or perceived infractions against Islam. These infractions appear particularly grave to some Muslims because Salafi-Jihadists tend to employ conspiracy theories to further incite fear and hatred of the West. • Third, it helps the suicide attacker to morally disengage himself from his act and from the victim. Ideology helps create a dichotomy of good-versus-evil ('true' Muslims on one hand vs. *kuffar* on the other), and it dehumanizes the enemy by describing him as defiled, degenerate, bereft of any sense of decency, unjust, and cruel. [3] *Assaf Moghadam is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/jihadi\\_studies\\_as\\_trivia/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/jihadi_studies_as_trivia/)
2. <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/jebcenter/pubs/moghadam/SCT%20Article.pdf>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/assaf\\_moghadam/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/assaf_moghadam/)

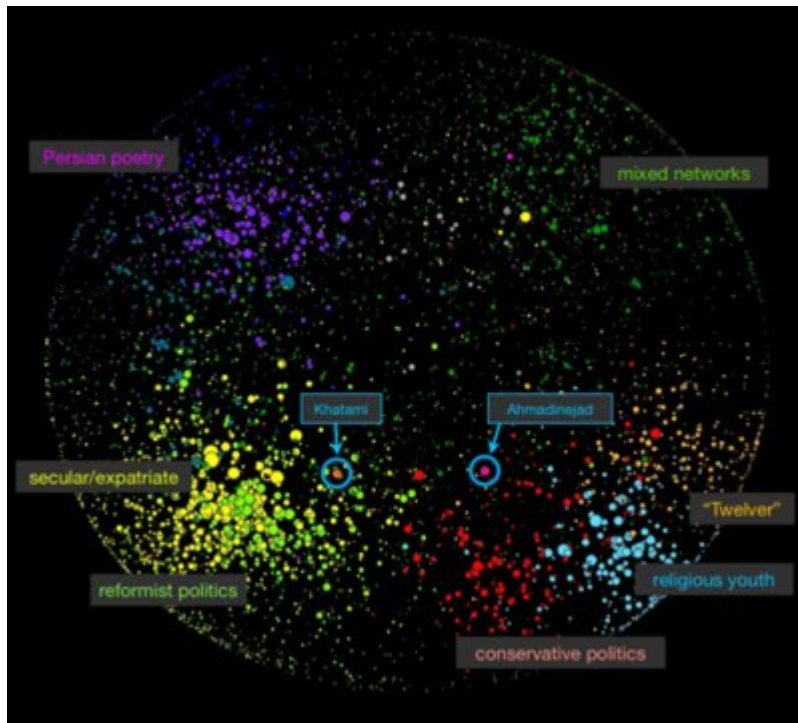
## Mapping Iran's blogosphere (2008-04-13 09:00)

From MESH Admin

The [1]Internet and Democracy Project at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society, Harvard Law School, has just published a new study, Mapping Iran's Online Public: Politics and Culture in the Persian Blogosphere. The image below is the resulting map of the Iranian blogosphere (click on the image for a larger view). From the study's [2]abstract:

Social network analysis reveals the Iranian blogosphere to be dominated by four major network formations, or poles, with identifiable sub-clusters of bloggers within those poles. We label the poles as 1) Secular/Reformist, 2) Conservative/Religious, 3) Persian Poetry and Literature, and 4) Mixed Networks.... Given the repressive political and media environment, and high profile arrests and harassment of bloggers, one might not expect to find much political contestation in the blogosphere. However, we identified a subset of the secular/reformist pole focused intently on politics and current affairs and comprised mainly of bloggers living inside Iran, which is linked in contentious dialog with the conservative political sub-cluster. Surprisingly, a minority of bloggers in the secular/reformist pole appear to blog anonymously, even in the more politically-oriented part of it; instead, it is more common for bloggers in the religious/conservative pole to blog anonymously. Blocking of blogs by the government is less pervasive than we had assumed.

Download the report [3]here (pdf). And while we're at it, MESH would like to take the opportunity to thank the Berkman Center for hosting the MESH website.



[4]

1. <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/research/internetdemocracy>
2. [http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/publications/2008/Mapping\\_Irans\\_Online\\_Public](http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/publications/2008/Mapping_Irans_Online_Public)
3. [http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/Kelly&Etling\\_Mapping\\_Irans\\_Online\\_Public\\_2008.pdf](http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/Kelly&Etling_Mapping_Irans_Online_Public_2008.pdf)
4. [http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/Iran\\_blogsphere\\_map.jpg](http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/Iran_blogsphere_map.jpg)

## Balance of terror (2008-04-14 18:24)

From [1]Alan Dowty



So the focus shifts to deterrence. Both Charles Krauthammer ([2]here) and Zev Chafets ([3]here) hold out little hope for international efforts to block Iran getting the bomb, or for military action to that end (though Chafets suggests that Israel might be able "in the best case" to weaken and delay Iran's program). As a wake-up call this is justified: the sanctions are pathetic and the military options are dismal.

It is too early to give up completely; international pressure has slowed the program down, and the Iranians are still years from possession of a significant amount of fissionable material (which is why the apparent hiatus in weapons development is meaningless). Dragging out the program gives more time for moderating trends within Iran. But it makes sense at this stage to ask how a nuclearized Iran, guided by apocalyptic notions, might be deterred.

Krauthammer offers the Berlin model of extended deterrence. Extended deterrence in the Cold War setting had two dimensions: the threat of nuclear retaliation to protect non-nuclear allies, and the threat of nuclear retaliation in response to an overwhelming conventional attack. Kennedy's pledge on Berlin involved both. Since the United States could not actually prevent Soviet bloc forces from occupying the Berlin enclave, the answer was to threaten a "full retaliatory response" upon the Soviet Union itself. In truth, there was always an irrational side to this posture: would the United States actually sacrifice tens or hundreds of millions of American lives to defend a city that would doubtless be also destroyed in a full-scale nuclear exchange? Fortunately, this was never tested.

The suggested "Holocaust Declaration" is in some respects more credible. Krauthammer proposes that it apply only to a nuclear attack on Israel, and as he points out there is little fear—for now—of Iranian retaliation against the United States itself. On the other hand, Israel is not Berlin, and it is far from clear that any U.S. government would feel the need to reinforce a deterrence that is already in place: the certainty of a massive Israeli response to any nuclear attack. Chafets is correct: the key is deterrence by Israel.

MESH Updater: Read more MESH discussion on deterring Iran in [4]this thread and [5]this thread.

If an Iranian government would not be deterred by the likelihood of casualties in the tens of millions (as [6]calculated recently by Anthony Cordesman), then what additional impact would a U.S. pledge of retaliation have? The issue of vulnerability to a first strike, eliminating Israel's retaliatory force, is raised—but it will be decades, if ever, before Iranian forces could conceivably carry out such an attack, and Israel is already moving to protect these forces.

Nor should we forget that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is already a reality: chemical and biological weapons are already a part of the equation between Israel and Syria, for example. A Middle East "balance of terror" already exists. It is not the world that we prefer, but it may be the world we have to live with and find ways to stabilize.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)
2. [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2008/04/deterrence\\_to\\_defend\\_israel.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2008/04/deterrence_to_defend_israel.html)
3. [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/13/opinion/13chafets.html?\\_r=1&ref=opinion&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/13/opinion/13chafets.html?_r=1&ref=opinion&oref=slogin)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/iran\\_and\\_extended\\_deterrence/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/iran_and_extended_deterrence/)
5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/not\\_too\\_late\\_to\\_dissuade\\_iran/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/not_too_late_to_dissuade_iran/)
6. [http://www.csis.org/index.php?option=com\\_csis\\_pubs&task=view&id=4172](http://www.csis.org/index.php?option=com_csis_pubs&task=view&id=4172)

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Adam Garfinkle (2008-04-15 12:12:30)

In the difference of opinion that has arisen between Charles Krauthammer ([1]here) and Zev Chafets ([2]here) over the notion of an American "Holocaust" pledge to Israel, my sympathy lies with Chafets, with one—just one—reservation. But there is also a significant ambiguity in their discussion, the resolution of which should make a difference in how any sensible person thinks about the problem. And both share a premise I think is mistaken. All of these—sympathy, reservation, ambiguity and premise—are tangled together, naturally enough: We are, after all, talking about Israel and the Middle East. Starting from the end of the list, Krauthammer and Chafets share the premise that the Bush



Administration policy has already failed and the Iranians will have a bomb. I don't agree. There is still time for diplomatic pressure to work; there is still time for military action if it doesn't; and it isn't even clear that the Iranians are stupid enough to turn the last screw and openly test a nuke, even if they get that far. But if we grant the premise for the sake of argument, the ambiguity rests in the fact that Krauthammer calls for a Presidential declaration, not a treaty to be ratified by the Senate. He muddies the water by referring to NATO and Cold War extended deterrence, but he doesn't call for a formal alliance in so many words. Chafets seems to assume the reverse, for only in the context of a Senate debate on a treaty would the kind of constraints on Israel that Chafets fears be brought forth in full form. In short, the two seem to be talking past each other on a very important detail. If Krauthammer really means a NATO-like U.S. treaty commitment, then Chafets's concern that such a U.S. commitment would limit Israeli sovereignty to an unacceptable degree is correct. (That's been the reason all along, after all, for the polite and studied opposition of Israeli statesmen to the occasional suggestion that Israel be taken into NATO.) The limits one might imagine resulting from such a connection seem modest right now, because recent U.S. administrations have been sympathetic for the most part to Israeli strategic concerns. But that was not always the case and may not always be the case in the future. The core of the problem lies in the fact that it is not clear if the strategic logic of the Cold War, which bound the United States and Israel together as objective allies, will be replicated in the context of the so-called war on terror, the problem of Iran, or anything related to either. With the future stretched out long before us, even a "Holocaust Declaration" that is a unilateral guarantee not formally requiring anything of an Israeli government could be turned to nefarious purposes from an Israeli point of view if U.S. and Israeli core interests come to diverge significantly. To put it Biblically, a pharaoh might arise who knows not Joseph. If so, a future U.S. administration's public renunciation of a "Holocaust Declaration" might do more harm than having created it in the first place will do any good. As for the reservation, Chafets's assertion that Israel can take care of its own security might not be as true *in extremis* as he thinks. Israel is a small country with its population concentrated in the narrow belt between Haifa and, say, Rishon LeZion. Just one or two nuclear explosions in that area could kill 1-2 million people and effectively destroy Israeli society. Iran, on the other hand, is a comparatively huge country, with a far more dispersed population something like ten times the size of Israel's. For the IDF to destroy a comparable percentage of Iranian population that would destroy Iranian society would take a lot more than one or two bombs. Without rehearsing the strategic logic we all learned thirty years ago, suffice it to say that it is not self-evident that Iranian leaders will conclude that Israel can do to Iran in a second strike what Iran can do to Israel in a first strike. It's their judgment that counts, not ours; so they may not be as deterred as all that, even according to a rational calculus that sets aside possible irrational motivations. Therefore, some pledge of extended deterrence could well "even up" the calculation, and if not from the United States, then from where? This leaves me wishing that the U.S. Government could convey a pledge of extended deterrence to Israel that leaves a little something to the Iranian imagination. But wait: Isn't there already such a pledge, dating from 1969 and updated thereafter, and don't the Iranians already know of it? (Or are we not supposed to mention this?) And if the Iranians were in doubt, didn't President Bush say on June 1 of last year: "If I were an Israeli, I would take the words of the Iranian president seriously, and as President of the United States I take them seriously.... Whether there's an imminent attack coming, I don't think so," but—and here's the essence—"If Iran did strike Israel we will defend our ally, no ands, ifs or buts"? Seems to me I've already got my wish, and Krauthammer is asking George Bush to do something he's pretty much already done. Even so, in the end Chafets is right: An Iranian nuclear threat is an existential problem for Israel, but not for the United States, so for Washington to assume responsibility for that problem presupposes its assumption of a major chunk of Israeli sovereignty, as well. Sadly, it may come to that one day; but, on a happier note, that day is not yet here. [3]Adam Garfinkle is a member of MESH.

1. [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2008/04/deterrence\\_to\\_defend\\_israel.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2008/04/deterrence_to_defend_israel.html)
2. [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/13/opinion/13chafets.html?\\_r=1&ref=opinion&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/13/opinion/13chafets.html?_r=1&ref=opinion&oref=slogin)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)

Barry Rubin (2008-04-15 15:51:45)

The question here is not so much a U.S. guarantee for Israel but one for all its allies in the region. This is surely going to be an issue in the not-distant future. One of the greatest threats of Iran having nuclear weapons is the panic among a dozen or more countries ranging from Turkey to Jordan to Saudi Arabia and all the smaller Gulf Arab states, and even Iraq. If and when Iran has nuclear weapons, all these regimes are going to put appeasing Tehran at the top of their priority list. The outcome will be a disaster for Western interests, and U.S. interests most of all. Ironically, Israel has some nuclear deterrence of its own and an ability to defend itself. The others don't. Any president better have a very serious and specific plan over how to provide the most credible possible nuclear umbrella and mechanism for deterring Iran. Whether or not Tehran is not reasonably deterrable—that is a worthwhile but a separate debate—Washington is going to have to do the best possible job trying, no matter what else it does. [1]Barry

*Rubin is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry_rubin/)

Harvey Sicherman (2008-04-15 17:31:11)

Charles Krauthammer already has a good record in giving a memorable name to an existing practice, namely, what he called the Reagan Doctrine, a U.S. policy to aid Contras, Afghans, and many other groups willing to die for our interests in their cause. So, as Adam Garfinkle [1]points out, the "Holocaust Declaration" already exists: Bush said as much on June 1, 2007. Charles ought to stimulate the President to repeat the pledge, and then ask the presidential candidates to sign up. It'll be good for him, good for them, and who knows, it might be good for the Middle East. The two comments, and [2]those of Alan Dowty, are all dimensions of the same classic problem, that between two allies, one large and less vulnerable, the other much smaller and much more vulnerable. Predictably, successive Israeli governments have sought the benefits of an American shield while still retaining freedom of action. The Americans, just as predictably, have demanded no complicating surprises. In 1980-81, Begin wanted Osirak halted through international action and only after that appeared unlikely did he strike. In 1991, Shamir agreed to refrain from retaliation against Saddam's Scuds, leaving it to the United States, although he was much criticized for diminishing Israel's deterrent. The last two Israeli governments have followed Begin's diplomatic example, broadening the case for international action. But here is the difference: Israel could strike Osirak without asking, or telling, the United States. I do not think that could be done in the Iranian case for practical reasons; hence telling becomes a form of asking. So to sum it up, the "Holocaust Declaration" is there waiting only to be reannounced. That covers an Iranian attack on Israel. Yet to be covered is an Israeli attack on Iran. [3]Harvey Sicherman is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/balance\\_of\\_terror/#comment-416](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/balance_of_terror/#comment-416)

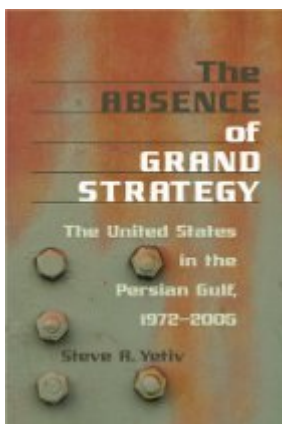
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/balance\\_of\\_terror/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/balance_of_terror/)

3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey\\_sicherman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey_sicherman/)

### 'The Absence of Grand Strategy' (2008-04-16 09:27)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Steve A. Yetiv is a professor of political science at Old Dominion University. His new book is *The Absence of Grand Strategy: The United States in the Persian Gulf, 1972-2005*.

From [1]Steve A. Yetiv



[2] I have always been interested in the interplay between theory and empirics and have been curious about the extent to which our prominent theories offer useful guides to understanding reality. Given my empirical work in American foreign policy and international security, I've become especially interested in theory as it relates to great powers. To what extent do great powers pursue grand strategies, chief among them balance of power policy and hegemonic design?

The *Absence of Grand Strategy* reflects this ongoing interest in theory and empirics, with a focus on the United States. It is an intellectual outgrowth of my earlier book, [3] *Explaining Foreign Policy* (2004). In writing that book, it became clear (at least to me) that we should be cautious about assuming that states act in line with the assumptions of the rational actor model. In particular, I tried to show that we would be misled if we assumed that the United States made decisions in line with the rational actor model during the 1990-91 Persian Gulf crisis. I developed an integrated approach for using multiple models and showed how and explained why it was important to draw upon them, including the rational actor model, for understanding how states make decisions.

The *Absence of Grand Strategy* has emerged from this work. It follows a similar metatheoretical theme, but with a very different goal. Unlike my earlier book, this new book is not about decision-making models, but rather about foreign policy actions beliefs and actions. The book cautions against assuming that states use single, grand strategies and suggests that they may not use any grand strategy at all. In this sense, they do not pursue and employ consistent and cohesive policies over time in trying to promote their interests in regions of the world.

I hope that *The Absence of Grand Strategy* can contribute in several ways. It seeks to illuminate the evolution of U.S. foreign policy in the Persian Gulf, by analyzing ten cases from the policies of the Nixon administration to George W. Bush's war in Iraq. In so doing, it paints a picture in sharp contrast to that of a state pursuing grand strategy. Rather, it reveals that the United States clearly exhibited significantly shifting, improvised, and reactive policies that were responses to unanticipated and unpredictable events and threats.

While the book finds that the United States did not practice grand strategy in the Persian Gulf, it does not claim that grand strategies are not at play elsewhere (although it holds out that prospect). Nor does it intend to impugn the study of grand strategy. Such study is vital. It frames the big questions; it forces us to assess and examine the larger picture; it sketches cause and effect; it may help us see things that we otherwise would have overlooked, and it serves as a foil for weighing how states do behave. In addition, understanding different grand strategies puts multiple tools in one's intellectual kit. These tools can then be used as cuts on reality. In doing so, we may draw on aspects of different grand strategies to paint more accurate pictures of how states behave.

However, *The Absence of Grand Strategy* does put forth a different conception of how the United States behaved in the Gulf, which I call "reactive engagement," and which may apply elsewhere. At a minimum, I hope that thinkers consider "reactive engagement" against the precepts of grand strategic theorizing in thinking about how best to explain international outcomes. It may well be that the best explanation of foreign policy actions results from using multiple approaches.

At the end of the day, however, my sneaking suspicion is that randomness all too often parades as design and serendipity belies control. The behavior of states, even great powers, seems to be a messy affair. It is shaped not only by a mesmerizing mix of complex factors within the "black box" of decision-making, but also by behavior that often reflects a lack of careful preparation, inconsistency (even in key beliefs), and reactivity. It may be that while all great powers have an appetite for grand ideas, they end up with a mouthful of reality.

[4]Order from Publisher | [5]Amazon

1. <http://al.odu.edu/gpis/faculty/etiv.shtml>
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51GR20MWYOL.jpg>

3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/080187811X>
4. [http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/title\\_pages/9497.html](http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/title_pages/9497.html)
5. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0801887828>

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## Iran and extended deterrence (2008-04-17 00:53)

From [1]Jacqueline Newmyer and [2]Stephen Peter Rosen



The extension of American nuclear guarantees in the Middle East has been posed as a question of American guarantees to Israel. This is understandable given the intense hostility to Israel expressed by the Iranian regime. However, there is a broader objective that may be served by U.S. nuclear guarantees in the region. If the United States is not able to prevent the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Iran, its goal must be to prevent this development from destabilizing the region as a whole, and to prevent Iran from gaining any political advantage from its new capabilities. These twin aims are served by the extension of the American deterrent umbrella to a full range of U.S. allies.

The question of how Iran will use its new strategic capabilities, or how Iran's behavior will be affected by the possession of a nuclear arsenal, has already elicited a range of expert opinions. At one end of the spectrum is the view that Iran's religious elites would order an offensive nuclear attack against the United States or U.S. forces or Israel, despite the certainty of suffering a catastrophic response, because they would be willing to die to eliminate Iran's infidel enemies. (Some critics of the Bush administration accuse it of adopting this eschatological understanding of Iran's strategic calculus.) It is difficult to envision any effective U.S. deterrent to a nuclear Iran if this view is accurate.

At the other end of the spectrum is a view that a nuclear-armed Iran would not behave much differently from how Iran behaves now. This might be reassuring or distressing, depending on one's view of Iran's current foreign policy aims, and how Iran might seek to advance them under a nuclear umbrella.

Closer to that end of the spectrum, one can envision two possible courses of action by a nuclear-armed Iran that would be of concern to the United States, because they extrapolate current Iranian policies already designed to intimidate and weaken U.S. allies and protégés.

1. Gulf coercion. Projecting out from current Iranian efforts to maximize revenues from natural resources, Iran may try to use nuclear threats to coerce the non-nuclear oil-producing states of the Persian Gulf into transferring oil-producing territories, oil revenues, or maritime rights to Iran. Those nuclear threats might involve mobilization of nuclear forces, demonstrative test launches of missiles into disputed areas, military

violations of the air and sea frontiers of Arab Gulf states, and nuclear weapons tests, in ways analogous to the behavior of the Soviet Union in the 1956 Suez crisis.

It is difficult to imagine how the Arab Gulf states could independently resist coercion by a nuclear-armed Iran. But the United States has a clear interest in neutralizing the impact of such Iranian efforts. American nuclear guarantees to its non-nuclear allies in the region, perhaps supported by the deployment of American submarines armed with nuclear cruise and ballistic missiles, could serve this interest. This class of guarantees could include Israel, but need not, since Israel has a perfectly adequate nuclear deterrent force of its own.

2. Proliferating to proxies. Iran may transfer nuclear weapons technology to proxy groups. Every state except India that has developed nuclear weapons technology has transferred valuable know-how to others. The United States shared technology with the United Kingdom; France shared reactor technology with Israel; Israel shared technology with Taiwan and probably with South Africa; China shared warhead technology with Pakistan, and so on. Iran would not be doing anything unprecedented if it clandestinely transferred nuclear weapons technology, not bombs, to others. This might, however, result in nuclear weapons technology in the hands of Syria and then Hezbollah. (In the past, Iran and Syria transferred missiles of a kind never before deployed by a sub-state actor, into the hands of Hezbollah.) An anonymous terrorist use of a nuclear weapon against Israel, perhaps detonated on a ship off shore from Israel, is, therefore, a real worry.

Israel recognizes this potential, and sees the credibility of its deterrent as being eroded by the difficulty of establishing responsibility for such an attack in ways that would seem undeniable to world opinion. This uncertainty increases the likelihood that Israel might act unilaterally to reduce the danger posed to it by Iran's arsenal. A strike on Iranian nuclear facilities would risk inflaming the whole region and would be seen by Jerusalem as providing, at best, temporary relief. But it is not clear what other choice Israel would have.

MESH Updater: Read more MESH discussion on deterring Iran in [3]this thread and [4]this thread.

Israel's compulsion toward a unilateral attack that could destabilize the region might be mitigated by a U.S. statement that it regarded a terrorist nuclear explosion directed against any American ally in the Middle East as an Iranian attack on the United States, to be met by the full force of an American nuclear response. To be sure, such a guarantee might lead Israel to take greater military risks in dealing with Iran. Such a guarantee, then, would have to be part of a formal alliance and a quid pro quo in which Israel did agree to coordinate its actions with the United States.

Israel might refuse such a deal. But the offer would not be unreasonable. It would follow the precedent of earlier efforts of the United States in the 1950s and '60s to coordinate nuclear deterrent doctrines with NATO, and it might be the basis of a new international doctrine for dealing with terrorist nuclear threats.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jacqueline\\_newmyer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jacqueline_newmyer/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/balance\\_of\\_terror/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/balance_of_terror/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/not\\_too\\_late\\_to\\_dissuade\\_iran/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/not_too_late_to_dissuade_iran/)

Efraim Inbar (2008-04-17 10:27:56)

The discussions that focus on post-nuclear Iran scenarios underestimate the strategic repercussions of an Iranian nuclear arsenal. A nuclear Iran will probably lead to Iranian hegemony in the Middle East. Tehran will control the energy zone from the Caspian Basin to the Gulf; it will strengthen the radical elements in the Middle East; it might undermine the stability of Turkey; it will end the Western orientation of Central Asian states; and it will negatively affect the nuclear balance in the Indian subcontinent. The worst consequence is nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. Several Middle Eastern states are already slowly moving in this direction. American extended deterrence to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons in the Middle East is not a credible policy. Conventional extended deterrence failed in the past and nuclear extended deterrence is less likely to have an impact in an area where countries do not trust the guarantees of outsiders. The French rationale for not relying on an American nuclear umbrella and leaving NATO in the 1960s is compelling. In case Iran is also successful in its project to develop inter-continental missiles, Arab leaders will inevitably ask: Why should the Americans endanger an American city for an Arab one? It is unlikely that Arab leaders will trust an American offer for a nuclear umbrella. Offering Israel American extended deterrence is even more futile. Iranian leadership believes that the decadent and feeble Christian world (this is how the West is seen by the Ayatollahs) is ready to sacrifice the Jewish state in order to achieve a truce with the rising Muslim world. Thus, any American threats to prevent a nuclear attack on Israel will not be taken seriously in Teheran. If Iran is allowed to become nuclear, inevitably states such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey will follow suit. Then, the primary challenge will be how to stabilize a nuclear multipolar Middle East. Achieving stable deterrence between Israel and Iran is a secondary concern. Erecting stable nuclear deterrence in a Middle East with four to six nuclear powers is extremely problematic. Waltzian nonchalant attitude à la "the more the better" is the embodiment of intellectual irresponsibility. The small distances in the Middle East, the lack of adequate early warning systems, the initial rudimentary stage of nuclear arsenals, the presence of elites only newly initiated to the intricacies of nuclear strategy, the regional rules of game that allow brinkmanship and use of force, and the low sensitivity to cost, all create a strategic nightmare. The same problems exist for a dyad relationship when Israel is part of this scenario. Many overlook the fact that the establishment of a credible second strike is a complex process fraught with uncertainties. It is an interactive process that demands continuous intellectual, scientific and financial investments. Moreover, dictatorships with nuclear arsenals in the region may face domestic instability, which may lead to the rise of radical regimes in charge of nukes even for short periods. Unfortunately, the region displays fanatics that put Ahmedinejad in a positive light. The claim that a balance of terror already exists because of the existence of chemical weapons is very misleading. First, there is a huge difference in lethality between nuclear and chemical weapons. Second, the existence of such arsenals has not prevented use of violence by Syria or Iraq against Israel. Emulating the balance of terror between the two superpowers is not self evident. As it is very unlikely to stop Iran becoming nuclear by diplomacy and/or economic sanctions, it is only military action that can prevent the descent of the Greater Middle East into a very brutish region. [1]Efraim Inbar is professor of political studies at Bar-Ilan University and director of the Begin-Sadat (BESA) Center for Strategic Studies.

1. [http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/efraim\\_inbar/](http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/efraim_inbar/)

Michael Mandelbaum (2008-04-18 12:29:57)

Jacqueline Newmyer and Stephen Peter Rosen rightly [1]note that an Iranian nuclear weapons capability would pose an arguably greater threat to the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf region than to Israel, which, unlike them, has the means to retaliate effectively against an attack and thus has the basis for a policy of deterrence without assistance from others. The prospect of Iranian nuclear weapons therefore raises the question of an American nuclear guarantee to these Arab countries, for which the precedent is the American Cold War-era nuclear guarantee to its NATO allies in Western Europe, most of which—Germany most notably—lacked nuclear weapons of their own. There are (at least) two major differences between American nuclear deterrence in Europe during the Cold War and prospective twenty-first-century nuclear deterrence in the Persian Gulf: one makes Middle Eastern deterrence easier than was the case in Europe, the other renders it more difficult. In the first case, the country being deterred—the Soviet Union—had, from the mid-1960s if not before, the capacity for a nuclear strike against the continental United States. This called into question the credibility of the American commitment to Western Europe. Would the United States, it was asked at the time, risk New York in order to save Paris? Charles de Gaulle, for one, publicly doubted that the United States would do any such thing, which served as part of the rationale for creating an independent French nuclear arsenal. The United States devoted a good deal of time, money, and political capital to persuading one and all that, for strategic purposes, Western Europe and North America were inextricably "coupled" and that the United States would indeed respond forcefully to a Soviet attack on Europe despite the danger this would pose to the American homeland. Iran is presumably far from acquiring missiles of the range to strike North America, so the specter of

“decoupling” would not loom over an American nuclear guarantee to the countries of the Persian Gulf. Tehran could more readily hit Western Europe, so the United States would be in the business of deterring an Iranian attack on its Cold War allies, as well; but that would simply enhance the value of the American immunity from a direct Iranian nuclear strike. If geography makes the extension of the American nuclear umbrella to the Middle East easier than was the case for Western Europe, however, politics makes such a policy more difficult. In Europe the United States was protecting stable, like-minded democracies. The countries that would need protection in the Middle East obviously do not fit this description. The domestic character of America’s Cold War allies was particularly important because the United States stationed troops within their borders, in order to reinforce the credibility of the nuclear commitment to them as well as to defend against a non-nuclear attack by the armies of the Communist Warsaw Pact countries. The troops were, on the whole, welcome and their presence caused relatively little friction (although not none at all) between America and Europe. Given the character of the societies against which the United States would be attempting to deter an attack in the Middle East, a smooth reception for American armed forces in large numbers on their territories could scarcely be guaranteed. The question of what additional regional military deployments, if any, would accompany an American nuclear guarantee to the Persian Gulf countries would therefore have a great deal to do with the long-term viability of such a guarantee. [2]Michael Mandelbaum is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/iran\\_and\\_extended\\_deterrence/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/iran_and_extended_deterrence/)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_mandelbaum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_mandelbaum/)

Chuck Freilich (2008-04-20 12:41:40)

I believe Iran is a carefully calculating rational actor and has proven itself such, for the most part, since the revolution. There are two primary exceptions to this: its policy towards the United States and especially towards Israel. Even if there are elements of irrationality here—and there can be no doubt that their policies in this regard are highly affect/ideology/theology-laden—this does not by any means imply insanity. I have no doubt that Iran is truly committed to Israel’s destruction and that it is willing to devote—is devoting—considerable resources to this end. But what price is Iran really willing to pay? A thousand dead—sure; a few thousand—yup; 10,000, maybe? But where does it stop? Israel is widely considered to be a nuclear power. Is Iran willing to risk a Tel Aviv-for-Tehran exchange? And who said that it will end there? (I could think of some other attractive targets, beginning with Qom.) Are they willing to risks millions, tens of millions? I doubt it very highly. But because I could be wrong, I do believe that Israel has to consider the threat existential, even if it probably is not. The true danger in my eyes is not the “out of the blue,” erase-Israel-and-rejoice scenario, but in the influence a nuclear capability would provide Iran in lesser scenarios. For example, what happens when the next round with Hezbollah breaks out (note the intentional usage “when,” not “if”), in which the Syrians too might be tempted to join the “fun”? Suppose that Iran then decides to take advantage of this to “out” its nukes, even implicitly? With nukes, we are talking an *entirely* different ballgame. Should Iran indeed go nuclear, there are a number of potential responses. (The following draws heavily a lengthy study [[1]here] I recently prepared on aspects of the issue.) **Unilateral U.S. deterrence of Iran.** This would involve a clear declaratory policy, stating that the use, or threat of use, of nuclear weapons against Israel (or alternatively, any state in the region), would be viewed as a threat against the United States itself and that it would respond devastatingly. Most countries in the region, Iran included, already believe that Israel enjoys a de facto American security guarantee. A declaratory commitment of this sort would thus not be viewed as a dramatic new step, especially following President Bush’s repeated, if somewhat less explicit, statements. Many Israelis, too, presume the existence of a de facto American commitment and it is not clear that a further verbal expression of this will meaningfully ease their threat perception. Deterrence, nonetheless, remains a primary option. A good case can be made that Israel’s own strategic capabilities, both offensive and defensive (Arrow anti-missile system), when further buttressed by U.S. “extended deterrence,” would be a sufficient response to the Iranian threat. To refute this approach would require imputing irrationality to Iranian behavior, or at a minimum, severe miscalculation. The fact that the Iranian regime is “probably” rational, however, will not fully assuage Israel’s fears, when its very existence is at stake. The possibility that Iranian “rationality” is different, and that otherwise “unacceptable” consequences might be acceptable for its theological regime, is at the very heart of both American and Israeli fears. **Direct U.S. security guarantees for Israel.** This is, in effect, what Charles Krauthammer calls the “Holocaust Declaration”—a formal US commitment. Assuming U.S. willingness to provide such a commitment—a significant “if”—Iran would know that in threatening Israel, it would be taking on the United States as well and thus face “assured destruction,” above and beyond Israel’s own capabilities. This might seem to be a “no-brainer” for Israel. Nevertheless, for reasons deeply entrenched in Israel’s national security thinking, it is likely that it would be quite reluctant to go this route: • Israel would fear that its freedom of action would be greatly reduced, whether in regard to threats directly pertaining to Iran, or beyond. • Israel might be concerned that the United States would demand that it divulge its independent strategic capabilities and possibly even dismantle

them. • Like the NATO allies during the Cold War, Israel would fear that the United States might not live up to its commitments, when the crunch came. In reality, Israel has long consulted with the United States on virtually all strategic matters, including Iran, and has made few decisions of consequence in recent decades without first doing so. Moreover, Israel's deep-seated fear of a loss of freedom of maneuver could, as in previous U.S. defense agreements (e.g. the Polaris Agreement with Britain in 1962), be addressed through an exemption from the commitment to joint consultation in cases of "supreme national interest." Furthermore, the guarantee could be limited solely to existential dangers. The possibility that the United States might demand that Israel divulge and even dismantle its purported nuclear option cannot be dismissed. For Israel, this would likely be a "show stopper" and it might prefer to go it alone. In truth, the United States may actually have an interest in Israel's retaining its independent capabilities, which greatly reduce the prospects of its ever actually being called upon to invoke the guarantee. Furthermore, the whole point of the guarantee would be to strengthen Israel's sense of security, dissuade it from independent military action and increase its willingness to "live" with a nuclear Iran. Demanding that Israel forego its ultimate capabilities would hardly be a way to achieve this. **A multilateral guarantee.** If Israel might be hesitant to place its fate in a bilateral security agreement with the United States, it will certainly be loath to do so with an alliance of twenty-six nations. Additional multilateral guarantees for Israel (or all states in the region facing a nuclear threat), might include a joint U.S.-Russian one, or a collective guarantee of the P5. As in the case of NATO, Israel would be most reluctant to place its faith in multilateral agreements. **A regional security system.** A further option is for the United States to establish a regional security system, in which it provides either a general guarantee to countries in the region, or a more narrowly defined one, limited to nuclear/WMD attack. This has the benefit of adding a stabilizing element to the region as a whole, and of alleviating Arab anger over what would otherwise be a one-sided commitment to Israel. The very breadth of the arrangement, however, is also its primary drawback. It is highly questionable how many of the countries in the region would join such an arrangement. **Ending Israel's nuclear ambiguity.** This is obviously one of the possible responses. The question, however, is whether this would make a significant contribution to Israeli deterrence in the face of an imminent, or declared, Iranian nuclear capability. Removing any lingering doubts regarding Israel's nuclear status, especially if it was thought that Israel had a second-strike capability, would presumably add some measure of clarity and thus of deterrence. In fact, however, Iran must take into account that Israel is already thought to possess a nuclear arsenal, so the added utility of an end to ambiguity would appear to be marginal. The question is whether this marginal increase in deterrent value, in itself, or as part of a broader package, would justify the costs. **Regime change.** The idea of regime change, as a basis for living with a nuclear Iran, has been raised for years, the assumption being that a nuclear capability in the hands of a more moderate regime would not pose an unacceptable danger. Twenty-nine years after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, however, no one has as yet devised a practical strategy for regime change. Moreover, there is no guarantee that a future regime will, indeed, be more moderate. Most importantly, in the race between the two competing timelines, regime change and an operational nuclear capability, it appears likely that the latter will win hands-down. [2]Chuck Freilich is a member of MESH.

1. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=284>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck\\_freilich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck_freilich/)

## Gates calls for truce (with academia) (2008-04-17 08:10)

From [1]Andrew Exum



Be sure to read the [2]speech given on Monday by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates to the Association of American Universities in Washington.

Since 9/11, the U.S. and its allies have been involved in two prolonged counter-insurgency campaigns in



both Iraq and Afghanistan. These wars are low-tech conflicts in which anthropological skills and language training are often more important than high-tech weapons systems.

But as David Ucko [3] pointed out in the most recent *Orbis*, a quick study of defense spending priorities reveals that large, expensive weapons systems better suited for a future conventional war with China continue to soak up more funds than training and equipment tailored for the counter-insurgency fights in Iraq and Afghanistan. Department of Defense anthropologist Montgomery McFate is fond of pointing out that the amount of money spent by the Pentagon on social science research annually is equal to just two and a half F-22 fighter-interceptors—a weapons system Gates complains has yet to fly a single mission in Iraq or Afghanistan, while soldiers on the ground remain in dire need of better language skills and cultural training to help navigate the population-centric battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Gates also understands the Department of Defense needs the help of America's academy to develop these language skills, regional expertise, and cultural knowledge. As such, he went before the Association of American Universities on Monday prepared to be humble, self-deprecating, and charming in his effort to woo an academic community whose members often have an uneasy relationship with the uniformed military services.

Inevitably, the speech turned to the Human Terrain Teams in use in Iraq and Afghanistan which have provoked a furious reaction from an anthropological community still scarred by Project Camelot and other Cold War misadventures. McFate herself has been relentlessly targeted by the self-appointed mandarins of the anthropological community who have threatened to blacklist any anthropologist who dares work for the Pentagon. Gates addressed the subject with typical good humor:

At times, the lexicon we come up with for new programs appears almost designed to induce maximum paranoia. In that vein, “Human Terrain Teams” follows in the proud tradition of initiatives like:

- The Office of Special Plans;
- TALON Reporting System; and
- Total Information Awareness.

In reality, there is a long history of cooperation—as well as controversy—between the U.S. government and anthropology. Understanding the traditions, motivations, and languages of other parts of the world has not always been a strong suit of the United States. It was a problem during the Cold War, and remains a problem.

It is hard to imagine Donald Rumsfeld giving such a speech, but perhaps that is unfair. Gates, as the former president of Texas A & M University, is uniquely prepared to address the grievances and grudges of academia while at the same time making it clear that America needs the help of its regional studies experts and language scholars to help it carry out operations abroad in a way that best protects the lives and welfare of the innocents. He was right to extend an “olive branch” (as one headline [4] put it) to academia. It remains to be seen whether or not he and the nation's uniformed services gain a reciprocal response.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew\\_exum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew_exum/)
2. <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1228>
3. <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2008/03/print/an-outsiders-perspective/>
4. <http://insidehighered.com/news/2008/04/16/minerva>

**South Lebanon: who reigns? (2008-04-19 01:20)**

From MESH Admin



[1] Last week, as Israel conducted countrywide civil defense and military exercises, UNIFIL increased its patrols on the Israeli-Lebanese border. The Beirut Daily Star [2] reported:

On the Lebanese side, hundreds of UNIFIL and LAF [Lebanese army] patrols—on land and in the air—were met with the complete absence of Hizbullah fighters. But Hizbullah was present everywhere one looked, with banners, mock rockets, flags, and posters of "martyrs" reminding everyone who reigns down South.

Click on the thumbnail image just above for the current UNIFIL deployment map (March 2008), or download a pdf version [3]here. (And there is more on Hezbollah's war preparations [4]here.)

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/04/unifilmarch2008.png>

2. [http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition\\_id=1&categ\\_id=2&article\\_id=90741](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=2&article_id=90741)

3.

[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps\\_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/8E0942F512B1CA83C1257424002CA5B8/\\$File/uncs\\_PRG\\_310308.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/8E0942F512B1CA83C1257424002CA5B8/$File/uncs_PRG_310308.pdf)

4. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0414/p07s03-wome.html>

http:

**Uncle Sam wants you! (2008-04-21 08:37)**

From [1]Philip Carl Salzman



[2] "He must be a spy," said the visiting Baluch, bearded, turbaned, and baggy in long shirt and trousers. My fellow camp mates of the Dadolzai shrugged. They had accepted me and were past wondering exactly how I got there. "Sure," I replied; "the government"—whether Iranian or American was left unspecified, "they are paying me big bucks to tell them how many rocks"—I point at rocks on the ground—"there are in Baluchistan. And they are very interested in how many of these"—goat turds—"there are in Baluchistan." Camp mates shrug; visitor is now bored with the subject.

New locale: Rajasthan. The Brahman veterinarian from the Sheep and Wool Service who served as my guide, local expert, and traveling companion, assured me that everyone knew that so-called tourists who went to Jaisalmer, up near the Pakistan border, to ride the camel safaris in the sand dunes were really

spies. "Why," he said, "they went missing for days at a time, and we know what they are spying." His trump argument: "No well-to-do, educated people would ever do anything so dumb as to want to ride camels in the desert, for fun."

It is very common for anthropologists, and foreigners in general, to be regarded as spies, agents, dubious, and perhaps dangerous. So the oft-heard plea of researchers—"We can't ever work for government or people will think all of us all the time are spies and agents"—seems at the very least naive, and, one cannot help thinking, disingenuous.

It is not that anthropologists believe any more in neutrality, objectivity, or truth. These ideas are largely deceased among social and cultural anthropologists (excepting behavioral/evolutionary ecologists). On the contrary, subjectivity is now explicitly paired with political commitment as the twin pillars of anthropology. As there is no point seeking "truth," the only purpose of the field is advancing the interests of the subaltern: people of color, women, gays, workers, the third world, and so on. Thus the call from the most famous of contemporary anthropologists, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, for "revolutionary anthropology." This is a "postcolonial" extension of the Marxism that was so popular in anthropology for the decades prior to the fall of the Soviet Union.

So it is not much of a surprise that the American Anthropological Association has [3]condemned the [4]Human Terrain System, under which anthropologists and other social scientists have served with military units in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many, perhaps most anthropologists do not support the United States or the United States military. Or they only support some imagined Soviet-like version of the United States, or, as a last resort, some neutralized and anesthetized European-like version. In line with widely held postcolonial theory, many if not most anthropologists believe that all troubles in the world have been caused by the West, and, latterly, by the United States. As one anthropologist [5]put it so eloquently, he hoped that Iraq would turn out to be a thousand Mogadishus.

The muddy water of the anthropological swamp has been recently stirred by the [6]proposals of Robert M. Gates, Secretary of Defense, to the Association of American Universities, for cooperation in generating knowledge—on China, on terrorism, on religious ideologies, and on the application of social science—to help America cope with the challenges of "jihadist extremism, ethnic strife, disease, poverty, climate change, failed and failing states, [and] resurgent powers." More specifically, Gates proposes a set of consortia funded by the Pentagon to develop knowledge relevant to the future security of the country.

Anthropologists have responded as if to a proposition by Satan. Catherine Lutz of Brown University [7]says that the Pentagon does not understand real research, but is advocating "faux social science." She acknowledges that some people believe the military protect the country, but she says she takes another view grounded in history. Hugh Gusterson of George Mason University is an organizer of the [8]Network of Concerned Anthropologists, coaching all to chant, Hell no, we won't go.

Other of Gates' proposals likely to prove unpalatable to those unsympathetic to defense efforts include respecting those who wish to enlist in ROTC, which would of course entail accepting ROTC on campus, and offering "online courses... to troops at home or in combat zones [on subjects such as] history of the Middle East, anthropology classes on tribal culture, and so on. As a way of offering incentives, universities could together set standards and agree to count these classes for credit should troops matriculate at participating universities."

For many anthropologists, cooperating with the Pentagon would be cohabiting with the Devil. It would be siding with power, capitalism, whites, men, heterosexuals, and thus with the evil forces in the universe. When it comes to the American military, cultural relativism does not apply.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)
2. <http://www.defenselink.mil/photos/newsphoto.aspx?newsphotoid=9278>
3. <http://www.aaanet.org/issues/AAA-Opposes-Human-Terrain-System-Project.cfm>
4. [http://www.army.mil/professionalwriting/volumes/volume4/december\\_2006/12\\_06\\_2.html](http://www.army.mil/professionalwriting/volumes/volume4/december_2006/12_06_2.html)
5. [http://www.academia.org/campus\\_reports/2003/apr\\_2003\\_2.html](http://www.academia.org/campus_reports/2003/apr_2003_2.html)
6. <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1228>
7. <http://www.insidehighered.com/layout/set/print/news/2008/04/16/minerva>
8. <http://concerned.anthropologists.googlepages.com/>

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## Too late to dissuade Iran? (2008-04-22 03:56)

From [1]Chuck Freilich



Is it too late to dissuade Iran from developing nukes? A nuclear Iran does increasingly loom as the likely outcome, not because it is too late, but due to lack of sufficient resolve. Iran is at least two and probably more years away from an operational capability. France has taken a firm position and Britain and Germany are also on board, if not as fervently. The Sunni states are manifesting growing alarm, creating new possibilities for enlisting their support. The question now is how to go from P3+1 support in the Security Council to P5 agreement, i.e. how to bring Russia and China on board.

Iran talks a very good game, warning of the consequences of excessive sanctions, or military action, but let's not forget who really holds the bigger stick. Clearly the world does not want to go from \$110 a barrel oil to much higher prices, but for the international community this is pain; for Iran it is their entire economy. If the world refuses to import Iranian crude, which accounts for 80 percent of Iran's national budget and a huge percentage of its overall GDP, the Iranian economy collapses. Due to a shortfall in domestic refining capacity, Iran also imports 40 percent of its refined gasoline products. Were the international community to cease supplying them, the Iranian economy would be brought to its knees almost overnight.

So who has the bigger stick? The West does not want to pay the price, but if it comes to this, might temporary dislocations not be preferable to a nuclear Iran? If not through the Security Council, might not at least some U.S. allies agree to extra-UN multilateral sanctions of this kind? And if the self-motivation is lacking, might an American threat to impose a naval blockade on Iran not do the trick, both in its own right, or as a means of inducing the others to join in the sanctions in order to forestall unilateral American action? The last thing most of the potentially recalcitrant international players want is to see a replay of the "American predilection" for unilateralism.

How then can we get Russia and China on board for serious sanctions in the Security Council? Russia objects, not without reason, to enlarging NATO to include Ukraine and to the American plan to deploy an anti-missile system in Europe. The United States claims the system is designed to counter the threat of Iranian missiles to Europe. The danger that Iran would actually fire missiles at Europe is negligible to begin with, but why not get at the true source of the problem through a deal with Russia? No anti-missile system and no NATO enlargement (a worthy cause in its own right, but not an urgent one), in exchange for real

sanctions in the Security Council. China does not like being in the position of "odd man out" and is likely to follow suit.

Should both this approach and multilateral sanctions outside of the UN fail, it would then be time to consider a U.S. naval blockade. The Iranians might seek to exact some small price, e.g. attack a U.S. vessel, but they are not crazy. It would be like a guppy attacking a whale: The Iranian navy and many additional sites would rapidly cease to exist. It is important that we not engage in deceptive, fearful self-deterrence. (The same holds true for the highly exaggerated fears of Iran's capacity to retaliate against the United States in the event of an attack on its nuclear program.) The Iranians, in any event, will be far more realistic about this.

None of this is to discount the difficulties involved, but the game is far from over and there is still ample time to deal with it—given American leadership.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck\\_freilich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck_freilich/)

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Josef Joffe (2008-04-22 08:01:26)

You don't do sanctions at \$116 per barrel of oil, and you don't do war either when there is a constant imbalance between demand and supply in the oil market, for the slightest disturbance will have an enormously disproportionate impact on prices. Those who think that Israel alone or the United States can destroy a dozen nuclear targets in Iran are right only in the strictly military sense. Yes, these targets can be hit, but not in the way of the Osirak cakewalk that took the Israelis one afternoon. The campaign would involve a serious three-stage air campaign: first, take out Iran's air defenses, then wipe out their air and naval assets that can threaten tanker traffic in the Gulf, then hit the targets themselves. Yet those tankers, especially in the Strait of Hormuz, are sitting ducks, and some will be hit. Where will the oil price go, and for how long? To \$200 or \$300? For a week, month or year? So sanctions, then. Chuck Freilich has a [1]good point—up to a point. Western strategy toward Russia Resurgent has been haphazard, if not confused. Yes, we want them in on sanctions, but then we rile the Russians with NATO expansion and BMD in a forward position, fanning their fears of encirclement. So why not "hierarchize" our policies in favor of a deal on sanctions? One problem with this calculus is that it does not work. In Bucharest, NATO has shelved the inclusion of Georgia and the Ukraine. Has Russia become more forthcoming on sanctions? It does not look like it, does it? The larger problem with such linkages is the assumption that concessions on A will bring forth concessions on B. Yet Russia's help for Iran's nuclear program precedes both BMD and the latest round of NATO expansion. I am referring to Bushehr, a set of power reactors initiated by the Germans in the late 1970s and abandoned in the aftermath of the revolution. Bushehr is now being completed by the Russians, who are also supplying Iran with state-of-the-art anti-air missiles. This raises a conundrum. Theoretically, by dint of propinquity, Russia should feel more threatened by Iranian nukes than the U.S. or Europe. Why doesn't it? Why has it been dragging its heels on sanctions for about five years? "Stupid," you might say. Or you might conclude: Russia values the discomfort of the West and/or friendship with Iran more highly than non-proliferation. If this is the case, why would Russia suddenly tilt to the West for a mess of potage, those two handfuls of ABM's that cannot threaten Moscow's retaliatory potential, as Russian generals have conceded in unguarded moments? Now to Iran. Meanwhile, the Director of the NIC, in his February report to Congress, has cautiously amended the much-criticized NIE of December. He simply does not know whether weaponization has been resumed, he notes. But he invokes "important security and foreign policy interests" which will make it "difficult" for the Iranian regime to renounce nuclear weapons. And he reminds Congress that "enrichment and the development of long-range missiles" are proceeding apace. Add to that a report by *Jane's* (March 19). According to unnamed intelligence sources, some of them close to Iran's AMAD, the "Organization for Planning and Special Procurement," Tehran has been testing implosion systems (in the lab) since 2000. Recently, AMAD has gone into miniaturization, a 60-cm device that can fit on the medium-range missile Shahab-3. Quote: "Well-placed sources claim that Iran is continuing its nuclear weapons program." If a program initiated by the Shah in the mid-seventies has withstood revolution, precipitous drops of the oil price in the 1980s and 1990s, two sets of UN-mandated sanctions, why would we think that a third, or a fourth would turn the trick? Iran first went into the weapons business against Iraq. Its worst foe decimated, why does it continue? Arguably for the reasons that have motivated previous proliferators: status, hegemony, balancing against No. 1, the United States. And against Israel,

where deterrence fits nicely with Iran's larger interests in the Middle East: intimidate the region's No. 1, Israel, as well as the rest from Saudi Arabia to Egypt. These are big-ticket interests that are not derailed by sanctions. The sad conclusion: Iran will go nuclear, though not necessarily with a bang. It will get all its technological ducks lined up on the shelf, and then decide whether to assemble or not. You don't actually need to have a weapon to enjoy its political and strategic benefits. Also, with the oil price heading toward \$200, the bite of sanctions declines *pari passu*. It does not matter whether Iran is an economic basket case as long as those billions in oil money keep flowing into the coffers of the state, whence they will be disbursed to the populace to keep it quiet. This massive tranquilizer also implies that we can forget about "regime change" from the outside, especially since the regime has eliminated all centers of domestic opposition, beginning in the 1980s while it was simultaneously fighting the Eight Years War against Iraq. So what's left? The oldest weapons in the arsenal: deterrence and containment. The country threatened most, that is, existentially, by Iran is already proceeding in that direction. Three years ago, Israel managed to get two state-of-the-art conventional submarines out of Germany (at favorable terms), which it will surely equip with nuclear strike-weapons. When these subs are delivered in the early 2010s, Israel will have five—and thus a serious sea-based deterrent to complement its strike aircraft and MRBMs/IRBMs. Plus a growing missile defense, based on American and indigenous systems. So Israel talks offense, but walks deterrence and defense. The message from Jerusalem is: Iran will go nuclear, but we won't count on sanctions, let alone military strikes. We will enhance deterrence and defense—what nations always do when faced with a tilting strategic balance. [2]Josef Joffe is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/not\\_too\\_late\\_to\\_dissuade\\_iran/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/not_too_late_to_dissuade_iran/)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef\\_joffe/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef_joffe/)

Mark N. Katz (2008-04-22 17:03:40)

It is possible that Iran will acquire nuclear weapons. It is also possible that Iran will be prevented from acquiring them—at least for a time—through forceful action by the United States and/or Israel. But short of regime change in Tehran (and perhaps not even then), it is highly unlikely that Iran can be dissuaded from acquiring nuclear weapons as Chuck Freilich [1]suggests. Freilich argues that France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Sunni states all now support the United States concerning the need to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. If Russia and China could be persuaded to join this effort, serious Security Council sanctions could be applied to Iran that would cripple its economy if Iran did not drop its nuclear weapons ambition. Up to now, though, Moscow and Beijing have worked to prevent Security Council sanctions against Iran or water them down almost to the point of meaninglessness. And it is highly likely that they will continue to do so. Moscow and Beijing both see Iran's poor relations with Europe and especially the United States as an opportunity for their firms to gain commercial advantages in Iran. They will not risk losing this position merely because Iran appears likely to acquire nuclear weapons. Indeed, the resulting increased hostility between Iran and the West may serve to induce Tehran to be more amenable to the terms that Russian and Chinese firms offer it. There are those in Moscow in particular who do not see Iran as likely to acquire nuclear weapons anyway—for no better reason than that they do not see Iranians as capable of doing so. Others, of course, fear that Iran may well acquire nuclear weapons. But if there is going to be a confrontation between the United States and Iran over this issue, there are those in Moscow and Beijing who believe that their countries should just stay out of it. Tehran, they may well calculate, is less likely to retaliate against Russian and Chinese interests if they do not join in any U.S.-sponsored effort aimed at Iran than if they do. The United States could, as Freilich also suggested, impose a naval blockade against Iran without Russian, Chinese, or indeed, anyone else's approval. He argues that the Iranian economy would then collapse. Perhaps this would induce a normal, status quo government to end a nuclear weapons program. But the Islamic Republic of Iran is not a normal, status quo power, but a revolutionary regime. Fidel Castro has demonstrated how a revolutionary regime can endure American sanctions for decades, remain in power, and give considerable support to anti-American forces elsewhere from time to time. Far from buckling to U.S. demands in order to spare the Iranian public from economic hardship, Tehran is likely to encourage and delight in America being blamed by other countries for the oil price increase that would result from such a blockade. Nor would a U.S. naval blockade prevent Iran from a renewed effort to acquire nuclear weapons. The truth of the matter is: Iran either now has or will soon develop the means to acquire nuclear weapons. Since it probably cannot be dissuaded from acquiring them, should the United States and/or Israel act to forcibly prevent it from doing so? In my view, this question should be looked at in cost/benefit terms. Will such an effort succeed in preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons? If so, for how long—permanently, several years, or just a few months? What will be the impact of taking such a step on America's relations with third countries? How will Iran retaliate? Will America and/or Israel undertaking such an action embolden others—such as Russia or China—to cite it as precedent for doing something similar elsewhere (where we don't want them to)? Whether or not there are benefits, there will surely be costs to any such effort. And whether a preemptive strike on Iran is made or not, some thought needs to be given about what will happen, and how the

United States should react, if Iran does indeed acquire nuclear weapons. Other unpleasant regimes, including Stalin's and Mao's, have also acquired nuclear weapons, but have been deterred from using them. The Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons does not mean that Tehran will use them either; while the ayatollahs may encourage others to launch suicide attacks, they do not appear suicidal themselves. We must not, however, be complacent about a nuclear-armed Iran either. Non-nuclear Iran now arms Shi'ite militias in Iraq, Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, and Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank. A nuclear-armed Iran is likely to step up this activity. And while Tehran may not launch a nuclear attack for fear of retaliation, its possession of nuclear weapons could serve to constrain how the U.S. and Israel respond to its stepped up support for these groups—something that Tehran is undoubtedly both well aware of and counting on. That's the bad news. But the news may not be completely bad. For it is not just the United States and Israel that will fear a nuclear-armed Iran. Europe, the Arab states, Turkey, Pakistan, India, and even Russia and China (as well as others) are likely to fear a nuclear-armed Iran that behaves aggressively. And many of those that fear Iran may (despite their various objections to American foreign policy now) seek protection from or cooperation with the U.S. against Tehran then. A more threatening Iran could result in greater appreciation for the United States. This does not mean that Washington should welcome the Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons—far from it. But Tehran's acquisition of them will result in increased fear of Iran on the part of others. The United States can take advantage of this in order to deter and defend against a nuclear Iran. [2]Mark N. Katz is a professor of government and politics at George Mason University.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/not\\_too\\_late\\_to\\_dissuade\\_iran/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/not_too_late_to_dissuade_iran/)

2. <http://www.marknkatz.com/>

Louis René Beres and Isaac Ben-Israel (2008-04-23 16:26:08)

"Israel's Strategic Future," a [1]special report of the Project Daniel Group, was presented to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on January 16, 2003. Among other things, the report asserted that *under no circumstances* should Iran be allowed to "go nuclear." This firm position stemmed from our understanding that stable deterrence could never exist with a nuclear Iran led by the current extreme regime, and that Iran's belligerent stance toward Israel had remained openly genocidal. Iran has moved steadily forward with plans to build and deploy nuclear weapons. On April 8, 2008, Iran's "National Day of Nuclear Technology," President Ahmadinejad announced his intent to install 6,000 additional centrifuges at the Natanz uranium enrichment facility. Now no serious observer can any longer accept the argument that Iran seeks nuclear power only for peaceful purposes. International law is not a suicide pact. Every state has not only the right, but also the obligation, to protect its citizens from aggression. This expectation is beyond any moral or legal question when a determined and possibly irrational enemy seeks nuclear weapons. Ideally, Israel could deter any Iranian WMD attack by maintaining a credible posture of nuclear deterrence. But this is not your father's Cold War, and Israel's notably small size leaves Jerusalem very little room for strategic error. Not surprisingly, Israel continues to maintain a prudent plan for active defense against future Iranian missiles. The plan's indispensable core is the Arrow anti-ballistic missile. Still, no system of active defense can be "leak-proof." And terrorist proxies, rather than missiles, could also be used to deliver Iranian nuclear weapons. It follows, as Project Daniel had advised Prime Minister Sharon, that Israel must consider and codify appropriate preemption options. Under international law, these essential options are known as "anticipatory self-defense." For Israel, time is quickly running out. The Jewish state cannot fully depend upon its anti-ballistic missiles to defend against any future WMD attack from Iran any more than it can rely entirely upon nuclear deterrence. Even a near-perfect Arrow complemented by credible nuclear threats would not obviate Israel's preemption option. Israel has the right of all states to act in anticipatory self-defense when facing an existential assault. The 1996 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice even extends this right to the preemptive use of *nuclear weapons* in certain residual circumstances. These are "live or die" situations where the only expected alternatives to preemption would be unendurable assaults by enemy states or their surrogates. Israel certainly has no wish to act upon the 1996 ICJ Opinion. But it must continue to prepare for certain critical non-nuclear preemptions, and also to implement a maximally efficient missile interception capability. Should Iran somehow become nuclear, Israel would then have to significantly enhance the credibility of its nuclear deterrent (including a prompt end to the doctrine of nuclear ambiguity or "bomb in the basement"), and to deploy a suitable second-strike force. This recognizably invulnerable (hardened and dispersed) "countervalue" force would be fashioned to inflict a decisive retaliatory blow against selected Iranian cities. Whenever possible, Israel will continue to seek security by peaceful means. But under no circumstances will it allow Iran to imperil its citizens with nuclear arms. [2]Louis René Beres is professor of international law at Purdue University. Maj.-Gen. (ret.) [3]Isaac Ben Israel is a professor of security studies at Tel Aviv University, a member of the Israeli parliament, and former chair of the Israel Space Agency. Both were members of Project Daniel.

1. <http://www.acpr.org.il/ENGLISH-NATIV/03-issue/daniel-3.htm>
2. <http://www.polsci.purdue.edu/Directory/Faculty/beres.html>
3. <http://spirit.tau.ac.il/security/person.asp?msgin=12>

### Jordanian option (2008-04-23 15:07)

In an April 16 [1]op-ed entitled "Back to the Jordanian Option," Giora Eiland, former head of Israel's National Security Council, argued that an Israeli-Palestinian final status agreement is "unfeasible in the foreseeable future." He asked: "So what should we do?"

We should reshuffle the cards and try to think about other solutions as well. One of them is a return to the Jordanian option. The Jordanians won't admit this publicly, yet a Palestinian state in the West Bank is the worst solution for them. They too know that within a short period of time such state would be ruled by Hamas. The moment Jordan—which features a Palestinian majority as well as powerful Muslim Brotherhood opposition— will share a border with a Hamas state, the Hashemite regime will face immediate danger.

We asked Efraim Karsh for his response.

From [2]Efraim Karsh



Giora Eiland rightly assumes that an Israeli-Palestinian final status agreement is unfeasible in the foreseeable future. This is not because of the weakness of the present Palestinian leadership and its inability to deliver the goods, or the lack of viability of a Palestinian state, as he suggests. It is for the simple reason that there is no fundamental difference between the ultimate goals of Hamas and the PLO vis-à-vis Israel. Neither accepts the Jewish state's right to exist and both are committed to its eventual destruction. The only difference between the two groups lies in their preferred strategies for the attainment of this goal. Whereas Hamas concentrates exclusively on "armed struggle," a convenient euphemism for its murderous terror campaign, the PLO has adopted since the early 1990s a more subtle strategy, combining intricate political and diplomatic maneuvering with sustained terror attacks (mainly under the auspices of Tanzim, the military arm of Fatah, the PLO's largest constituent group and Arafat's alma mater).

Eiland is also correct about Jordan's abhorrence of an independent Palestinian state, though this is by no means their worst possible nightmare, as he tends to believe. That would be the incorporation of a huge "fifth column" of some two to three million Palestinians into their kingdom: an assured prescription for Hashemite demise.

From the early 1920s to this very day, the Palestinian leadership has been antagonistic to Hashemite rule in Transjordan (later Jordan) and committed to the vision of "Greater Palestine" comprising both banks of the Jordan River. In 1951, King Abdullah was assassinated by a Palestinian militant, and while successive attempts on the life of his erstwhile successor, King Hussein, came to naught, as did the September 1970 putsch, the Hashemites have never lost sight of the mortal danger to their throne attending the reincorporation of the West Bank into their kingdom. This was especially so after the Oslo accords transformed the area



into a full-fledged terror state. Their best hope, therefore, would seem to lie with Israel's continued security control of this territory, which would leave them to pay the customary lip service to Palestinians' rights and to bemoan their "oppression," without incurring the detrimental consequences of renewed annexation.

As for Israel, one need look no further than David Ben-Gurion's justification (in December 1948) of his preference for an independent Palestinian state over the annexation of Judea and Samaria (the term West Bank was not born yet) to Transjordan: "An Arab state in western Palestine [i.e., west of the Jordan] is less dangerous than a state that is tied to Transjordan, and tomorrow—probably to Iraq [then ruled by the Hashemites]."

Of course, the international circumstances have changed dramatically since then, but the gist of Ben-Gurion's rationale remains very much intact, albeit in the opposite direction. That is: a Palestinian-dominated militant entity on both banks of the river would pose a far greater threat to Israel's national security than a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, or perhaps two smaller states in each of these areas.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3532489,00.html>
2. <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/schools/humanities/depts/med/who/karsh/>

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Robert Satloff (2008-04-24 17:11:23)

I agree with the fundamental [1]assessment that my friends Giora Eiland, Efraim Karsh and Asher Susser all make—i.e., that an Israeli-Palestinian "permanent status agreement" is not feasible in the foreseeable future. However, I think we err by thinking of these as binary options, i.e., either the Palestinian or the Jordanian option. That observation, I quickly note, does not necessarily lead to the resurrection of another idea whose viability I do not vouch for, namely a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation antecedent to an Israeli-Palestinian permanent status agreement. For reasons that Asher accurately laid out, that is probably not in the cards (at least at the moment). My own view is that there may (and I emphasize *may*) be an option of having Israeli-Palestinian negotiations proceed in parallel with Jordanian-Palestinian talks on certain issues. Indeed, on certain critical topics—from trade to security—Israel is only likely to reach agreement with the Palestinians if the Israelis have a clear sense of how Palestinians and Jordanians will themselves approach the issues and if the Jordanians are bound up in both the process of negotiations and the resolution of the outcome. Some will view this as building confederation brick-by-brick; I prefer not to label this so as not to scare away participants. Of course, the Jordanians may want none of this. Despite their stated preference for progress in Abbas-Olmert talks, they may decide to use resources at their disposal to ensure no real progress, because a fully Palestinian independent state, governing its borders, is not in Jordan's interest. However, if the Jordanians were convinced that the alternative to the one I suggested is not perpetual Israeli control of the West Bank (which, for all its problems, would be better for the Hashemites than independent Palestinian rule) but the likelihood of growing Hamas/Islamist influence there, they may decide that participating in the parallel diplomacy I propose is the least bad of the available options. [2]Robert Satloff is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/jordanian\\_option/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/jordanian_option/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_satloff/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_satloff/)

Shmuel Bar (2008-04-27 11:09:11)

Giora Eiland's [1]points are valid. No serious observer of Palestinian politics would dispute the assertion that for the foreseeable future, an independent Palestinian state—even if it were granted on a silver platter—would most likely be a failed state. The energy necessary to reverse the "political entropy" that has characterized the Palestinian society for years cannot come from inside that society. At the same time, no external actor is willing to invest what is needed to create a stable Palestine—first and foremost, military force—to disarm the plethora of armed gangs who now rule the streets of the West Bank and Gaza. The only military force in the region that could conceivably tame the West Bank—at a very high price—is Israel, and Israel will not do so. The proposals for an international force are even less practical, as no international force will be able to embark on the kind of "surge" needed to pacify Palestinian society. Therefore, in the absence of a "Palestinian option" and in light of the fact that the current situation seems untenable

in the long haul, the "Jordanian option" has been mooted again. But as Asher Susser rightly [2] argues, the absence of a Palestinian option alone is not enough to convince the Jordanians that it is time to take on responsibility for the West Bank. A major part of the Jordanian political body eschews any idea of a return to the West Bank for fear of losing both banks to a Palestinian majority. I do not subscribe to argument that "Jordan is the Palestinian state" (despite the large percentage of Jordanians of Palestinian descent in the East Bank); the Jordanian regime has succeeded admirably in creating a common denominator and relative stability. However, any attempt to swallow the Palestinians of the West Bank would most probably undermine these achievements. Moreover, even if an agreement were reached to bring Jordan into the West Bank, the ability of the Jordanian army to impose law and order in a theatre from which it has been absent for forty years is highly in question. All this said, Jordan and Israel—and Egypt as well—have a common interest in cordoning off the West Bank and Gaza from "spilling over" into their own "Palestinian" communities. Israel is capable of doing so by erecting the security fence and restricting contact between the Palestinians and Israeli Arabs. Jordan, however, would find it difficult to cut off all social and economic ties with a West Bank which is cut off from Israel, and by so doing be accused of participating in an Israeli "siege" of the Palestinians. Thus, the more successful Israel is in cutting itself off from the Palestinians, the greater the danger for Jordan of spill-over into the East Bank. Only in this scenario might the Jordanian leadership conclude that the kingdom would face even graver threats to its well-being if it refrained from involvement in the West Bank. [3] *Shmuel Bar is director of studies at the Institute for Policy and Strategy, IDC, Herzliya, Israel.* MESH Updater: Visit this additional post, [4] 'Radical pragmatism' and the Jordanian option, for more commentary.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/jordanian\\_option/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/jordanian_option/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/jordanian\\_option/#comment-461](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/jordanian_option/#comment-461)
3. [http://www.herzliyaconference.org/Eng/\\_Articles/Article.asp?ArticleID=149&CategoryID=74](http://www.herzliyaconference.org/Eng/_Articles/Article.asp?ArticleID=149&CategoryID=74)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/radical\\_pragmatism\\_and\\_the\\_jordanian\\_option/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/radical_pragmatism_and_the_jordanian_option/)

Asher Susser (2008-04-23 15:34:05)

Efraim Karsh and Giora Eiland are [1] both right on the unfeasibility of a Palestinian–Israeli final status agreement. It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for any Palestinian leadership to agree on "end of conflict" with Israel. If "end of conflict" is intended to resolve not only the 1967 questions (borders, settlements, Jerusalem, etc.) but also the 1948 issues (refugees, etc.), its impossibility was already shown in Arafat's time. The increasing strength of Hamas is only pushing such a deal even further out of reach. The PLO's greatest achievement was the recognition of the organization by the Arab League in 1974 as the "sole" legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The PLO's recognized status pushed Jordan out of the picture and eventually coerced the United States and Israel into dealing directly with Arafat. But nothing now remains of that great achievement. Since the Hamas victory in the 2006 elections, the Palestinians have no "sole" legitimate representative. It is not just Mahmoud Abbas who is weak. Secular Palestinian nationalism, as embodied by the PLO, is in decline. Muslim Palestine (*Filastin al-Muslima*) is inheriting Palestine of the Revolution (*Filastin al-Thawra*), and Hamas is steadily eroding whatever was left of the viability of the two-state solution. As Eiland suggests, it would therefore be a great step forward if Jordan could be enticed to resume its historical role in the Palestinian question and put some order into the pandemonium called the Palestinian Authority. Unfortunately, however, in the Jordanian mind, the Jordanian option is not a book on the shelf for the Israelis to take down whenever they find it useful. When the Jordanians were genuinely interested, even desperate, the Israelis were consumed by their post-1967 hubris and sent the Jordanians packing. Some water has flowed down the Jordan river since then, and the Jordanian position has evolved. Jordan's loss of the West Bank in the 1967 war arrested the process of "Jordanization" of the Palestinians and denied Jordan its manipulative control of the bulk of what remained of Arab Palestine. The meteoric rise of the Palestinian national movement thereafter forced the Jordanians into the realization that they could not contain Palestinian nationalism as they had intended, and eventually forced them to disengage from Palestine lest it consume them. Over the years, especially since the civil war of 1970-71, a cohesive Jordanian national movement has emerged as a counterweight to Palestinianness. The Jordanian political elite has actually developed an interest in a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, as a guarantee against the transformation of Jordan itself into the "alternative homeland" (*al-watan al-badil*) for Palestine, as some on the Israeli right and elsewhere have suggested. "Jordan is Jordan and Palestine is Palestine," King Hussein used to say in his later post-disengagement years. The Jordanians have developed an obsession about the "alternative homeland" theory, and any Israeli idea of a Jordanian role in Palestinian affairs is immediately interpreted as an effort to suck the Jordanians into a quagmire of which they want no part. Hitherto that has been the position whenever ideas like the one suggested by Eiland have come to the fore. In the eyes of the Jordanian political elite, deep Jordanian involvement in the affairs of Palestine could be but the first step in a process which will culminate in the Palestinization of Jordan—and they, needless to say, are not interested. Hamas's power in Palestinian politics

these days doesn't make the Jordanians any more receptive to the idea. Quite the opposite is true. For the Jordanians to change their minds on this matter would require of them to conclude that the kingdom would face even graver threats to its well-being if it refrained from such involvement. Presently that does not seem to be the case. It would be a remarkably positive development if Jordan would agree to pull the chestnuts out of the Palestinian fire. It seems very unlikely, however, that they would agree to do so. [2]Asher Susser is senior fellow at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Tel Aviv University.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/jordanian\\_option/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/jordanian_option/)
2. <http://www.dayan.org/research.htm#ASHER>

## U.S.-Syria: Who's converting whom? (2008-04-25 10:36)

From [1]Peter W. Rodman



The idea of splitting Syria from Iran seems like a no-brainer. This is the most important strategic argument that is often made for trying to improve the U.S. relationship with Syria. The idea has been around for a long time, however—25 years or so, in fact, since the Syrian-Iranian alliance took shape during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s. The obstacle to actually accomplishing this strategic coup is that no one has figured out a way to do it consistently with other important strategic interests or without risk to other strategic interests of the United States.

It is reasonable to look at this question again, however, in the current context—especially in light of recent rumors of Syrian-Israeli contacts.

The main problems lately have been Syria's role and actions in Iraq, in Lebanon, in the Palestinian diplomacy, and in the nuclear dimension.

Iraq. Syria's President Bashar al-Asad sided with Saddam Hussein just before the 2003 Iraq war. Then, after the war, he opened Syria to Ba'athist extremists trying to undermine the new Iraqi government and to kill Americans. The Bush Administration sent senior officials on several visits to Damascus to meet with President Asad to try to persuade him to stop these activities: Secretary of State Colin Powell went in May 2003; I had the privilege of visiting myself in September 2004 as part of an interagency delegation with Assistant Secretary of State William Burns; and Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage had a similar meeting with Asad in early 2005.

In each case, the Syrians' response was that destabilizing Iraq and killing Americans were the furthest things from their minds; they did confess to having trouble controlling the Syrian-Iraqi border, and asked for our technical assistance. The concern that the American side expressed, however, was that the main problem was not border control but the evident policy of the Syrian government to allow sanctuary inside Syria for political organizing by Iraqi extremists directly involved in those hostile activities. We even

gave them names of senior Iraqi extremists who we knew were operating out of Syria. As we told President Asad, we had a hard time believing that the Syrian government did not have control over these kinds of activities on its territory. In response, they turned over one Iraqi radical, if I recall correctly.

And the Syrians are masters of spin. Each of these visits by senior Americans was meant to convey a serious warning and to ratchet up pressures on Damascus to reverse its disruptive and destructive policy. Our talking points, I recall on my own visit, were as blunt and tough as any talking points I have seen in many years (and we let President Asad know they had been cleared by President Bush). But the Syrians always publicized the fact of the high-level meetings as a sign that U.S.-Syrian relations were excellent. This conveyed a wrong impression to everyone, including our friends in the region. In other words, while our tough talking points were meant to ratchet up pressures, the Syrians spun the visits into relief from pressures.

Lebanon. The murder of former prime minister Rafiq Hariri took place in February 2005; the war between Israel and Hezbollah occurred in July 2006. One important consequence of these two events was to isolate Syria in the Arab world. The Arabs, particularly the Gulf Arabs, were furious at Syria—Hariri was a close friend of the Saudis, and the Gulf Arabs saw Hezbollah's aggression as an Iranian power play. At an Arab summit, there was the unusual occurrence of many leaders condemning Hezbollah for provoking the conflict. The Syrians chose that period to float another peace overture to Israel. But we and the Israelis and the Arabs correctly saw this as a ploy—as a device to break out of their isolation, indeed as a way to split us from the Gulf Arabs. At a moment when we and the Gulf Arabs were intensifying our security cooperation—in an important U.S. initiative called the Gulf Security Dialogue—prompted in large part by concern over Iran, for us to have taken the bait and launched into a rapprochement with Syria would have caused considerable confusion in the Arab world about our strategic judgment.

Arab anger at Syria is a recurring phenomenon—usually short-lived. In recent years, however, given the growing threat from Iran, the unholy alliance between Syria and Iran is likely to remain a big issue in Syrian-Arab relations. We should not forget which side we have the bigger stake in.

The Palestinian issue. On the Palestinian issue, too, Syria has long played a negative role, backing rejectionist forces. Today it is solidly backing Hamas and harboring its leaders. President Carter's efforts notwithstanding, this is a way of obstructing the peace process, not advancing it. Syria has long played this kind of role – to maximize its leverage over Israel and indeed its regional leverage.

The Nuclear dimension. None of us on the outside can know the full ramifications of the reported Israeli strike last September against a North Korean-related nuclear facility in Syria. It was interesting that both Israel and Syria perceived an interest in minimizing the public political fallout from that event. The incident probably has more immediate relevance to our present diplomacy with North Korea, but it is also a reminder of the potential dangers of a Syrian-Israeli conflict. Syria already possesses other forms of WMD if not nuclear weapons.

Where do we go from here? Some might say these are all reasons for the United States to reach out to Syria. But, if Syria really wants to make a deal with us (and Israel) in good faith, and if that's what Syria is really after, it has been going about it the wrong way. It is not in our interest to take the bait (on the Golan) in a context that complicates our Arab relations or seems to reward the killing of Americans.

Some make the argument a little differently, saying that our current difficulties show we need Syria and need to reach out to them. But Syria's collusion in the killing of Americans in Iraq has made it unattractive for the United States to take any such initiative. Yielding to blackmail, or approaching them as demandeur, would be the wrong approach.

Thus, Syrian policies have made it harder to visualize any kind of rapprochement—assuming that’s what they are interested in. My conclusion is, on the contrary, that the Syrian government has behaved like a government that has made a strategic decision to continue to play the spoiler—to cling to its alliance with Iran in order to maximize its regional position and leverage. Syria is an essentially weak country that has made itself a major factor in the Arab world by its alliance with Iran and by being disruptive and menacing in its behavior. It is not self-evident the Syrians will give all that up, just for the Golan Heights. Their strategic priorities do not seem to be limited to the Golan.

Is there some “grand bargain” to be had between us and Syria? If so, what would it be? What else could we give them, apart from helping them recover the Golan? We can’t “give them Lebanon,” or seem to. In 1991, the inclusion of Syria in the Madrid peace process was seen by some (including the Syrians) as giving them a green light to step up their bullying in Lebanon. That’s not in the cards today.

In other words, it’s not only Syria that has a price; we have a price:

- Will they leave Lebanon alone? The continuing deadlock over the Lebanese presidency and cabinet shows Syria still playing a bullying role and trying to regain by other means the dominance it lost in Lebanon after it took its troops out.
- In Iraq, there seems to be some recent reduction in the flow of extremist fighters from Syria, but it may be the result of a crackdown on Islamists within Syria—for Syria’s own domestic purposes—rather than a strategic decision to stop trying to weaken Iraq and bleed the United States.
- Will Syria still play the role of spoiler on other regional issues—supporting extremists, maintaining its strategic alliance with Iran?

In short, the conditions do not exist for an improvement of relations with Syria so long as Syrian policies remain hostile to important interests of ours in the Middle East. It is appropriate to continue sanctions and pressures on Syria so long as this is the case. And, based on the experience of past meetings with President Asad, I am skeptical of the value of further diplomatic overtures in the absence of significant improvements in U.S. leverage or in the overall balance of forces in the region.

Lately there have been fresh reports of Syrian-Israeli diplomatic contacts. I can only speculate, but I can see some benefit to the Israelis in playing the Syrians and Palestinians off against each other, or in nailing down a stable situation on the Syrian front while they continue to wrestle with the agonizing Palestinian problem. Perhaps now is an opportunity for the Israelis to be creative in this area. But I have two concerns.

One is whether Israeli domestic politics can absorb a Syrian negotiation at the same time as the (already difficult) Palestinian negotiation. It has long been an axiom of the Middle East peace process that the Israeli political system cannot handle major concessions on more than one front at a time. But that, of course, is for the Israeli government and people to decide.

Second, it is essential that Israel and the United States coordinate their respective strategies toward Syria, in light of the broader regional significance of Syrian policies. Israel and the United States also need to keep in mind the broader Arab context—and the Iran context—and the stake we both have in cooperation with the moderate Arabs, including in the Gulf. Ultimately there will have to be a Syrian-Israeli peace settlement—everyone knows that—but it should be in a strategic context that strengthens the forces of moderation in the region rather than weakening them. Syria will be thinking strategically if it pursues a dialogue with Israel; so should we.

My bottom line is that Syria has to pay a big part of the price—in Iraq, in Lebanon, in the Arab-Israeli diplomacy, and in its ties with Iran—if it wants the United States to lift a finger in its behalf.

Peter W. Rodman made these remarks to the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on April 24.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)

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Michael Young (2008-04-26 09:28:15)

I fully agree with [1]Peter Rodman, and must disagree with my friend [2]Jon Alterman. I find paradoxical, even contradictory, the line of argument that he has put forward. It goes something like this: It is not in the U.S. interest to isolate Syria for an extended period of time. But the way out of this dilemma is to convince the Syrians that it's not in their interest to remain isolated from the U.S. I'm simplifying, but that's roughly it. Of course, Syria sees things quite differently. They know very well that they're isolated; and they know very well that they're losing their cards. That's precisely why they will not do what Jon suggests, and surrender their remaining cards just so they can be viewed as less of a trouble-maker in Washington. The Syrians are well-versed in the ways of power, as Jon correctly points out. They do respond to sticks. And while he asserts that the effectiveness of U.S. sticks is diminishing, at this stage the sticks are not only American; they are also Arab, European, and international, through myriad United Nations resolutions on Lebanon. But are U.S. sticks really diminishing? I'm not so sure. I don't believe, for example, that Bashar Asad would have so vocally supported a peace deal with Israel had he not been seeking to use negotiations toward that end as a way of gaining entry back into Washington, for the reasons Peter Rodman outlines. Asad's statements are causing useful anxiety among Syria's Middle Eastern allies—whether Iran or Hezbollah—who wonder whether they can really trust Damascus, particularly after the killing of Imad Mughniyeh. Is it not in U.S. interests to create tension in that relationship, and to do so by forcing Syria to make the mistakes? I also find that Peter put his finger on a fundamentally new reality, very different than what we've seen in the past: Syria's isolation within the Arab world, particularly its very poor relations with Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The intensity of that hostility has to be understood outside the context of traditional Middle Eastern politics. The reason the Saudis and Egyptians are so worried about Syria is that Syria is perceived as an Iranian wedge in the Levant. The reason both are so adamantly opposed to Syria in Lebanon is that they feel that a Syrian return there would pose an existential threat to them by extending Iranian influence from Tehran to the Mediterranean. It would also enhance the power, and more broadly the appeal of the revolutionary "model," of Iran's militant Islamist allies, serving as an example to their domestic Islamist opposition movements. Is it really in the U.S. interest to engage Syria in this context, when its major Arab allies are in the midst of a conflict with Iran they view as vital? In fact, I'm not at all convinced that asking Arab states to change Syrian behavior through "more robust interactions and investments in the country" would work. The Arabs have repeatedly tried to change Syrian behavior through more congenial means, most prominently at the Arab League summit in Riyadh last year. The Syrians have ignored this. Why? Because they know the price for their return to the Arab fold would be to give up on a return to Lebanon. They're not about to do that, because only such a return, one that is total, with soldiers, would give Syria the regional relevance it lost in 2005, when it was forced out of Lebanon. It would also allow Syria, from Beirut, to undermine the Hariri tribunal, which threatens the future of the Syrian regime and which will probably begin operating next year. In this, Syria has the full support of Hezbollah, which realizes that without a Syrian comeback, the party will continue to face a majority in Lebanon that wants the party to disarm. I find it revealing that Jon failed to mention Lebanon once in his post. That's because advocates of engaging Syria realize that the only way you can bring about an advantageous dialogue with Damascus is to give it something worthwhile. That something can only be Lebanon, the minimal price Syria would demand to offer positive concessions in return. More broadly, the Syrians also happen to feel that their alliance with Iran allows them to persist in that objective, while also ignoring the entreaties of their Arab brethren. Syria sees Iran as the regional superpower of the future, an impression Asad has little reason to discard when the debate in the United States so foolishly ignores the regional implications of a substantial American drawdown in Iraq. Asad may be right, but his attitude is not the basis on which an enduring U.S.-Syrian relationship can be built. We are in a regional struggle for power, and Syria happens to stand at its nexus point. It is a weak link that some persist in wanting to strengthen by advocating U.S. engagement of it. But what are the conditions of such engagement? If it is that Syria must surrender

Lebanon, Hamas, and Hezbollah to find its salvation in a better relationship with the United States, then be assured that Asad won't accept such a patently bad deal. He prefers to take his chances with a fight, with Iran on his side. If there are those in the United States willing to give up on Lebanon's independence, however, and by extension allow Syria to further bolster Hezbollah, then fine. But I again fail to see how that would be in the long-term U.S. interest. [3]Michael Young is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/us\\_syria\\_whos\\_converting\\_whom/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/us_syria_whos_converting_whom/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/us\\_syria\\_whos\\_converting\\_whom/#comment-472](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/us_syria_whos_converting_whom/#comment-472)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_young/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_young/)

Eyal Zisser (2008-04-26 17:28:08)

For nearly all of six decades, the United States and Syria have had an impossible relationship, marked by total U.S. failure. Despite all efforts, the United States has failed to turn Syria into its ally, or even persuade Syria to respect U.S. regional interests. The problem would seem to be not only Syria's behavior, but the very nature of the regime, especially that of the Asad dynasty. It is useful to consider Syria as another Cuba or North Korea, with which it bears many similarities. All three countries are ruled by dictatorial family dynasties cloaked in anti-Western ideologies that legitimate them and ensure their survival. For this reason, Bashar Asad is unlikely to be "bought" by the West. It would be a mistake to compare Bashar even to Anwar Sadat. Unlike Sadat, Bashar sends out feelers to United State and Israel, not as part of an effort to bring about a fundamental change in his country's domestic situation, but in order to preserve things just as they are. It is more apt to compare him to Gamal Abdel Nasser, who in the 1950s sought to maneuver between the two big blocs, until Washington finally pushed him into the arms of the Soviet Union. What Bashar is proposing to the United States is an honorable capitulation: that it depart from Iraq, abandon Lebanon, pressure Israel to return the entire Golan Heights, and acquiesce in Syria's continued membership in the region's Iran-centered "axis of evil" (with no more than a vague Syrian hint of a possible future withdrawal from that axis). In return for all this, Syria offers to restore the arms-length relationship it had with the United States in the 1990s. Washington tolerated that sort of Syrian maneuvering in the days of George Bush senior and Bill Clinton, but it became altogether unacceptable to the present Bush administration after 9/11. Syria is paying a price for Bashar's defiance of the United States and his alignment with Iran and North Korea. Syria remains weak and backward, and its economic situation is getting worse. The country is depleted of its oil reserves and impacted negatively by the global economic downturn. But domestically, on the Syrian street, Bashar's policies appear to enjoy wide popularity. America's sinking into the Iraqi morass and Israel's failure to subdue Hezbollah in the Lebanese war weakened Syria's two main rivals and strengthened Bashar, who suddenly looked like a winning gambler. In a troubled region, Syria gives the impression of a model of political stability. Its social and economic problems are not yet acute, and there is no real domestic threat to the regime's stability. So the question of what to do about Syria remains unresolved. There is very little Washington can do to compel a change in Syrian behavior if it is not interested in another Iraq-type adventure (i.e., regime change by means of military occupation), or not ready to use real force against Syria—for instance, by imposing a blockade on export of Syrian oil. Absent such measures, U.S. policy consists of ineffective rhetoric and insignificant economic sanctions. In that light, perhaps those who call upon the United States to change its policy have a point. If Washington isn't prepared to beat Damascus, its only other option, aside from the status quo, is to think about joining it. A properly conceived Syrian-Israeli peace process could serve Israeli and U.S. interests. A different Syria also could play a stabilizing role in Lebanon. If Syria somehow ended up aligned with the *pax Americana*, it could work keep Hezbollah from assuming power there (which might otherwise happen in 15-20 years). But a Syrian-American dialogue should be realistic. It cannot be based on the illusion that Syria might become another Egypt, or even another Libya. At best, it might be another North Korea—a country with which the United States could reach limited understandings after long and exacting negotiations, crafted carefully and realistically. [1]Eyal Zisser is director of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University.

1. <http://www.tau.ac.il/dayancenter/research.htm#EYAL>

Jon Alterman (2008-04-25 15:55:55)

I agree that Syria has consistently played a spoiler role in the Middle East, and the assurances of its most senior leadership are either disavowed or left in abeyance in the days and weeks after they are made. We don't owe them anything, and we're unlikely to make them into allies any time soon. I completely agree that even enthusiasts for improving the bilateral relationship should expect clearing a pretty low bar here. But if we put aside the question of healing the rift in U.S.-Syrian relations and just think about how best to manage an often antagonistic regime, it

seems to me that our policy of growing isolation over decades isn't serving our interests. There is increasingly little we can do to harm Syrian interests (I still love the irony that under the Syria Accountability Act we barred Syrian Arab Airlines from flying to the United States, when I am fairly sure they don't even own an aircraft that could make such a journey). Even more practically, we (and the Syrians) have systematically winnowed down the constituencies in both countries that would support better ties, lowering the costs to either side of escalating tensions. There is no question that the Syrian government responds to sticks. We saw that in the way they caved on Abdullah Ocalan, their lack of response to the Israeli airstrike in September, and so on. But consistently applying the stick to Syria as we have done has made them somewhat numb, and that makes whatever sticks we pick up less and less effective. To my mind, our policy needs to have two components. The first is to persuade the Syrians that the utility of their spoiler role is diminishing. In meetings with Syrian officials at the highest levels last July, I put forward the point that people have forgotten that Syria has any ability to help solve problems, so consistent has their troublemaking been. Americans should push this point time after time, and challenge the Syrians to be constructive. The second is to press Arab allies in the cause of changing Syrian behavior, taking advantage of their much more robust interactions and investments in the country. Coordinating our activities with them has a huge multiplier effect; carrying them out alone, it seems to me, means our effect is marginal at best. None of this is to suggest that our problems with Syria will go away, or that the regime can be "flipped." I don't believe there is much evidence that it can be. But are we better able to manage things from a position of having more interactions or less? I think the indicators are pretty clearly in favor of the former. [1]Jon Alterman is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon\\_alterman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon_alterman/)

Itamar Rabinovich (2008-04-27 11:12:39)

The trilateral relationship among the United States, Israel and Syria was transformed in 2000-2001 from what it had been through most of the 1990s. The first Bush administration in its final months and the Clinton administration collaborated with three Israeli prime ministers in trying to bring about a peace settlement with Syria that would be intimately linked to a dramatic improvement of U.S.-Syrian relations. This effort collapsed in 2000. By 2001 Hafez al-Asad was dead, Bill Clinton ended his term and Ehud Barak was defeated by Ariel Sharon. George W. Bush was not interested in the Arab-Israeli peace process, certainly not in the Syrian track; Sharon was determined to focus on the Palestinian issue and was opposed to withdrawal from the Golan. The Bush administration's relationship with Syria deteriorated during the next few years. Syria had been an ally of Iran, a sponsor of terrorist organizations and a collector of WMD. This original list of U.S. grievances was significantly lengthened by two other issues: Syria's important aid to the Sunni insurrection in Iraq and its efforts to stifle Lebanese independence and democracy, cherished by President Bush himself. Since the Bush administration decided not to engage Syria on one hand and not to attack it on the other, its policy of punishing and isolating Syria has remained largely ineffective. When Ehud Olmert, Sharon's successor, began to talk about resuming negotiations with Syria, he was told by the Bush administration that this was not a good idea. Recently, talk of such resumption has been given more play. Oddly it was prompted by Washington's decision to expose details of Israel's destruction on September 7, 2007 of a nuclear reactor being built in northern Syria by North Korea. At the time, both the United and Israel chose to play down this major event. In the past few weeks a confluence of Congressional and intra-administration pressures led to a decision to reveal the details of the Israeli raid. The anticipated revelations and the expectation of Syrian embarrassment reinforced Olmert's tendency to explore through Turkey the prospect of renewing the negotiations. Olmert has his own domestic political reasons for flaunting this prospect, but he now had the added reason of seeking to minimize Syria's embarrassment so as not to push its president, Bashar al-Asad, towards another irresponsible adventure. This turn of events gave rise to the current debate about the pros and cons of such a deal and of a putative U.S.-Syrian rapprochement. To my mind the debate is irrelevant because the prospects of such a deal or deals are quite dim. The Bush administration is focused on the Palestinian track and is hostile to Syria. It is difficult to see how the U.S. and Syrian positions on Lebanon could be reconciled or how Syria's disengagement from Iran could seriously be discussed in the coming months. The issue will be relevant, if at all, for the next U.S. administration in the late winter of 2009. [1]Itamar Rabinovich was Israel's chief negotiator with Syria. He is visiting professor of public policy at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

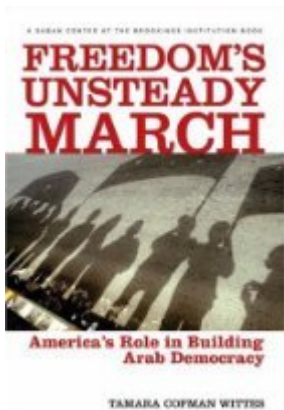
1. [http://ksgfaculty.harvard.edu/Itamar\\_Rabinovich](http://ksgfaculty.harvard.edu/Itamar_Rabinovich)



## 'Freedom's Unsteady March' (2008-04-30 18:22)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Tamara Cofman Wittes is Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy of the Brookings Institution, and a member of MESH. Her new book is *Freedom's Unsteady March: America's Role in Building Arab Democracy*.

From [1]Tamara Cofman Wittes



[2] When I began writing *Freedom's Unsteady March*, four years ago, I set it up as a two-part argument: why the United States should promote democracy in the Arab world, and then how. I thought the "why" part of the argument would be relatively uncontroversial, but the "how" might be very useful. After all, the notion that democratic growth abroad is in America's national interest has been a tenet of both Democratic and Republican administrations for decades, but implementation is often complicated both by bureaucratic factors and by misgivings regarding democracy's impact on other US national interests.

But the fallout from the Iraq war drastically shifted the context in which the book now appears. Today's presidential candidates are all running away from President Bush's foreign policy in various ways, and Bush's "Freedom Agenda"—in particular its association in the public mind with the Iraq war—is a big part of what they are running away from. So today, a book arguing for assertive U.S. efforts to cultivate Arab democracy seems not merely against the tide, but out-of-place entirely: naïve, foolhardy, and simply irrelevant.

My fear is that the book's argument will be dismissed too quickly in this environment, by those foreign policy commentators who are more focused on bashing Bush than on figuring out what to do instead, and more concerned with America's global reputation than they are with our global position. My hope is that *Freedom's Unsteady March* will help keep open a debate which should not be foreclosed: about whether, when, where and how the United States should seek to advance democracy in the Arab world.

I finished writing the book and sent it to press in the firm belief that, regardless of the whisperings of neo-isolationists on both the left and right in America, regardless of the inevitable onset of ABB ("Anything But Bush") orientations in U.S. foreign policy, the Middle East is not going away—and despite the wishes of some in the commentariat, the United States is not walking away from the Middle East either, not in any fundamental sense. Given that, it seems to me that the domestic political and economic trends in the region that are challenging governance and legitimacy—trends that are driving leaders' threat perceptions, shaping their attitudes toward regional issues, and constraining their cooperation with the United States—will remain matters of crucial interest here in Washington. The question is not whether America will influence the future shape of the Arab world, but in what manner, and to what end.

Freedom's Unsteady March focuses on how regional and global realities affect the durability of Arab autocracies and the environment within which America must continue to pursue its regional interests. Some argue that a pro-democracy American stance will threaten strategic cooperation with Arab allies, and will enable Islamists with questionable democratic credentials to take over the governments of major Arab states. These two concerns long prevented America from even trying to advance democracy in the Middle East, and these same two concerns (and some crucial bad judgments) ultimately doomed Bush's revolutionary "Freedom Agenda" for the Middle East as well. My book takes on these two problems and unpacks them, showing how America can promote democracy while protecting its other interests. In the silly season of a presidential election, and more importantly when a new administration takes office, I hope my book will help shape a realistic, pragmatic debate about how to do in the Middle East what America has done for every other region of the world: integrate democracy promotion into the daily conduct of American foreign policy.

[3]Table of Contents | [4]Sample Chapter | [5]Order from Publisher | [6]Amazon

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara\\_cofman\\_wittes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara_cofman_wittes/)

2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51pOpZ0ui5L.jpg>

3. [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Press/Books/2008/freedomsunsteadymarch/freedomsunsteadymarch\\_TOC.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Press/Books/2008/freedomsunsteadymarch/freedomsunsteadymarch_TOC.pdf)

4. [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Press/Books/2008/freedomsunsteadymarch/freedomsunsteadymarch\\_chapter.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Press/Books/2008/freedomsunsteadymarch/freedomsunsteadymarch_chapter.pdf)

5. <http://www.brookings.edu/press/Books/2008/freedomsunsteadymarch.aspx>

6. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0815794940>

## 2.5 May

### ASMEA's debut (2008-05-02 12:37)

From [1]Mark T. Clark

I am happy to report that the inaugural conference for the [2]Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa (AMESA) on April 25-26, 2008 went extremely well. The title of the conference was "Evolution of Islamic Politics, Philosophy and Culture in the Middle East and Africa: From Traditional Limits to Modern Extremes." In six months' time, ASMEA has grown to about 500 scholars from 40 countries representing 230 colleges and universities from 35 academic disciplines. Nearly 250 people attended the first conference.

Six panels and two roundtables covered such subjects as Islamic philosophy, religious obligation, current case studies in the Middle East and Africa, and more. The chair of the Academic Council of ASMEA, Bernard Lewis, gave the keynote speech on the subject of "Studying the Other: Different Ways of Looking at the Middle East and Africa." In his speech, Lewis demonstrated that no civilization in history has made the study of "the Other" for its own sake important, except for Western civilization (for which the West is nevertheless disparaged in many a Middle Eastern studies program). Watch Lewis' speech at the bottom of this post. Media reports on the conference can be found [3]here and [4]here.

I invite you to consider joining ASMEA to help us build a strong academic society dedicated to defending free inquiry into the important regions of the Middle East and Africa.

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1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_t\\_clark/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_t_clark/)
2. <http://www.asmeascholars.org/>
3. <http://www.asmeascholars.org/IntheNews/FirstMeetingforNewGrouponMiddleEastandAfr/tabid/818/Default.aspx>
4. <http://www.asmeascholars.org/IntheNews/LackofOpennessMakesScholarlyDiscussionofIsl/tabid/819/Default.aspx>

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Raymond Ibrahim (2008-05-08 04:55:43)

As a person who had (more or less) vowed never to bother with most Middle Eastern conferences—I have been to too many farces on both the university and governmental level—ASMEA’s recent [1]inaugural conference was a breath of fresh air. Why? What makes it different? Two main reasons come to mind: First, the atmosphere of “you’re either with us or against us”—i.e., you’re either an apologist for radical Islam, who believes that Israel is the source of all woes, who filters all data through a secularist/materialistic epistemology, or otherwise you’re a hate-mongering, “Islamophobic,” simpleton—was refreshingly absent. Which, of course, is the purpose of the organization: a return to objectivity—in all its ugliness. Second, the presentations revolved around topics that actually mattered and were relevant—again, something of a rarity in this field. Presentations revolved around: Islamic jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*) and hermeneutics; sharia law and jihad’s role; war and peace in Islam; the problematic practice of *takfir*; and apocalyptic discourse in Islam. Compare these pressing themes to one of the Center of Contemporary Arab Studies’ most recent presentations, “Orientalism and Sexual Rights.” The point here is not so much that “orientalism” and “gender studies” are unimportant aspects when studying the Middle East; far from it. Rather, the point is that there are many extremely important and pressing topics—such as jihad, sharia law, and radical Islam—that the world needs answers to, but that are being virtually ignored by those who are most expected to provide an answer. In the place of this void, it was inevitable that a more relevant and objective organization studying the Middle East, Africa, and the Islamic world would come into being. More’s the pity it did not come sooner. [2]*Raymond Ibrahim is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/asmea\\_debut/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/asmea_debut/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_ibrahim/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_ibrahim/)

Philip Carl Salzman (2008-05-05 10:11:48)

I joined ASMEA and participated in its [1]first annual conference. For me, ASMEA provides an alternative to the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), which has tended to take an obscurantist or apologist line toward Islamism and its threat to the West, as well as a pro-Arab line on the Arab-Israel conflict. The “postcolonial” approach so prevalent in MESA, blaming all problems of the Middle East on the West, was not much in evidence at the ASMEA conference. Many of the difficult issues of contemporary conflict were tackled head-on in ASMEA conference papers. And for once, we academics were not just talking to each other. The conference was enriched by the participation, and by some papers, from members of independent think tanks and agencies, members of various governments, and members of the military. There were definitely more military crew cuts than appear at most academic conferences. This is a constructive development. We want academics to be more realistic, and we want agencies, governments, and the military to be better informed. ASMEA has found a fruitful niche, and I look forward to future conferences. [2]*Philip Carl Salzman is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/asmea\\_debut/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/asmea_debut/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)

## MEK: State’s irrelevant allegations (2008-05-05 05:44)

From [1]Raymond Tanter



On April 30, the U.S. Department of State released the [2]2007 edition of Country Reports on Terrorism, which reports descriptions of State Sponsors of Terrorism and groups listed as Foreign Terrorist Organizations. Country Reports rightly identifies the Iranian regime as the "most active state sponsor of terrorism," which is consistent with evidence of terrorist capability and intent: The regime ships to Iraq "rockets, sniper rifles, automatic weapons, mortars that have killed thousands of Coalition and Iraqi Forces... and improvised explosive devices (IEDs)... specially designed to defeat armored vehicles."

However, Country Reports is inconsistent in its application of principles of capability and intent in listing the Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MEK) as a foreign terrorist organization. By omitting the [3]2006 Country Reports allegation of capability and intent in the 2007 edition, State indicates a movement toward reconsideration of designation, which is due for mandatory review in October 2008.

Country Reports 2006 had alleged terrorist intent and capability: "MEK leadership and members across the world maintain the capacity and will to commit terrorist acts in Europe, the Middle East, the United State [sic], Canada, and beyond." To its credit, State omits this allegation in Country Reports 2007; hence, there is no basis for designation of the MEK as a foreign terrorist organization: State relies on non-terrorist allegations to make its case.

On April 25, Patrick Clawson, deputy director of research at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, [4]wrote that designation "should be based only on terrorism issues," and that State "cited no alleged MEK terrorist activity since 2001, yet have increased allegations pertaining [to] the group's non-terrorist activities." Country Reports 2007 continues this trend of making allegations that are irrelevant to terrorist designation.

Tehran's terrorism has been on the rise since 2003, despite the State Department's conciliatory efforts toward Iran. The United States, unprovoked and at the request of Tehran, bombed the bases of the MEK in Iraq, disarmed the group, and limited its activities to its main encampment in Ashraf, Iraq. Washington hoped that by complying with Iran's demands, Tehran would cease supporting the insurgency in Iraq. To the contrary, American conciliation only produced Iranian intransigence as Tehran escalated its shipment of roadside bombs to Iraq.

De-listing the MEK would be consistent with the legal criteria of the [5]U.S. Anti-Terrorism Effective Death Penalty Act, because the allegations on which designation is based are false, misleading, or irrelevant. Additionally, de-listing would provide diplomatic leverage over Tehran, as the West is presently failing to constrain the Iranian regime's nuclear program, sponsorship of terrorism, and subversion of Iraq.

Regarding the veracity of terrorist allegations against the MEK, a November 2007 decision by the [6]Proscribed Organisations Appeals Commission (POAC), a UK Court, [7]found that such claims were invalid:

There is no evidence that the [MEK] has at any time since 2003 sought to re-create any form of structure that was capable of carrying out or supporting terrorist acts. There is no evidence of any attempt to "prepare" for terrorism. There is no evidence of any encouragement to others to commit acts of terrorism... continued proscription could not be lawfully justified.

In light of the UK court ruling to delist the MEK in the UK and the absence of evidence for terrorist capability and intent in Country Reports 2007, Secretary of State Rice should de-list the MEK when the organization's designation comes up for [8]mandatory review in October 2008, if not immediately. To do otherwise would be inconsistent with the principle that designation should be dependent upon evidence of capability and intent.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_tanter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_tanter/)
2. <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2007/>
3. <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2006/>
4. <http://www.thewashingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2808>
5. <http://www.ustreas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/legal/statutes/aedpa.pdf>
6. <http://www.siac.tribunals.gov.uk/poac/>
7. <http://www.siac.tribunals.gov.uk/poac/Documents/outcomes/PC022006%20PMOI%20FINAL%20JUDGMENT.pdf>
8. <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/08/103392.htm>

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## Tolerating terrorism in Yemen (2008-05-06 12:55)

From [1]Daniel Byman



The Washington Post's [2]reporting on the weekend that "all the defendants convicted in the [2000] attack [on the USS Cole] have escaped from prison or been freed by Yemeni officials" will hardly surprise anyone watching how Yemen has handled the issue of terrorism since 9/11. While Yemeni security forces have at times made important arrests of Al Qaeda members and like-minded groups, the government is often lenient to violent Sunni jihadists, particularly those who direct their activities outside the country. Sanaa's solution seems to be to balance its crackdown with efforts to divert the jihadists' focus from Yemen to other countries. As Gregory Johnsen and Brian O'Neill [3]contend, "Since 2003, the Yemeni government and Al-Qaeda in Yemen have reached what could best be described as a tacit non-aggression pact." Many jihadists who went through the government's "reeducation" program reportedly later went to Iraq to [4]fight against U.S. forces there. As Murad Abdul Wahed Zafir, a political analyst in Yemen, [5]contends, "Yemen is like a bus station—we stop some terrorists, and we send others on to fight elsewhere. We appease our partners in the West, but we are not really helping."

Why does Yemen tolerate this? In part, anything that smacks of cooperation with the United States is unpopular, while the anti-U.S. Sunni fighters in Iraq are lionized as heroes. But it is more than this simple story of anti-Americanism. Yemen has [6]suffered a persistent low-grade insurgency from Houthi rebels since 2004, and it is concentrated among Yemen's large population of Zaydis. (The Zaydis are a Shi'a community, but their beliefs and traditions differ from the better-know school of Shiism practiced in Iran.) The government has used the Shi'a-hating Sunni jihadists to fight this insurgency, as it used the same group in the early 1990s when it faced a civil war from southern socialists. Moreover, many of the jihadists are linked to strong domestic political groups like the Islah party. So Yemen's leaders find it best to try to tolerate and divert the jihadists rather than confront them directly.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel\\_byman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel_byman/)
2. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/03/AR2008050302047.html>
3. <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373533>
4. <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373384>
5. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/28/world/middleeast/28qaeda.html>
6. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/03/world/middleeast/03yemen.html>

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Adam Garfinkle (2008-05-08 04:54:23)

Daniel Byman has it [1]right on Yemen, a dangerous place that gets too little attention. He mentions Gregory Johnsen in his post and rightly so: He's actually spent a fair bit of time there. For a fuller picture of Yemen's situation and the government's deal with the bad guys, see Johnsen's 2006 essay, "Well Gone Dry: A Letter from San'a," *The American Interest*, [2]here. [3]Adam Garfinkle is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/tolerating\\_terrorism\\_in\\_yemen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/tolerating_terrorism_in_yemen/)
2. <http://www.the-american-interest.com/ai2/article.cfm?Id=195&MIId=6>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)

Bernard Haykel (2008-05-08 04:53:14)

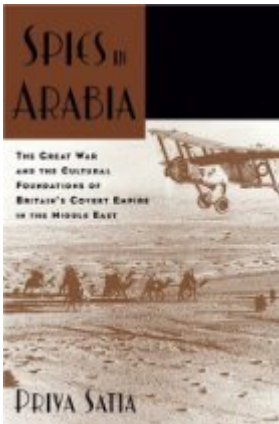
Daniel Byman's [1]posting on Yemen is accurate and underscores that the different tack that Yemen has adopted in dealing with Al Qaeda is largely the result of the following factors: 1. There is a politically significant domestic constituency of Al Qaeda sympathizers in Yemen and as such the constraints of managing this group are internal to Yemen's domestic scene. The government in Sanaa cannot eject easily this group from the body politic or is unwilling to do so. 2. Appeasing the United States does not trump the Yemeni government's desire to keep Al Qaeda and its local sympathizers on side. 3. Yemen has a relationship with Salafi-Jihadis that pre-dates 9/11 and has used these forces against local Zaydi-Shiites, Sufis as well as the Socialists. In other words, the Al Qaeda-type people are a useful, perhaps necessary, tool in the hands of the government in Sanaa, one which it will not relinquish easily. [2]Bernard Haykel is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/tolerating\\_terrorism\\_in\\_yemen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/tolerating_terrorism_in_yemen/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bernard\\_haykel/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bernard_haykel/)

### 'Spies in Arabia' (2008-05-08 04:47)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Priya Satia is assistant professor of modern British history at Stanford University. Her new book is *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East*.

From [1]Priya Satia



[2] There was something fittingly fateful about how I came to write *Spies in Arabia*. Exactly a year before the 9/11 attacks, when the war in Iraq was but a twinkle in George W.'s eye, I stumbled into the Mesopotamian quagmire from the east. While exploring British Indian efforts to "develop" that region during World War One, I came across frequent complaints by local British officials about their difficulty gathering information in the country.

I assumed their problems arose partly out of a cultural mindset that had long seen the Middle East, and the "Orient" more generally, as essentially unknowable, mysterious, inscrutable. Here, I thought, was a question worth pursuing further: How did long-circulating cultural representations about the Middle East influence the practical unfolding of empire on the ground? How did they shape military and intelligence operations? The question promised to inject new life into the somewhat tired subject of European perceptions of the Orient. And so, I embarked for the UK to research the history of British intelligence-gathering in the Middle East, without an inkling that the topic was about to seize center stage in American political debate.

My clever academic question soon acquired a more sinister and politically urgent aspect when the records of the Air Ministry revealed the true significance of the subject of British surveillance in the Middle East: After World War One, Iraq became the first colony policed from the air, bombardment forming a routine part of administration. The Royal Air Force's obsessive emphasis on "ubiquity" of surveillance seemed in some way to be connected to those earlier complaints of blindness, a hypothesis I set about proving by tracing the culture of intelligence-gathering in the region before, during, and after the war. As I read official records alongside agents' personal papers, contemporary fiction, scholarly journals, and the press, the extent to which secret histories—the history of espionage—can produce immense effects in politics and culture became increasingly and eerily apparent.

Then came September 11, 2001, and the book that I had launched for its apparent intellectual merits inexorably acquired a new purpose and an increasingly polemical subtext. The more I thought and wrote, the more I grew convinced that the contemporary echo of my historical topic was neither a coincidence, nor evidence of my political prescience, nor even the tragically farcical repetition of history; it was in fact the unfolding of a new chapter in that unfinished history. What came to be known as the "group think" of our intelligence community was, I found, partly a legacy of the British intelligence establishment's earlier incursion in the region, as was the mentality guiding American counterinsurgency.

Intelligence, it turns out, is not simply the matter of collecting objectively true, but hidden facts. It depends on prior epistemological choices, as we are now painfully aware—and those are liable to be shaped by cultural understandings. If a certain Edwardian-era hankering after romance and fascination with Bedouin inspired the eccentric community of British Arabist agents (T. E. Lawrence, Gertrude Bell, St. John Philby, and John Glubb being among the most well-known) to volunteer to spy in the Middle East, that very "genius"—and their claim to such a genius—ensured that all that the British state did in the region was similarly inventive—and often with horrific consequences, as in the case of the aerial surveillance

regime. The book's purpose is partly to make sense of how those who claimed the greatest empathy with Arabs—those most committed to "Arab freedom"—became the most enthusiastic supporters of a regime they knew to be unprecedentedly lethal and highly error-prone: How it came to be, in George Orwell's words, that "Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: [and] this is called pacification."

Conversely, today's events helped me understand the historical significance of the new imperial style ushered in with air control, what I call "covert empire." At the very moment that Britain's democracy became truly inclusive after the war, and began, somewhat self-consciously, to assert its right to check the power of the British state, particularly the extravagant expenditure and brutality in Iraq, those activities became increasingly hidden from public view; administrative and military power fell into the hands of unaccountable intelligence bodies. There was a lesson in here for us—about the perils of democracy, its fostering of a paranoid official secrecy simply by virtue of its insistent demand for openness. Somewhat counter-intuitively, when a democracy attempts imperial occupation, there is a lot of lying and a lot of unrecorded death. Indeed, today's conversation about official secrecy about violence and corruption in Iraq seems almost to parody the parliamentary debates of 1920s Britain. Then, too, "spin," euphemism, and spurious declarations of success accompanied the creation of an ethnically-ordered, militaristic, and corruptly developmentalist security state in Iraq.

The secrecy of British intervention was not lost on Iraqis. They too grew suspicious, indeed paranoid, about the extent of their independence once it was nominally granted in 1932, and even after the RAF finally departed in 1958—with good reason, since a mere two years later, the CIA made its first attempt to assassinate the Iraqi head of state. My hope is that Spies in Arabia will not only help us think about the follies of Britain's imperial past (and dispel the myth of Britain's success in Iraq) but will also remind us of the all-too-recent historical memory shaping reception to Western occupation in formerly colonized countries, however benevolent its stated objective; people simply can no longer swallow that much unfairness—or that much paternalism (except perhaps under UN auspices).

At a practical level, the lesson from the past is that the local spawn of covert empire is inevitably doomed: today's blinkered conversation about why the Iraqi government is failing to step up so that we can stand down is founded on the fallacy that an only nominally independent government can ever have any legitimacy. Collaborationist regimes are, by their very nature, prone to paralysis and/or oppression. And making the U.S. presence more discreet—for instance, by replacing troops with airpower, as has been suggested—will only further compromise local authority. Iraq needs to belong fully and without reservation to the Iraqis; my own hunch is that if we depart, we will be pleasantly surprised by their possession of the heroic yet ordinary human capacity to avert the chaos that we claim to fear—and that we have in any case delivered to them.

Spies in Arabia has morphed into a rather different book from what I had foreseen. As much as it attempts to explain the past, it provides an unwitting but insistent comment on our present discontents. Flying in the face of our usual assumptions about the relatively benign and retiring nature of the inter-war British empire, it tacitly questions any modern government's presumption of the oxymoronic role of peaceful empire.

[3]Order from Publisher | [4]Amazon

1. [http://www.stanford.edu/dept/history/people/satia\\_priya.html](http://www.stanford.edu/dept/history/people/satia_priya.html)
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51lrbafqMBL.jpg>
3. <http://www.us.oup.com/us/catalog/general/subject/HistoryWorld/British/19001945/?view=usa&ci=9780195331417>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0195331419>



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## The unintentional humor of dictators (2008-05-09 06:44)

From [1]Barry Rubin



There was a great item on the Harry's Place blog by the anonymous Davem who spent a long time in Syria studying Arabic. (If you haven't read his long "[2]Syria Diary" posted on the site some months ago, you have missed what is probably the best piece of first-hand reportage from that country in a long time.)

Now Davem has written a [3]shorter item about some of his experiences. In it he quotes a high-ranking Syrian official as insisting that there is freedom of speech in Syria, and that people are only arrested for subversive actions. The problem is the same official had earlier spoken as follows:

Riyad Na'san al-Agha: Of course. I accept the placing on trial of whoever curses the resistance [Hezbollah]. I accept the placing on trial of anyone who wants to take part in the Greater Middle East plan, with which the United States controls our nation. I agree with the placing on trial of anyone who questions the identity of this nation, anyone who wants to shatter national unity to racial and ethnic pieces, and anyone who wants to instigate tensions between the different minorities.

In other words, he says: if you say something we will put you on trial; likewise if you "want" to take part, if you "question," or if you "want to instigate." In other words, we will imprison you for thought crimes.

One of the responses to the post was from an angry Syrian named Jabar, who complained about one of the anecdotes told by Davem. Davem had recalled that he had gone to hear a well-known Syrian comedian who, in the middle of the show, shouted out the name of former Syrian vice-president Khaddam, who had fled the country (probably one step ahead of being suicided by Bashar al-Asad), headed for Paris, and joined the opposition. Davem recorded that the audience laughed nervously, but he cited the event as evidence that there is a little freedom of speech, if only to serve as a pressure valve to let Syrians blow off steam.

Jabar, however, says that he went twice to the comedian's show and it was not true that he had just said the name. No, afterward, the comedian had denounced Khaddam from the stage as a running-dog flunky of the imperialists or whatever terms they are using nowadays. In other words, Jabar wanted it to be clear—speaking with pride—that there was not even the tiniest space for free speech. In the best Stalinist fashion, he had to insist that everyone at all times loves Big Brother with no deviations.

If academics actually listened to what the leaders, officials, and mouthpieces of Middle East dictators said—many more examples can be cited—many of the fantasies (or outright repetitions of regime propaganda of which so large a portion of regional studies often seems to consist) would dissolve.

Isn't this called working with primary sources?

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry_rubin/)
2. [http://hurryupharry.blogspot.com/archives/cat\\_syrian\\_journal.html](http://hurryupharry.blogspot.com/archives/cat_syrian_journal.html)
3. [http://](http:///)

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## Illicit money trail leads to Central Bank of Iran (2008-05-09 09:44)

From [1]Raymond Tanter



When asked why he robbed banks, Willie Sutton declared, "That's where the money is." Following the money trail has led to U.S. and UN sanctions on Iranian banks involved in the financing of terrorism and WMD technology purchases.

In January 2008, as I approached Hotel Parc Hyatt Paris Vendôme at 5 Rue de la Paix to hold a press conference on Tehran's evasion of UN sanctions, I noticed that just down the street stood a Paris branch of Iran's Bank Saderat, which has transferred millions of Euros to Hezbollah. Farther down the street is Bank Sepah, whose proliferation activities have been curtailed by UN sanctions. Indeed, Under Secretary of Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Stuart Levey visited France in July 2007 to build consensus in Europe for removing Iranian banks from the international financial system.

Despite sanctions on banks Saderat and Sepah, Treasury has yet to sanction Iran's Central Bank. [2]According to Deputy Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing and Financial Crimes Daniel Glaser, "Another method Iranian banks use to evade controls is to ask other financial institutions to remove their names when processing transactions through the international financial system...This practice is even used by the Central Bank of Iran to facilitate transactions for sanctioned Iranian banks." Furthermore, Glaser has said that the "From 2001 to 2006, Bank Saderat transferred \$50 million from the Central Bank of Iran through its subsidiary in London to its branch in Beirut for the benefit of Hezbollah fronts in Lebanon that support acts of violence."

Consistent with Glaser's testimony, information obtained during Iran Policy Committee research on Iran's opposition parliament-in-exile—the National Council of Resistance of Iran—indicates that Ebrahim Sheibani, a former head of Iran's Central Bank, is a senior member of Tehran's task force to evade sanctions. Also, the IPC has learned that Iran's Central Bank pays Bank Keshavarzi (Agriculture Bank) and Bank Refah to set up banks abroad as middlemen for Bank Sepah to make illicit financial transactions for Iran's Ministry of Defense.

Because of such illicit activities, Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network has advised U.S. banks to be cautious of the Central Bank of Iran, which is using deception to mask involvement in nuclear proliferation and terrorism. But, the governor of the Central Bank has said he is "proud" the Central Bank has helped other Iranian banks with financial commitments, "regardless of the pressures on them."

At issue is whether such pressures are enough. Treasury has been incrementally ratcheting up sanctions against Iranian financial institutions. So far, sanctions have made the international financial system an increasingly difficult environment for Iran to conduct illicit transactions in support of terrorism and pursuit of nuclear weapons. But the Central Bank governor's comments suggest that such pressures are insufficient, given the role the Central Bank is playing in evading sanctions.

When asked why the Central Bank of Iran has not been sanctioned, Glaser told the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, "Taking action against the Central Bank of Iran is an extraordinary step. It is certainly something that is within our toolbox." In response to Glaser's testimony, California Democrat Brad Sherman, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, said, "In effect, he's [Central Bank of Iran governor] announced that his Central Bank is helping other banks evade the various sanctions that you've [Glaser] applied."

The words of Iran's Central Bank governor and Treasury's own warning to U.S. banks strongly suggest that the Central Bank of Iran should be next on Treasury's list for sanction. To be sure, as much as Banks Saderat and Sepah, the Central Bank "is where the money is" when it comes to terrorist financing and purchasing nuclear weapons technology.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_tanter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_tanter/)
2. <http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/hp933.htm>

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## Clashes in Beirut (2008-05-11 16:29)

From [1]Philip Carl Salzman



After modest initiatives in recent days by the Lebanese government to restrict the independent operations of Hezbollah, fighters of Hezbollah and Amal flooded into the streets of west Beirut, attacked and dispersed government fighters, set up road blocks, and occupied government and media offices. The Druze and Christian militias did not act, and the Sunni militia limited itself to minor engagement. The Lebanese Army remained on the sidelines, respecting "neutrality."

On May 8, Hezbollah Secretary-General Hasan Nasrallah gave a speech in which he [2]said: "...whoever declares, and starts, war against us, be it a mother, a father, or a brother—we have a right to counter him and defend our rights, our weapons, our existence, and our resistance." The other militias take the same view. The overall pattern is a set of quasi- or fully independent political corporations, based on identity and fierce loyalty, each armed and maintaining the right to act militarily in its own interests and those of its constituents. Each political corporation seeks dominance over the others, or, if that is not possible, a balance in which its interests and those of its constituents are not violated by the others. "National" institutions are weak, undermined by partisan loyalties and the independent corporations. Consequently, there is no overarching, inclusive loyalty, no rule of law, and no peaceful procedures for resolving basic conflicts.

How can we understand this factional pattern of institutionalized fragmentation and oppositional conflict? My suggestion is that this pattern reflects the "tribal spirit" of Arab culture, manifested in self-help corporations for defense and the advancement of interests, and for which men have a primary obligation to engage in military action. Each man has a duty to be a warrior, and most take pleasure in the glory of it. In the view of the members of a corporation, there is no presumption of rights for members of other corporations, and there is no recognition of legitimate authority outside of the corporations and above them.

In Lebanon, of course, these corporations are primarily defined by sect—Sunni, Shi'a, Christian, Druze—as are some of the corporations found in Iraq, such as Sadr's "Mahdi Army" Shiite militia, while others are ethnic, such as the Kurdish Peshmerga. These sect- and ethnicity-defined corporation-militias are often found in Arab cities—Beirut, Bagdad, and Basra are those most recently in the news—but descent-based corporations, actual tribes, are prevalent in rural trouble spots, such as Anbar Province of Iraq, throughout Afghanistan, in the mountains and deserts of Pakistan, and in currently quiescent places, such as Libya, in both town and country. The sect-based corporations have inherited presumptions and structures from the descent-based tribes, applying them in corporations based upon a different principle of identity: religion rather than descent. The same, of course, applies to Islam in general, in its militant opposition of the dar al-Islam to the dar al-harb.

Politically stable countries in the Arab world, such as Iraq under Saddam and Syria under the Alawites, demonstrate the factional opposition at a different phase, one in which one corporation has succeeded in establishing dominance over the others, using the state as a weapon to suppress any opposition. As we have seen in Iraq, remove the successful oppressor, and factional opposition ignites with fury. All of which is highly reminiscent of the tribal wars throughout Middle Eastern and North African history.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)
2. <http://www.memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=IA43608>

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### 'The Rise of Israel' (2008-05-12 06:52)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Jonathan Adelman is professor at the Graduate School of International Studies of the University of Denver. His new book is *The Rise of Israel: A History of a Revolutionary State*.

From [1]Jonathan Adelman



- [2] The Rise of Israel: A History of a Revolutionary State had a slightly unusual

genesis. As a specialist in Russian and Chinese politics with little background in the Middle East, I never expected to write a book on the Middle East or Israel. But, after teaching at Hebrew University in 1986 and the University of Haifa in 1990, I became fascinated by Israel, how it came to exist and how it survived and flourished despite enormous obstacles.

In 1988 I was in Moscow to give a paper on the Russian civil war at the Soviet Academy of Sciences. While there I asked its deputy director, Yuri Osipyan, if there was a research unit on Israel, with which the Soviet Union did not have diplomatic relations at the time. Soon I found myself in front of a group of fifteen researchers in the Laboratory for the Study of Israel, who insistently requested I give a talk on Israel. I found myself giving an overly long talk on how Israel represented a new Russia with deep roots in its narodniki, Menshevik and even Bolshevik revolutionary traditions.

After the second intifada broke out in 2000, I became deeply involved in giving talks on Israel for various Jewish organizations across the country. As an academic who also teaches a graduate seminar in comparative revolutions, I remembered my time in Moscow and soon again saw the deep revolutionary origins of Israel. I spent several years working out a different way to view the state. Those visits to Israel and the Soviet Union in the late 1980s ultimately led to *The Rise of Israel: A History of a Revolutionary State*. And now, I am hard at work already on a sequel to this volume.

When I started reading the literature on Israel's origins and causes for its successes against great obstacles, I was surprised that none of the three main camps—Arabist, post-Zionist, or (for lack of a better word) mainstream Zionist—really dealt with this question. The Arabists largely dismissed its relevance, for they saw Israel as a lackey and running dog of powerful Western imperialism. They focused on the West, not Israel, as the source of Israel's victories and successes. The revisionist post-Zionists, focusing on Israel's numerous (and sometimes real) sins of omission and commission, were not interested in looking at the questions that would put Israel in a positive light. The mainstream Zionists (especially of the previous generation), whom one would have expected to be interested in the question, largely saw the rise of Israel as inevitable or as a product of the reaction to the Holocaust.

I hope the book has several impacts. First, it serves to remind the reader of how Israel, with few resources, had to overcome enormous obstacles—Tsarist Russia, the Ottoman Empire, the British Empire from 1939-1949, the Soviet Union, much of the Arab world, international religious and political organizations—that none of over 130 other new states after World War Two had to face. Second, it shows how so many of the labels put on Israel, such a racist, colonialist, imperialist, Nazi-like, have little academic relevance to the topic. Third, it shows that Israel, far from being a running dog of Western imperialism or born in original sin, came into being and flourished because of its ability to originate and carry through two revolutions—first, a nationalist, democratic socialist revolution (1882-1977) and a second, incomplete semi-capitalist, globalist revolution (1977-present).

I hope thus to move the debate on Israel away from its perceived sins to one that seeks to understand the revolutionary origins of Israel. I also seek to show how the application of neo-realist theories can be used to explain Israel's actions in a world of menacing threats, today most strongly from the Islamic Republic of Iran and its fundamentalist allies in the region.

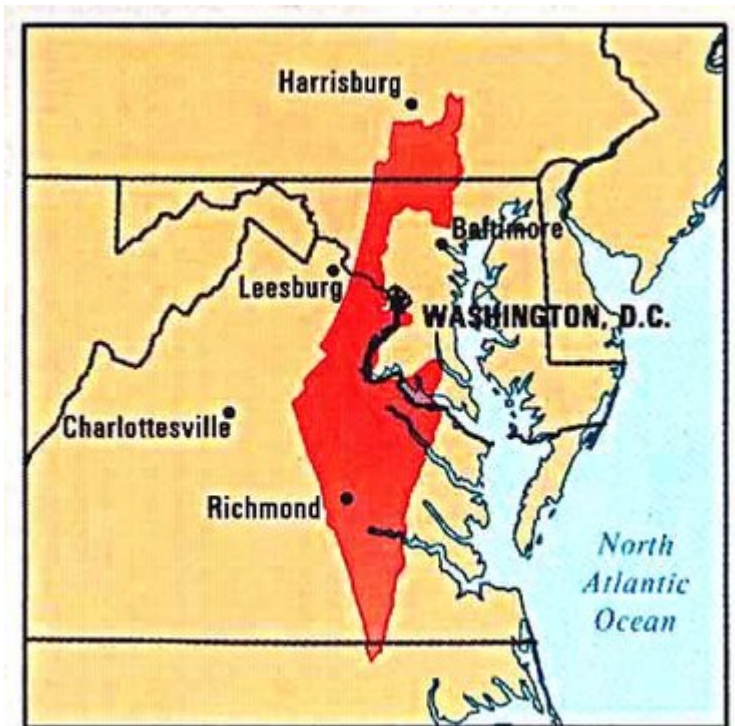
There are over 400 books on the Israel-Palestinian dispute but very few on the nature of Israel's rise and cause of its successes. Just as India cannot be understood solely through a focus on its dispute with Pakistan, so too Israel cannot be understood solely by a mono-focus on its dispute with the Palestinians and Islamic fundamentalism. This book, rooted in theories of comparative revolution and comparative politics, seeks to help readers to see a different Israel and gain a new perspective on a critical player in the turbulent Middle East.

[3]Order from Publisher | [4]Amazon

1. <http://www.du.edu/gsis/faculty/adelman/>
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/41mODDHqYIL.jpg>
3. <http://www.routledge.com/books/The-Rise-of-Israel-isbn9780415775106>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0415775108>

## The rules of war (2008-05-14 06:59)

From [1]Philip Carl Salzman



### Area Comparison

Let us imagine (in the style of political philosophers) that a small country, for illustration let's say Paraguay, is deemed by its neighbors to be a usurper and illegitimate. Further, that on numerous occasions, Uruguay to the southeast, Bolivia to the southwest, and Chile to the far west, mount military campaigns against Paraguay in order to eliminate it and divide its resources among themselves. It is notable, on the occasion of these invasions, that the great powers, Brazil and Argentina, stand neutral and strictly committed to non-interference.

Plucky Paraguay, however, whether out of devotion or desperation or both, repeatedly overcomes the odds, blocking the invading Uruguay, Bolivia, and Chile, and turning the tide toward defeating their aggressors. At this point in each conflict, however, the neutral and strictly non-interfering great powers decide to make an exception in order to stop Paraguay from defeating its enemies and from imposing any penalties on them for their aggression. Any temporary gains that Paraguay makes must be rolled back, say the great powers, and everything returned to the aggressors, otherwise the results would not be "proportionate."

As the aggressors have been repeatedly blocked by plucky Paraguay, they have thrown up irregular guerrilla



armies, call them Ama and Ezbolo, to harass and undermine the civilian population of Paraguay. Paraguay is strong enough to strike and eliminate them, but the menacing great powers say Paraguay may not, that actually stopping the attacks would be "disproportionate."

In short, the rules of war, as defined by the great powers, are that the aggressors may invade as they like, but they may never lose anything for having done so, and that guerrilla armies may attack freely, and may not be eliminated. In short, military aggression is cost-free; while defense is disproportionate and disallowed. This formula guarantees for the great powers an endless drama to observe and amuse themselves. And, of course, it encourages aggression, one of the few remaining cost-free entertainments.

My transparent little conceit obviously refers, not to South America, but to the Arab-Israel conflict, in which the Arabs, holding the vastness of the Middle East and North Africa—incidentally all conquered by the sword—have vehemently rejected the existence of minuscule Israel and repeatedly invaded and tried to eliminate her. On each occasion, when Israel, at great cost, has blocked the invasion and is in a position to conquer its foes, and to make them pay a serious price for their aggression, she has been stopped by the "great powers" of Europe and America.

Most recently, as her civilians (both in the north and in the south) have suffered from a daily barrage of rockets, Israeli counter measures are insistently denounced as "disproportionate." Imagine, if you will, a daily barrage of rockets from Belgium into France, and France's response; or from Mexico into Texas, and America's response; or from Paraguay into Brazil, and Brazil's response.

It appears that there are special rules of war that apply to Israel alone: aggression against Israel is judgement free and cost free, while Israeli defense is deemed immoral and forbidden.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)

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## **Bush begs Saudis (again) (2008-05-16 12:00)**

From [1]Gal Luft

✘ Four months and thirty extra dollars a barrel later, President Bush is again in Saudi Arabia trying to persuade the Saudis to open the spigot and increase OPEC production. Last time the answer was a resounding no. Not even a gift of 900 precision-guided bombs helped convince the Saudis to show more oomph at the pump. The lesson for the Administration: speak softer and wave a bigger gift. This time the United States has agreed to help Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, develop "civilian" nuclear power.

Of course the Saudi interest in nuclear power has nothing to do with energy production but with Iran and the Sunnis' fears of Iranian hegemony. Does President Bush really believe that helping the Saudis with nuclear technologies would cause Tehran to pull the plug on its nuclear program?

Saudi Oil Minister Ali al-Naimi insists that the oil market is well supplied, blaming the high prices on hedge funds and speculators. Considering the fact that OPEC production level is not much higher than its level thirty years ago and that Saudi output is lower than it was two years ago, putting the entire blame on speculators is utter nonsense.

The Saudis have always taken pride in their role as swing producers, claiming to own over 2mbd in spare

capacity. But what good is this liquidity mechanism if they are not prepared to use it? When last month Nigeria's production fell by 330,000 bpd, OPEC did not lift a finger to compensate for the loss. At what level will they provide us with liquidity? \$200? \$300?

If the Saudis are right and it's all about the speculators, why not put this to test? This is exactly what Bush should have suggested: pour some oil into the market for a limited period of time and let's measure the effect on prices so we can determine who is the culprit. With projected revenues of \$400 billion this year, the Saudis can surely afford to embark on such an experiment and clear their name once and for all. But as I wrote [2]here in January, we'd rather beg than blame.

The spectacle of an American president begging for oil every few months only to be rewarded with a slap in the face is getting a bit tedious. What's next? Naming one of our aircraft carriers USS Ibn Saud?

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal\\_luft/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal_luft/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/bush\\_begs\\_the\\_saudis/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/bush_begs_the_saudis/)

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### 'Negotiating Under Fire' (2008-05-20 15:15)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Matthew Levitt is senior fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy and a member of MESH. His forthcoming book is *Negotiating Under Fire: Preserving Peace Talks in the Face of Terror Attacks*.

From [1]Matthew Levitt



[2] In 1993 I was a graduate student focusing on the Middle East, international security studies, and negotiation theory and conflict resolution. In many ways, events of



the day—that is, the just-signed Oslo Accords—forced upon me what became a decade-and-a-half-long study of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. This particular peace process, however, was simply the most relevant and immediate case study available to me as I set out to develop a theory of conflict management applied to ongoing negotiations over protracted social conflicts. So, with the support of a graduate fellowship from the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School, I set out for Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Washington (the last being the most dangerous, by far), and conducted over seventy interviews of Israeli, Palestinian and American negotiators, decision-makers and intelligence and security officials.

My working hypothesis—no great leap of genius—was that spoilers will always seek to undermine peace processes through acts of violence. But is there anything that can be done to insulate ongoing negotiations from the impact of these security crises and preserve peace talks in the face of terror attacks? Of course, this assumes the parties are truly committed to pursuing peace and are ultimately willing to make sometimes painful concessions and then sell them at home to their constituencies. That may or may not be the case in any given peace process, including past and present efforts to secure a negotiated settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But let's just say, for argument's sake, that Israeli and Palestinian leaders truly dedicate themselves to making peace, and the biggest obstacles they face are radical extremist groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad or Kach and Kahana Chai. Sure, it's a leap of faith, but the journey led to some interesting findings. And, as the international community tries to reinvigorate Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking, these questions are of critical importance.

And yet, they remained unanswered even though they are not new, as the crises examined in *Negotiating Under Fire* make clear. A year into the Oslo Peace Process, in February 1994, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators were making slow but steady progress when Baruch Goldstein entered a Hebron shrine and massacred 29 Muslims at prayer. On October 9 of that year, just weeks after the signing of an accord transferring a litany of powers and responsibilities to the nascent Palestinian Authority, Hamas terrorists kidnapped and later assassinated Nachshon Wachsman, a young Israel corporal and dual Israel-U.S. citizen. And in February and March 1996, following the smooth handover of major Palestinian cities to Palestinian control, Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists conducted a string of suicide bus bombings killing 63 and wounding 238 over a nine-day period.

The Oslo peace process continued in fits and starts until September 2000, when it collapsed in the wake of the failed Camp David Summit of that month. This ushered in six years of violence unprecedented even in the Israeli-Palestinian context. In January 2006, Palestinian politics was turned on its head when the militant Islamist group Hamas defeated the long-dominant Fatah party in national elections and assumed majority control of the governing Palestinian Authority. For the vast majority of Israelis, the Hamas victory, coming just months after Israel's complete withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, reinforced the already dominant view that unilateral moves, like building a fence in and along the West Bank, are the only answer to the perceived absence of a credible Palestinian peace partners. This position was still further reinforced after the Hamas takeover of Gaza in June 2007.

The impact of acute security crises on ongoing negotiations represents one of the most significant yet under-researched facets of modern conflict resolution theory. Ironically, it also stands out as the factor most likely to derail inherently sensitive negotiations. These events unleash waves of public opposition to the very idea of sitting down to negotiate with those perceived as responsible for the crisis. How can decision-makers cope with such incredible challenges? How are they to answer these challenges so that their constituents acknowledge their continued authority and legitimacy as negotiators? How can decision-makers remain credible partners in the eyes of their negotiating partners in the wake of such events?

Focusing on three types of legitimacy—decision-makers' authority as negotiators for their constituencies, the legitimacy of their policy of pursuing negotiations, and their credibility in the eyes of the other

party—provides an analytical framework to study the changes in the negotiating environment that result from acute security crises in ongoing negotiations. Understanding how decision-makers perceive such attacks, and the means by which they undermine the legitimacy of peace negotiations, provides the foundation for a practical set of recommendations to preemptively insulate peace talks from acts of terror that are bound to occur, and a theory of crisis management on how to contain them when they do.

Unlike my last [3]book on Hamas, *Negotiating Under Fire* discusses terrorist attacks but is not about terrorism. And despite the downward trajectory of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, this is an optimistic study. That's because the book is not really about that particular conflict. As an academic discourse on resolving protracted social conflicts, it gives reason to hope. It all comes down to decision-makers' willingness and ability to make difficult decisions and sell them at home—albeit easier said than done.

[4]Pre-order from publisher | [5]Pre-order from Amazon

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew\\_levitt/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew_levitt/)
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/41gz8otcvdL.jpg>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0300122586>
4. <http://www.rowmanlittlefield.com/Catalog/SingleBook.shtml?command=Search&db=%5EDB/CATALOG.db&eqSKUdata=0742551628&thepassedurl=>
5. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0742551628/>

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## Hezbollah deals (2008-05-21 10:53)

From [1]Tamara Cofman Wittes



A Lebanese friend of mine made a close study of the new deal announced today in Doha between Lebanese factions, and didn't think it was so bad. He argued to me that the deal effectively forbids Hezbollah from using its cabinet representation as a veto on government decisions, and that the electoral law is a net benefit for Lebanese democracy. He further noted that the primary Hezbollah achievement in the deal is not in the new electoral law or in the shuffling of cabinet seats, but in safeguarding their weaponry from any efforts at disarmament of political factions by the Lebanese state.

If this reading of the deal is correct, it says a lot about where Hezbollah's priorities are, and where their ambitions lie: their armed capability is their paramount concern, not political hegemony inside Lebanon. This is not a domestic agenda, but a regional one—and one that portends more violence. As far as Lebanese democracy is concerned, Hezbollah's military capability is an absolute bar to effective democracy, whether the deal "allows" them to use their weapons internally or not.

Some suggest that an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement is the best way to neutralize Hezbollah's armed status—the theory is that a peace agreement would require Syria to end its support for Hezbollah (and Hamas and the other Palestinian rejectionists), thus cutting off Hezbollah's arms supplies from Iran and reducing its scope for action. I am not optimistic that an Israeli-Syrian deal would have this effect. It seems to me that one clear lesson of the period since the 2006 Lebanon War is that Hezbollah has resources and decisionmaking now very independent from Syria, such that Syria today could not, even if it wished, "deliver" Hezbollah in a deal with the Israelis. Thus, the international community and the status-quo states of the Middle East must

now recognize that Hezbollah is a regional power that is here to stay, with ambitions that go far beyond the "defense" of Lebanon's Shia.

The other elephant in the room, of course, is Iran's role in the Levant, as revealed by these events. From an Israeli perspective, perhaps a deal with Syria helps in this regard: the testing (and likely failure) of this long-perceived linkage between a Syrian-Israeli peace agreement and the disarmament of Hezbollah would clarify the extent to which Iran has invaded the Levant (via Hezbollah), and thus free Israel's hands further in confronting this threat. It has long been obvious that Israel perceives the Iranian-Hezbollah-Hamas axis as presenting a far more significant and strategic threat than Syria.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara\\_cofman\\_wittes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara_cofman_wittes/)

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### Syria and Israel: tactical advantage (2008-05-21 11:12)

From [1]Jon Alterman



It would be nice to think that Israeli-Syrian negotiations represent a key strategic advance. While I wouldn't rule out such an advance in the future, this all has the whiff of tactical advantage to me.

On the one hand, the talks don't represent a change in the Syrian position. I've met Bashar al-Asad twice, and both times he's talked about his keen desire to negotiate with Israel. And he kept saying "Israel," not "enemy forces" or the "Zionist entity" or any such circumlocution. Further, he didn't wince and have a hitch in his voice, the way American politicians often do when they talk about Palestine. On this (and perhaps many other matters), he's a realist. There are any number of reasons he has wanted such negotiations, the most obvious being that he's not going to be able to re-conquer the Golan with troops. If he wants it back, it will be at the negotiating table.

But there are other, less noble reasons for wanting to open an Israel channel now. He is in a position of some strength, as he looks to consolidate his allies' gains in Lebanon. He is also quite eager to ease his isolation—life is tough when your greatest friend in the world is Iran—and engaging with Israel presumably renders kosher a whole range of countries' dealings with Syria. Not least, I think Syrians believe that such negotiations will protect them from attack by both Americans and Israelis, which are the two countries they fear most.

Ehud Olmert's political troubles give him every reason to negotiate with Syria, because it makes him look like a statesman. Further, the Syrian track is less emotional and less morally difficult for Israelis than his indirect talks with Hamas, and it helps deflect attention from the very difficult choices Israel will have to make in Gaza. Also, such talks serve to light a fire under the Palestinians, who fear that the Prime Minister will lose interest in their track to concentrate on Syrian negotiations.

While each side has powerful reasons to negotiate, however, there are equally powerful reasons not to conclude a deal. Such reasons start with the political weakness of each leader, who would be hard pressed to make monumental concessions to a longstanding enemy whose ultimate intentions are disputed. The Bush Administration's keen disinterest in engaging Syria also dims hopes, as one of the prizes the Syrians seek

is U.S. acceptance. A year from now, with a new U.S. president and likely a new Israeli Prime Minister, the situation might be different, and in the interim, there are certainly common understandings that can be reached.

I wish I could say this was the beginning of the end of the Syrian-Israeli conflict, and I certainly can't say it's the end of the beginning. Unfortunately, it seems to me we're still right in the middle, and I fear we're going to stay in the middle for some time.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon\\_alterman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon_alterman/)

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Harvey Sicherman (2008-05-21 17:45:54)

The newly announced Israel-Syria indirect talks, in preparation for a year, should be seen in the perspective not only of the parties themselves but also the role of the intermediary. Despite occasional calls for imposed settlements, the Arab-Israeli "peace process" only works when two leaders convince each other that they want a deal and then turn to other powers to reduce their risks in making one. Chief among those other powers has been the United States. In this case, the intermediary turns out to be the only Muslim member of NATO, Turkey. Why have the parties used Turkey rather than the United States? It is surely not because the Turks can reduce Olmert's or Asad's risks but because the differences between the United States and Syria over Lebanon and Iran are so severe that, in Washington's view, American participation might give everyone in the region the wrong signal, namely, that the United States was accommodating Syria's demands, especially its campaign to dominate Lebanon once more. The Israelis, who are the direct victims of Syrian support for Hezbollah and Hamas, have proven less squeamish, perhaps because they have less faith in the U.S.-backed Lebanese March 14 coalition to prevail. Curiously, the announcement of resumed "indirect talks" came on the same day as the Lebanese factions, negotiating in Qatar, ended their most recent fight with an agreement that fulfills Syria's ambition to wield a veto over Lebanon's government through Hezbollah. So, score two for Asad, zero for Hariri, and double zero for President Bush, fresh from a valedictory tour of the region. But do not count Washington out. The Israelis may be prepared to enter indirect talks over the Golan but that comes well short of an agreement itself. And there will be no agreement unless the Americans underwrite it for both parties. The reason has to do with the terrain, physical and political. Who will observe and certify demilitarization arrangements on the Golan? Who can bring Syria in from the cold thereby acquiring a stake in the survival of the Asad regime? This may very well be, as Asad remarked recently, for the next American president. But it will surely not be without the American president. Syria's evident desire to pry the Israelis away from the United States. if only in a preliminary move, may signal an attempt to extract itself from the frontline of the Sunni-Shiite, Arab-Persian conflict, which also affects Syria's domestic balance. Asad the son has apparently after all inherited a diplomatic gene from Asad the father, who escaped the dying Soviet embrace for a new semi-alliance with Bush's father through Saddam's overreach in 1991. In Tehran, the perspective ought to be that Syria can be rented, subject to lease change without notice, not bought. Hence, the deal may be a zero score for Iran as well, and a harbinger of a much bigger zero later on. A Syrian defection from the Iranian ambitions would deal a fatal blow to their pretensions along the Mediterranean. Still, we should not feast on this prospect prematurely. It has not yet been cooked, much less served. Not to be forgotten is the basic conundrum: Israel wants what Sadat gave and is willing to give what Sadat got, namely, a return to the international line; father Assad wanted more than Sadat got, namely, a riparian right on the Sea of Galilee, without giving Sadat's normalization. Israel's interest in such normalization has grown to include the end of Syria's alliance with the bloodthirsty Iranians and Hamas, and the severing of Syria's contribution to Hezbollah's anti-Israel arsenal. These are very large issues, and while the Turks can ease the water problem, a deal, as both sides agree, may take a long time subject to political change. In that respect, Asad's tenure seems secure; Olmert's much less so. For his part, the Israeli Prime Minister now finds himself in a Barak-like position circa 2000: well short of the political and personal leverage necessary for the "difficult concessions" inherent in a Syrian or Palestinian deal, much less the two together. But Olmert has been working successfully for some time on the strength of his weakness. His government, like so many before it, has reached that wonderful terminal stage: too weak to fall because the coalition partners fear elections, but not strong enough to do much either. Thus, the Prime Minister, like Bush, Abbas, and now Asad, has acquired a profound stake in a negotiating process so long as it does not reach conclusions too soon. Hence, we score one for Israel, at least for now. That leaves the Palestinians. Conceivably, Abbas might benefit from Syrian "advice" to Hamas to restrain itself and perhaps the organization's desire for a cease-fire already reflects such pressure. A period of calm, an emphasis on diplomacy, aids Abbas' case that he can be the effective partner even though he lacks

the strength to deliver. Will the two tracks compete or complement? Experience since Madrid suggests both can be true. The score here then is deferred until the next quarter. Last and not least, Turkey's willingness to facilitate things indicates a newfound interest in affairs of the Arab Middle East, something the Erdogan government's opponents fear as a harbinger of a turn away from Europe. That remains to be seen. But Turkey's intervention in this matter suggests that Ankara no longer prefers passivity as the best way to stay clear of regional troubles. One up for Turks, if—alas, always the if—things go well. [1]Harvey Sicherman is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey\\_sicherman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey_sicherman/)

Peter W. Rodman (2008-05-21 11:45:24)

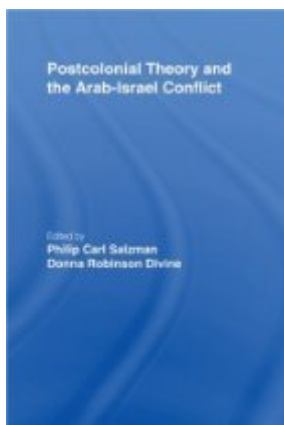
It is no coincidence, comrades, that Hezbollah's victory in Lebanon came at the same time as confirmation of Israeli-Syrian peace talks in Turkey. Israel has been preoccupied with a bilateral relationship; the price paid includes a serious blow to an American strategic interest—our efforts to form a regional strategy against Iran with the Gulf Arabs, who have correctly seen Hezbollah's challenge in Lebanon as an Iranian strategic threat. Let's start with Lebanon. The only way to head off the Hezbollah breakthrough in Lebanon would have been to squeeze Syria. Syria is the weak link in the Iran-Hezbollah-Syria axis. Israel could have warned Syria that upsetting the status quo in Lebanon would be regarded as a threat to Israel and posed risk of Syrian-Israeli conflict. Obviously Israel was not interested in any such posture toward Syria—hence the outcome yesterday in Beirut. It is easy to see how Syria gains strategically from a "peace breakthrough" with Israel. It gains in Lebanon; it breaks out of the isolation that the Gulf Arabs (and the United States) had sought to impose on it because of its unholy alliance with Iran. The Israeli strategic analysis is harder to discern. Ehud Barak speaks of gaining leverage over the Palestinians. There is abstract talk of the great benefit of splitting Syria from Iran. The problem is, there is no sign that any of this will materialize. Indeed, what assurance will Israel get that Syria won't continue to use Hezbollah as a proxy weapon of pressure against it even after a Golan deal? Could Syria make a credible promise not to—or deliver on it? The bottom line is that the Israelis are short-sightedly playing here with American strategic chips, undercutting an American regional strategy toward Iran—which one would have thought they had an interest in. [1]Peter W. Rodman is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)

### 'Postcolonial Theory and the Arab-Israel Conflict' (2008-05-27 17:46)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Philip Carl Salzman is professor of anthropology at McGill University and a member of MESH. His new book (with Donna Robinson Divine) is *Postcolonial Theory and the Arab-Israel Conflict*.

From [1]Philip Carl Salzman



[2] Thomas Kuhn, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, made the point that as normal science collects information, various anomalies appear that do not fit neatly or at all into the established theory. But this does not lead to rejection of the theory. Rather, he argues, theoretical change

in science requires the constructive of an entirely new conception, or new paradigm, that can be developed into a different theory that successfully encompasses and orders the accumulated anomalous data.

Kuhn's argument appears to apply, to the extent it does, to natural science. It has nothing to do with the "social sciences" or self-proclaimed "humanities," in which theoretical paradigms are largely unrelated to "data," "information," or "evidence." Most "theory" in the "social sciences" and "humanities" is heuristic theory: vague, general guidelines and orientations which rarely are connected with substantive, middle-range theories capable of risky testing. These heuristic theories usually have a short lifespan in the social sciences and humanities. The rapid turnover of master theories are driven by two factors:

- Ideology. For example, in the 1970s, when no one in Eastern Europe believed in Marxism anymore, Marxism was adopted as a dominant paradigm in North American academia as graduates from the 1960s youth rebellions arrived in academic departments. Most every academic article began with quotes from Marx and Engels.
- Careerism. "Names" are made by advocating new paradigms and easy-to-remember slogans, not by the accumulation of evidence on a topic, which is too slow, detailed, and specialized to be of interest to the general membership of the discipline. Prestige and then status rest in saying something new and different, not in the careful accumulation of evidence, and never in supporting established paradigms.

The rise of Edward Said conformed closely to this pattern. His ideological stance was overdetermined, in that it drew heavily on Leninist ideas about imperialism and colonialism, and on Michel Foucault's reduction of knowledge to power, on one hand, and a partisan advocacy in favor of the Muslim Middle East and particularly the Palestinians, on the hand. His foundational work, *Orientalism*, coined a slogan that today serves as an effective curse against ideologically "unacceptable" scholarship.

Although Said, a Columbia University professor of English literature, knew nothing of the "social sciences" and apparently not too much about oriental studies, his discrediting of Western scholarship of the East as a handmaiden of imperialism and a defamer of the "Other" rang true to his ideological kin in social sciences and humanities. I assumed at the time of its debut that such an ill-founded and transparently ethnocentric diatribe would not be taken seriously in academia. I could not have been more wrong. For the last decades Said has been probably the single most important influence in academic social science and humanities, taught in every other class in these "disciplines."

Said's prominence was assisted by the discrediting, among North American fair-weather academic friends, of Marx and Engels as a result of the fall of the Soviet Union, and the consequent inability of academic Marxists to so identify themselves. Said's critique of "orientalism" spawned the son of Marxism and postmodernism, the elegantly named "postcolonial theory," the main thesis of which is that all of the problems of the world are the result of Western imperialism and colonialism, and that all the problems of the Middle East are due entirely to Western imperialism and Israeli colonialism.

The multiple perniciousness of Said's doctrine will perhaps continue until careerism of the next academic generation produces a fresh, new paradigm. The unlikeliness of serious criticism of postcolonial theory producing any modification of academic opinion did not, however, stop a number of us from addressing what we think are its weaknesses and distortions. Under the auspices of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East (full disclosure: I serve as a member of the Board of Directors) I organized a conference, held at Case Western University, on "Postcolonial Theory and the Middle East," the proceedings of which have appeared under the title *Postcolonial Theory and the Arab-Israel Conflict*, first in fall 2007 as a [3]special issue of *Israel Affairs*, and second in a hardback, Routledge volume, with the addition of a conclusion by myself, just out in spring 2008. Both versions were edited by myself and Donna Robinson Divine.

Following an introduction by Divine, four chapters by Irfan Khawaja, Ronald Niezen, Ed Morgan, and Laurie Zoloth, address theoretical issues, such as the doubtful philosophical basis of Said's argument and its unsupportable assumptions. Two chapters by Herbert S. Lewis and Gerald M. Steinberg examine the pernicious effects of Saidism in anthropology and peace studies. Efraim Karsh, David Cook, and Andrew G. Bostom contribute chapters on Middle Eastern history that is unspoken in postcolonial discourse. Two chapters on Arab tribal and honor-shame culture are offered by myself and Richard Landes. Finally, addressing Said's preferred example, Gideon Shimoni, S. Ilan Troen, Donna Robinson Divine, and Irwin Mansdorf analyze the Arab-Israel conflict, Zionism, the history of Palestine, and current ideological conceptions.

Does such criticism blunt the edge of postcolonialism? Does it undermine faith in the heuristic model? This seems doubtful. Consider other cases such as the evidence against the efficacy of socialism; yet people continue to say, even so, it is a good idea. Similarly, when the "hockey stick" diagram of temperature change was proven invalid, supporters of global warming replied, even so, the theory is correct. Shall Postcolonial Theory and the Arab-Israel Conflict lead to repudiation of Saidism? I doubt it. But perhaps it—along with Ibn Warraq's [4]Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism and Robert Irwin's [5]Dangerous Knowledge: Orientalism and Its Discontents—will at least give heart to skeptics and inform the open-minded.

[6]Order from Publisher | [7]Amazon

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/41GbHAm6kZL.jpg>
3. <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=g782279023~db=all>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1591024846>
5. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/158567835X>
6. <http://www.routledge.com/books/Postcolonial-Theory-and-the-Arab-Israel-Conflict-isbn9780415443258>
7. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0415443253>

## Last straw (2008-05-28 11:03)

From [1]Alan Dowty



"Go'al nefesh" (abomination). Thus a headline on the front page of today's Yediot Ahronot, Israel's largest-circulation (and centrist) newspaper, characterizing yesterday's testimony by U.S. businessman Morris Talansky about his abundant generosity over the years to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Gifts totaled \$150,000, much of it cash in envelopes handed over personally, some of it credit card charges for Olmert's luxurious style of life, over a period of 15 years.

This is the fifth police investigation of Olmert since he became Prime Minister; most are still pending. An indictment on this latest scandal is expected in the months to come. There is no law against Talansky serving as Olmert's personal Caspomat (as ATMs are known in Israel), but public officials are required to report all income—even if it is for "election campaigns," and especially if those expenses include \$4,000 hotel suites and \$60 cigars. But whether there is an indictment or not, Olmert's public career is finished. He may



be left to dangle in public view for a while, but another resurrection is not in the cards. To a public bludgeoned by repeated scandal—the last two Prime Ministers and the last two Presidents all under investigation if not indictment—this was the last straw.

Knives are already being sharpened for the struggle within Kadima to choose a new standard-bearer. Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni has been waiting for her chance, ever since she prematurely called on Olmert to resign at the time of the interim report of the Winograd Commission on the Second Lebanese War. Shaul Mofaz, former Chief of Staff and current Transport Minister, has for all practical purposes begun his campaign. Interior Minister Meir Sheetrit and others are likely to get in the act.

What impact will all this have on the peace process? A cynic might ask: "What peace process?" Since there is no party willing and able to implement a peace agreement in the Palestinian territories, the Bush administration is now pushing for a "shelf agreement" by the end of the year: a settlement of the conflict in outline that can be implemented when conditions change. But few if any serious observers believe that even this limited objective can be achieved in the months remaining.

Olmert's successor, whoever it may be, will not be in a significantly stronger position to put something on the shelf. Livni would presumably be slightly more dovish and Mofaz somewhat more hawkish, but no Prime Minister can convince a majority of the public to make far-reaching concessions on basic issues of the conflict to a Palestinian partner who cannot deliver. Unless, that is, there were some stunning new development on the ground.

And that seems as unlikely as Olmert surviving this latest and ugliest go'al nefesh.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)

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## Islam's war doctrines ignored (2008-05-29 01:32)

From [1]Raymond Ibrahim



At the recent inaugural conference for the Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa (ASMEA), presenter LTC Joseph Myers made an interesting point that deserves further elaboration: that, though military studies have traditionally valued and absorbed the texts of classical war doctrine—such as Clausewitz's *On War*, Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, even the exploits of Alexander the Great as recorded in Arrian and Plutarch—Islamic war doctrine, which is just as if not more textually grounded, is totally ignored.

As recent as 2006, former top Pentagon official William Gawthrop lamented that "the senior Service colleges of the Department of Defense had not incorporated into their curriculum a systematic study of Muhammad as a military or political leader. As a consequence, we still do not have an in-depth understanding of the war-fighting doctrine laid down by Muhammad, how it might be applied today by an increasing number of Islamic groups, or how it might be countered."



This is more ironic when one considers that, while classical military theories (Clausewitz, Sun Tzu, Machiavelli, et al.) are still studied, the argument can be made that they have little practical value for today's much changed landscape of warfare and diplomacy. Whatever validity this argument may have, it certainly cannot be applied to Islam's doctrines of war; by having a "theological" quality, that is, by being grounded in a religion whose "divine" precepts transcend time and space, and are thus believed to be immutable, Islam's war doctrines are considered applicable today no less than yesterday. So while one can argue that learning how Alexander maneuvered his cavalry at the Battle of Guagamela in 331 BC is both academic and anachronistic, the same cannot be said of Islam, particularly the exploits and stratagems of its prophet Muhammad—his "war sunna"—which still serve as an example to modern day jihadists.

For instance, based on the words and deeds of Muhammad, most schools of Islamic jurisprudence agree that the following are all legitimate during war against the infidel: the indiscriminate use of missile weaponry, even if women and children are present (catapults in Muhammad's 7th century, hijacked planes or WMD by analogy today); the need to always deceive the enemy and even break formal treaties whenever possible (see Sahih Muslim 15: 4057); and that the only function of the peace treaty, or *hudna*, is to give the Islamic armies time to regroup for a renewed offensive, and should, in theory, last no more than ten years.

Quranic verses 3:28 and 16:106, as well as Muhammad's famous assertion, "War is deceit," have all led to the formulation of a number of doctrines of dissimulation—the most notorious among them being the doctrine of *taqiyya*, which permits Muslims to lie and dissemble whenever they are under the authority of the infidel. Deception has such a prominent role that renowned Muslim scholar Ibn al-Arabi declares: "[I]n the Hadith, practicing deceit in war is well demonstrated. Indeed, its need is more stressed than [the need for] courage" (The Al Qaeda Reader, 142).

Aside from ignoring these well documented Islamist strategies, more troubling is the fact that the Defense Department does not seem to appreciate Islam's more "eternal" doctrines—such as the Abode of War versus the Abode of Islam dichotomy, which in essence maintains that Islam must always be in a state of animosity vis-à-vis the infidel world and, whenever possible, must wage wars until all infidel territory has been brought under Islamic rule. In fact, this dichotomy of hostility is unambiguously codified under Islam's worldview and is deemed a *fard kifaya*—that is, an obligation on the entire Muslim body that can only be fulfilled as long as some Muslims, say, "jihadists," actively uphold it.

Yet despite all these problematic—but revealing—doctrines, despite the fact that a quick perusal of Islamist websites and books demonstrate time and time again that current and would-be jihadists constantly quote, and thus take seriously, these doctrinal aspects of war, apparently the senior governmental leaders charged with defending America do not.

Why? Because the "Whisperers"—Walid Phares' all too apt epithet for many Middle East/Islamic scholars, or, more appropriately, apologists—have made anathema anyone who dares imply that there may be some sort of connection between Islamic doctrine and modern-day Islamist terrorism, such as in the recent Steven Coughlin debacle. This is a long and all too well known tale for those in the field (see Martin Kramer's *Ivory Towers on Sand: the Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America*).

But consider for a moment: though there are today many Middle East studies departments, one will be sorely pressed to find any courses dealing with the most pivotal and relevant topics of today—such as Islamic jurisprudence and what it has to say about jihad or the concept of Abode of Islam versus the Abode of War—no doubt due to the fact that these topics possess troubling international implications and are best buried. Instead, the would-be student will be inundated with courses dealing with the evils of "Orientalism" and colonialism, gender studies, and civil society.

The greater irony—when one talks about Islam and the West, ironies often abound—is that, on the very same day of the ASMEA conference, which also contained a forthright address by premiere Islamic scholar Bernard Lewis (“It seems to me a dangerous situation in which any kind of scholarly discussion of Islam is, to say the least, dangerous”), the State Department announced that it had adopted the recommendations of a memo stating that the government should not call Al Qaeda-type radicals “jihadis,” “mujahidin,” or to incorporate any other Arabic word of Islamic connotation (“caliphate,” “Islamofascism,” “Salafi,” “Wahhabi,” and “Ummah” are also out).

Alas, far from taking the most basic and simple advice regarding warfare—Sun Tzu’s ancient dictum, “Know thy enemy”—the U.S. government is having difficulties even acknowledging its enemy.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_ibrahim/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_ibrahim/)

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William McCants (2008-06-03 10:24:29)

I don’t think Raymond Ibrahim’s choice of 9:29 is a good one for bolstering his argument. The Arabic is notoriously vague, as the parenthetical “even if they are” indicates. He might have used 4:34 instead. I agree that most medieval scholars believed that jihad against the infidel was obligatory until the whole world was under the political rule of Islam. But I stand by my assertion that this doctrine developed over time and is not obvious from the Quran. There are some verses that support this sentiment and lots of verses that contradict it, which is why the doctrine of abrogation and even Muhammad’s biography had to be developed in order to make sense of the contradictions. Let’s leave aside the question of whether or not there are obvious doctrines to be gleaned from the Quran and hadith. It was a small part of my larger point that studying Islamic doctrines of warfare—an extremely valuable enterprise—will not help us predict what Jihadis will do. What does Ibrahim make of the rest of my arguments in this regard? Finally, I seem to have misunderstood the tone of his initial post and his follow-up to Haykel’s comment. When he wrote about the “troubling” implications of Islamic doctrines of warfare for international relations or the “troubling” hadiths that permit the killing of women and children, I thought he was saying that they bothered him or should bother others. My bad. [1]William McCants is an independent consultant on militant Islamism living in the Washington, D.C. area.

1. <http://www.jihadica.com/about/>

Raymond Ibrahim (2008-06-04 10:57:59)

To anyone remotely interested in this increasingly pedestrian debate with William McCants, here goes: 1. There is nothing ambiguous about 9:29—at least not to native Arabic speakers. Responding to a critic, not writing an original piece for an audience—i.e., merely trying to get the point across—I simply copied and pasted that Quranic verse without providing my own translation. To be sure, the “even if they are” does not belong there, and the Arabic simply says “fight those ... from the people of the book...” In the words of McCants, “My bad.” 2. No, I don’t believe that studying Islam’s doctrines of war will lead to omniscience in regards to the jihadists’ every move, as they are not automatons. Still, I think that classes dealing with Islam’s war doctrines would be extremely relevant and useful, and, on an intellectual and strategic level, a strike against Islamists. In closing, I’d like to thank all who opined—pro and con—as meaningful debate is always welcome. [1]Raymond Ibrahim is a member of MESH. This discussion thread is now closed. —MESH Admin

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_ibrahim/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_ibrahim/)

Michael Horowitz (2008-06-01 21:02:07)

Raymond Ibrahim’s very interesting [1]post on Islamic doctrines of war deserves careful scrutiny and much praise. He is certainly correct that Western analyses of Islamic doctrines of war are sorely lacking. I think his argument is also important since it demonstrates the importance of thinking about the *content* of religion as much as religion itself. When people tend to consider whether or not religion influences behavior, like behavior in wartime, they tend to think about it as a binary: either it is on or it is off. However, it is also possible that the content of the religion itself matters, so studying Islamic doctrines concerning war may help us learn important lessons for dealing with

Salafi Jihadi groups. Ibrahim is also correct, at least based on my reading, that Salafi Jihadi groups have read Islamic war doctrines carefully. This debate has some interesting links to the debate over the impact of Sun Tzu on Chinese thinking about warfare. While some scholars argue that Chinese strategists read Sun Tzu to provide justifications for actions they already want to take, others say Sun Tzu's writings actively influence the way Chinese strategists think about warfare, and some even argue Sun Tzu is irrelevant for thinking about Chinese behavior. One can and should ask similar questions about Jihadis today. Another interesting analogy is the way that Catholic Christians read Christian doctrine on war during the early Crusading period. Christianity originally began as a religion theoretically predicated on non-violence. However, over time, for a variety of reasons, Christian doctrine on warfare changed so that war became, first, a spiritually neutral act when conducted for the purposes of protecting the Church, and then a positive act for which no apology was necessary and which possibly even conferred spiritual benefits. The texts did not change—only the interpretation. This suggests that there is something else besides doctrine influencing behavior. Now it is certainly true that Islamic doctrines on war are quite a bit more specific than Christian doctrines, at least in terms of texts considered definitive from a religious perspective. However, this also means that in addition to the question of what the doctrine says, we also need to try to figure out when particular interpretations of doctrine will be *activated*. I think the question of terminology is especially interesting. If the State Department is banning the use of terms like Jihadi, etc., is that because of arguments about whether calling Al Qaeda Jihadis legitimizes them under Islamic law? In that case, the motive would be very different than if the term was on the outs because the State Department did not want to offend their sensibilities. I would be interested in hearing from someone with insight on this decision. What will be the new label for the groups "formerly known as Salafi Jihadis"? Will McCants over at Jihadica has commented on Ibrahim's post ([2]here), and I agree with much of what he said. For example, it seems cost-benefit analysis is also an important part of Islamic warfare. McCants cites medieval Islamic war doctrines on suicide attacks saying that the benefits must outweigh the costs. Similarly, Martin Kramer, in one of his writings on Hezbollah and their decision-making in Lebanon in the 1980s, [3]cited the declining benefits of suicide attacks as an important reason why Hezbollah abandoned the tactic. McCants also cites some other things to consider when thinking about the relationship between Islamic doctrine and Islamic warfare practice, including: • contradictions in classical Islamic writings on war, something Bernard Haykel has already [4]commented on; • disagreements among today's Jihadis on tactics; and • academic studies showing the way organizational and politics also shape behavior, not just Islamic war doctrine. One book dealing with this issue, in part, is [5] *War, Terror & Peace In The Qur'an And In Islam: Insights For Military & Government Leaders*, by Timothy Schwartz-Barcott. The book attempts to outline classical Islamic doctrines on war and then "tests" them against the actual behavior of Muslims in war from the classical period through the present. I would tend to think that doctrine shapes behavior rather than determines behavior. That is to say, it is one input that is useful in predicting the behavior of Jihadis, but certainly not the only one. So Ibrahim is certainly correct in urging us to read and analyze Islamic war doctrines more carefully. However, we also need to be careful that we read those doctrines in context. Ibrahim's post importantly points out one shortcoming in America's strategic "education" on the way the Jihadis fight, and I hope it receives a great deal of attention. [6]Michael Horowitz is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/islams\\_war\\_doctrines\\_ignored/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/islams_war_doctrines_ignored/)
2. <http://www.jihadica.com/islamic-warfighting-doctrine-and-jihadi-behavior/>
3. <http://www.geocities.com/martinkramerorg/MoralLogic.htm>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/islams\\_war\\_doctrines\\_ignored/#comment-597](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/islams_war_doctrines_ignored/#comment-597)
5. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0970968221>
6. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_horowitz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_horowitz/)

Raymond Ibrahim (2008-05-31 20:57:07)

Unbeknownst to both commentators, Mark Clark's and Bernard Haykel's [1]responses to my [2]posting complement one another; more to the point, the former responds to the latter. First, I am in total agreement with Clark's appraisal of S.K. Malik's *The Quranic Concept of War*. Having just finished reading the book, it is clear that, while revealing and important in some ways, it is also something of a euphemistic interpretation of Islam's notions of war. To be sure, it does not apologize or lie—that is the territory of the Western, non-Muslim academic—as much as it tries to portray Islam's war practices and doctrines as noble, almost "humanitarian." However, Clark is right to question if Malik's treatise is "canonical." It is not. As Clark notes: "Malik's *Quranic Concept of War* is a noble and pure doctrine, limiting what a Muslim warrior can do in war. Sounds good, but which terrorist group abides any of the limitations?" This leads to, or answers, rather, Haykel's response. Haykel suggests that I believe Islamic law sanctions "indiscriminate violence" against the non-Muslim, and he cites in particular, fellow Muslims, women, children, the

elderly, and (the more than moot in today's era) monks. Now, I never said that, exactly. I wrote that "most schools of Islamic jurisprudence agree that the following are all legitimate during war against the infidel: the indiscriminate use of missile weaponry, even if women and children are present (catapults in Muhammad's 7th century, hijacked planes or WMD by analogy today)..." Well, it just so happens that, of the four schools of Sunni jurisprudence, the only school that appears to categorically ban an attack on those whom Haykel mentions is the Maliki school (as well as the Awza'i school, which, of course, is no longer valid): the three other "orthodox" *madhhabs* have made their blood *halal*, if exigency demands so. And, as Ayman Zawahiri cogently argues (unfortunately), the question of whether women, children, et al, can be killed, was decided upon by the *fuqaha* when Islam was on the ascendancy, and engaging in offensive warfare; in other words, the question of killing women, children, and the rest was relevant only when Muslims were the aggressors, invading infidel territory. Writes Zawahiri: "But when Muslims are defending their religion and their sanctities, and the infidels are surrounding them from every corner, and instead they [infidels] are the ones ones seeking them out and pursuing them... —in these situations it becomes a binding obligation on every Muslim to fight them anyway he can... [even if] some Muslims might be killed mistakenly" (*The Al Qaeda Reader*, 168). As for women and children, there are the troubling—yet canonical (as opposed to Malik's work)—hadiths that permit their killing: Muhammad authorized his followers to use catapults when he besieged the town of Taif in 630 AD (for nothing less than they would not submit to Islam), though he was aware that women and children were sheltered there. Also, when asked if it was permissible to launch night raids or set fire to the fortifications of the infidels if women and children were among them, the prophet is said to have responded, "They [women and children] are from among them [infidels]" (*Muslim* B19N4321). These two anecdotes are much more important than all the non-binding "discussions" of the ulema. In short, just as Clark points out that Malik's work is, in fact, non-canonical, so too does Haykel's notion that "There are discussions among Muslim jurists (such as Malik) about norms of proportionality and discrimination in targeting, and that can be used to refute Al Qaeda jihadists" not impress me. Why? Because that's all they are: discussions—not established precedents, sunna, law. Even Haykel seems to agree with this, as he makes the (somewhat contradictory) statement: "These norms [i.e., Islam's "noble" war codes], however tenuous or poorly applied in historical practice, can be invoked against Al Qaeda..." If they are tenuous and historically aberrant, what makes them "norms"? Bottom line: yes, there are Islamic war interpretations that are less radical. However, they are not "canonical," nor can one expect jihadists to abide by them when they are convinced that they are fighting for Islam's very existence. Nor are they very relevant when one keeps in mind that one pivotal, binding Islamic doctrine: that total war (whether monks are targeted or not) *must* persist until Islam dominates the world. [3] *Raymond Ibrahim is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/islams\\_war\\_doctrines\\_ignored/#comments](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/islams_war_doctrines_ignored/#comments)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/islams\\_war\\_doctrines\\_ignored/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/islams_war_doctrines_ignored/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_ibrahim/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_ibrahim/)

Mark T. Clark (2008-05-30 20:14:42)

Raymond Ibrahim [1] rightly notes the value of LTC Joseph Myers' presentation at the first annual conference of the Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa (ASMEA). Myers discussed an obscure—to the West, at least—text on Islamic war doctrine: Pakistani Brigadier S.K. Malik's *The Quranic Concept of War*. The book is rarely found in Western military libraries. It has been published in English, but by an Indian publication house (Himalayan Books in New Delhi) in 1986, which may explain its obscurity to the West. Myers argued that to understand the enemy, we must understand his doctrine and believes Malik's work may be the one to study. Having read the book (after an almost fruitless search on the internet for it), I would agree in part. It certainly has the ring of authenticity to it, despite—or because of—its similarity to reading classical Soviet literature on war, heavy with ideological and hagiographical references. But I wonder if we can consider Malik's work "canonical." Malik's *Quranic Concept of War* is a noble and pure doctrine, limiting what a Muslim warrior can do in war. Sounds good, but which terrorist group abides any of the limitations? A thorough study of this and other works would determine whether Malik's views are determined more by a desire to ennoble Islam's war doctrines than by a desire to explicate Islam's prescriptions for combat. Further, I would like to see whether any non-Pakistani Muslim army has adopted Malik's work, or even cited it doctrinally. However, the mere mention of Malik's work is a good starting point and Myers has served us by introducing the text. More study is needed. But Ibrahim discusses the failure of the United States to give serious attention to Islam's war doctrines. He also points out a new State Department and Department of Homeland Security mandate publicized on the last day of the conference delimiting the choices of words U.S. officials may use in discussing radical Islam. According to officials, using the words "jihad," "jihadist," or "caliphate" somehow legitimizes the radicals; just as, apparently, our having called Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles "strategic" somehow legitimized Soviet weapons. Ibrahim acknowledges at the end that the United States is having difficulty even acknowledging its enemy.

I would add that we may have just crippled ourselves intellectually as well. [2]Mark T. Clark is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/islams\\_war\\_doctrines\\_ignored/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/islams_war_doctrines_ignored/)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_t\\_clark/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_t_clark/)

Bernard Haykel (2008-05-31 11:14:36)

I must agree with Raymond Ibrahim that there is a [1]desperate need for the study Islamic laws and practices of warfare in the United States, and in the West more generally. However, I do not agree with his depiction of these—namely, that Islamic law sanctions indiscriminate violence in war against non-Muslims. There are discussions among Muslim jurists about norms of proportionality and discrimination in targeting, and that can be used to refute Al Qaeda jihadists. For example, there is a strong condemnation of killing fellow Muslims and justifying this through the unconstrained use of *takfir*. There is also discussion about the inviolate status of non-combatants (women and children, the aged and even Christian monks). These norms, however tenuous or poorly applied in historical practice, can be invoked against Al Qaeda, and a number of Arab countries have now done this to some effect. Michael Hayden, the head of the CIA, has acknowledged recently that Al Qaeda has been defeated in both Iraq and Saudi Arabia. In my view, this can only have been accomplished through a combination of strong-arm tactics as well as the use of Islamic propaganda that delegitimizes the truth claims of Al Qaeda's ideologues. [2]Bernard Haykel is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/islams\\_war\\_doctrines\\_ignored/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/islams_war_doctrines_ignored/)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bernard\\_haykel/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bernard_haykel/)

Raymond Ibrahim (2008-06-02 17:20:42)

To be brief, William McCants [1]errs by conflating those Islamic aspects that are "airtight" with those many others—such as the status of women and children during a *ghazwa*—that are not and that are, indeed, open to debate (though as noted, *most* legal conclusions reached regarding the lot of women and children intermingled with infidels are not very favorable). However, the concept that Dar al-Harb and Dar al-Islam must constantly be in a state of strife until the latter subsumes the former is hardly a "result of endless discussions, and not a given gleaned from Islamic scripture"—no more than the Five Pillars of Islam are. "Discussion" is necessary only for those questions that are neither clearly forbidden nor clearly obligatory—those many aspects of daily life that end up being labeled either "disliked," "permissible," or "recommended" according to *Ahkam al-Islam*. The concept that jihad must be waged until the entire globe is governed by Islam, like prayer, fasting, zakat, and the hajj (not to mention the *shahada*) is an *obligation*. Well-known jurist, Majid Khadduri, who lived and taught in the United States, after describing the Five Pillars and their individually-binding nature, moves on to jihad, which he reminds us is often called the "Sixth Pillar": "The jihad, on the other hand—unless the Muslim community is subjected to a sudden attack and therefore all believers, including women and children, are under obligation to fight—is regarded *by all jurists, with almost no exception, as a collective obligation of the whole Muslim community.*" (From his highly elucidating *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, 1955, p. 60.) As for McCants' statement regarding Quranic/hadithic exegesis: "I do not believe any scholar comes to a text without preconceptions of what it should say (which in turn are shaped by earlier interpretations, social influences, etc.) I am not a clean slate and neither is Ibrahim." That's fine; I partially agree. However, there is no denying that certain Quranic verses (e.g., 2:193, 2:216, 8:39, 9:5, 9:29, let alone hundreds of hadiths) make a clear imprint, even on the tabula rasa. What, I wonder, does 9:29 "mean" to McCants: "Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book [Christians and Jews], *until* they pay the jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued." Hardly ambiguous, the verse, in effect, declares all-out war. Moreover, the troublesome word "until" (*hata*) indicates that this is a divine commandment that still applies today, since there are millions of "people of the book" (not to mention *al-mushrikin*) who are not living in submission to Islam, "feeling themselves subdued." "Preconceived notions" are hardly needed to understand the Quran's very plain war verses. Thus McCants' somewhat "postmodern" suppositions—there are no absolutes or "truths" in Islam—are false. Yes, somethings, lots of things in Islam require debate and discussions; jihad in order to make the world subject to the sharia of Allah is certainly not one of them—at least not according to the orthodox *madhhabs*. As for his final point, that somehow I am "outraged by the fact that medieval clerics permit collateral damage in warfare," I confess that I am at a loss. Here is the paragraph where I discuss the ulemaic green-light for "collateral damage": "For instance, based on the words and deeds of Muhammad, most schools of Islamic jurisprudence agree that the following are all legitimate during war against the infidel: the indiscriminate use of missile weaponry, even if women and children are present (catapults in Muhammad's 7th century, hijacked planes or WMD by analogy today)..." How does that sound "outraged"?! (Incidentally, the exclamation mark in my question is meant to indicate

outrage.) [2]Raymond Ibrahim is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/islams\\_war\\_doctrines\\_ignored/#comment-607](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/islams_war_doctrines_ignored/#comment-607)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_ibrahim/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_ibrahim/)

William McCants (2008-06-01 21:10:19)

As noted above, I have already commented on the bulk of Raymond Ibrahim and Bernard Haykel's [1]exchange yesterday ([2]here). But I wanted to speak to Ibrahim's [3]follow-up to Haykel's response. Ibrahim makes a distinction between Islamic doctrines and Islamic discussions of doctrine. This is not a meaningful distinction. The convoluted discussion *is* the doctrine, which is why it does not make sense to talk about a coherent Islamic doctrine of warfighting. So when Ibrahim identifies "total war... until Islam dominates the world" as a doctrine, he must know that this "doctrine" is the result of endless discussions, and not a given gleaned from Islamic scripture. He may argue that the ulama are just reflecting what is in the Quran and hadith, but I do not believe any scholar comes to a text without preconceptions of what it should say (which in turn are shaped by earlier interpretations, social influences, etc.) I am not a clean slate and neither is Ibrahim. This is not to say there isn't rough stuff in the Quran and Sunna; there is. But it is the raw building material for the scholarly architects and engineers. A final point on which I would like Ibrahim's response. He seems outraged by the fact that medieval clerics permit collateral damage in warfare. Why? [4]William McCants is an independent consultant on militant Islamism living in the Washington, D.C. area.

1. <file:///localhost/mnt/ext/blogbooker/tmp/4p5x1k8v/4p5x1k8v-body.tex.lynxcomments.html>
2. <http://www.jihadica.com/islamic-warfighting-doctrine-and-jihadi-behavior/>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_ibrahim/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_ibrahim/)
4. <http://www.jihadica.com/about/>

## New state sponsors of terrorism (2008-05-30 06:21)

From [1]Daniel Byman



Middle Eastern governments have long supported terrorist groups as part of their foreign policies. States funded Palestinian militants, sheltered violent opposition groups confronting rival governments, and otherwise bolstered substate groups that regularly used terrorism. Regimes supported terrorists to fight Israel, demonstrate their revolutionary credentials, and weaken one another in their deadly geopolitical competition.

While state sponsorship of terrorism remains a tremendous problem in the Middle East today, the phenomenon is quite different than in the past. Not only have the names of the sponsored groups changed; the relationships are often fundamentally different as well. A particularly dangerous trend for the United States is the emergence of "passive sponsors" of terrorism: countries that deliberately look the other way as terrorist groups recruit, raise money, and otherwise sustain themselves. Saudi Arabia, before 9/11 (and even before the May 2003 attacks in the Kingdom), allowed Sunni jihadists to flourish with only limited interference. Today, Pakistan, Syria, and Yemen all knowingly tolerate Sunni jihadist activity on their soil. These states use jihadists and other terrorists to fight their enemies at home and abroad, and also fear confronting popular anger and powerful interest groups that back the terrorists.

Some governments, like Lebanon's, can do little against terrorist groups operating on their soil. Indeed, even in cases where governments are stronger, many terrorist groups are now partners rather than proxies. Even groups like Hezbollah, which has long worked closely with Iran and Syria, are emerging as actors with considerable independence. The terrorists' growing strength, and the importance of domestic politics as part of the decision to support the groups, has increased the chances of "blowback." Countries like Pakistan now are buffeted by the very violence they helped midwife.

I've authored a new [2]monograph, published by the Saban Center at Brookings, that looks at the activities of major state sponsors today, and critiques U.S. policy towards them. In the monograph, I call for a number of significant changes to how the United States handles this problem. However, even if all these changes are made, state sponsorship will still pose a danger to the United States in the years to come.

[3]Summary | [4]Full Text

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel\\_byman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel_byman/)
2. [http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2008/05\\_terrorism\\_byman.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2008/05_terrorism_byman.aspx)
3. [http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2008/05\\_terrorism\\_byman.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2008/05_terrorism_byman.aspx)
4. [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2008/05\\_terrorism\\_byman/05\\_terrorism\\_byman.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2008/05_terrorism_byman/05_terrorism_byman.pdf)

## 2.6 June

### 'Radical pragmatism' and the Jordanian option (2008-06-04 15:24)

In late April, MESH hosted a [1]discussion of the "Jordanian option." In today's New York Times, Thomas Friedman, writing from Ramallah, [2]offers his own version of it (see below, left). MESH member Adam Garfinkle reviews the earlier MESH thread, and adds his own insights. Comments are offered by MESH members Barry Rubin, Walter Reich, David Schenker, and Harvey Sicherman.

[22mideast450.jpg] "If Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas does not get control over at least part of the West Bank soon, he will have no authority to sign any draft peace treaty with Israel. He will be totally discredited.

"But Israel cannot cede control over any part of the West Bank without being assured that someone credible is in charge. Rockets from Gaza land on the remote Israeli town of Sderot. Rockets from the West Bank could hit, and close, Israel's international airport. That is an intolerable risk. Israel has got to start ceding control over at least part of the West Bank but in a way that doesn't expose the Jewish state to closure of its airport.

"Radical pragmatism would say that the only way to balance the Palestinians' need for sovereignty now with Israel's need for a withdrawal now, but without creating a security vacuum, is to enlist a trusted third party—Jordan—to help the Palestinians control whatever West Bank land is ceded to them. Jordan does not want to rule the Palestinians, but it, too, has a vital interest in not seeing the West Bank fall under Hamas rule.

"Without a radically pragmatic new approach—one that gets Israel

moving out of the West Bank, gets the Palestinian Authority real control and sovereignty, but one which also addresses the deep mistrust by bringing in Jordan as a Palestinian partner—any draft treaty will be dead on arrival."

Thomas L. Friedman, "Time for Radical Pragmatism," *New York Times*, June 4, 2008.

From [3]Adam Garfinkle

The Jordanian option is an idea whose time never exactly comes.

When I was writing about it—urging it, as it were, as the least bad of alternatives—nearly thirty years ago, the time was not right because, as Asher Susser [4]put it back in April, the Israeli government of the day was not sufficiently foresighted or realistic to understand the likely future of the matter. By the time later Israeli governments did understand, it was too late for the Jordanians. What Tom Friedman has been thinking all these years I can't say, but in light of what those of us who have been following this for more than thirty years know, his column looks to be a classical example of a BFO—a blinding flash of the obvious—but too late for prime time.

About a year or so ago Abdul Salem al-Majali was in Washington, carrying with him a very delicate version of a new Jordanian option. He raised it up the flag pole in a few places around town, and seems not to have noticed many people saluting. The problem with the idea, as was pointed out a few months ago, is that the Jordanians are afraid that instead of them re-containing Palestinian nationalism, the Islamicizing Palestinian national movement will finally toss the Hashemites into the proverbial dustbin of history. Israel would then be back where it was, geostragically speaking, before June 4, 1967, except instead of a Hashemite state in both east and west banks, with which it had a range of tacit understandings and some significant shared interests, it would have to deal with a far less cooperative neighbor.

This leads me more or less to the same conclusion Rob Satloff [5]mooted earlier: It may be possible to bring the Jordanians into a kind of relatively quiet dialogue on issues like trade, water and energy, air space and other aspects of security, medical-technical cooperation and a few other items, but only up to the carrying-capacity of the Jordanian political system which, under the current king, is still not back to where it was under an experienced and shrewd Hussein ibn Talal. If one takes the idea of path dependency seriously, as I do, then this sort of functional mix might lay the ground for a larger Jordanian role in the future, which might still end up being part of the least-bad-of-all policy alternatives for Israel, the United States, and arguably the Palestinians, too. But we're talking years here, and Israel's problem in the West Bank, where the collapse of Fatah has indeed created a dangerous vacuum, runs on a different, faster, timetable.

So, as I said, the Jordanian option is a idea whose time seems never to be right—Tom Friedman columns notwithstanding.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/jordanian\\_option/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/jordanian_option/)
2. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/04/opinion/04friedman.html>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/jordanian\\_option/#comment-461](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/jordanian_option/#comment-461)
5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/jordanian\\_option/#comment-466](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/jordanian_option/#comment-466)



Barry Rubin (2008-06-05 13:04:21)

Adam Garfinkle is of course [1]quite right. It is close to amusing how people writing about the Israel-Arab or Israel-Palestinian conflict waste our time with a long list of things that are not going to happen: quick fix, Hamas moderation, Jordanian solution, extending Gaza into Sinai, shelf agreement, one-state solution, shape of the table, give more concessions, and so on ad infinitum. The real point is that Hamas does not want a solution (except decades of Islamic revolutionary warfare) and Fatah/PA is incompetent, disorganized, and still too radical to accept one. Why then don't we devote ourselves—and governments, their time—to real issues and policy alternatives? But the starting point must be based on one simple admission: There is no solution in sight and no gimmick that will bring such an outcome. Let's begin the discussion there. Don't worry! There's plenty to talk about: the politics of Fatah/PA, will Hamas destroy them and how to prevent it, how can Lebanon be kept from being a state dominated by Hizballah-Iran-Syria, the best strategy in Iraq, stopping Iran from getting nuclear weapons, defeating Iran's ambitions, promoting a positive stability in Jordan and Egypt, and you can add another twenty issues to that. But as long as we spend a disproportionate amount of our time on pretending there is some imminent Arab-Israeli solution (or attending to the ridiculous notion that the failure is Israel's fault), we won't give enough attention to the real threats, issues, and options. Yet the idea of finding the solution (opiate of the policymakers? the holy grail? the philosopher's stone?) negates both all of our previous experience plus any sensible analysis of the current situation. [2]Barry Rubin is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/radical\\_pragmatism\\_and\\_the\\_jordanian\\_option/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/radical_pragmatism_and_the_jordanian_option/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry_rubin/)

Walter Reich (2008-06-05 15:24:51)

I appreciate Adam Garfinkle's [1]response to Thomas Friedman's recent [2]column summoning-up the semblance of a "Jordanian option." Like Adam Garfinkle, I've advocated some version of that option in the past, most recently in an op-ed that appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* in 2002 ([3]here). Of course, that option has always had serious problems associated with it, several of which Adam Garfinkle noted; the nature and likelihood of those problems have changed, depending the circumstances obtaining at the time. Moreover, that option doesn't result in an independent Palestinian state—for the existence of which there is, at least rhetorically, a consensus. (This is a consensus that would change, of course, if, after Jordan takes over the West Bank, the Palestinians manage to eject the Hashemites, take over Jordan as well as the West Bank and probably Gaza, declare a Palestinian state, and proceed with an effort to reclaim the rest of Palestine, which is to say pre-1967 Israel. At that point, lots of observers would denounce the idea of a Palestinian state having come into being by means of the Jordanian option as having been a bad idea, but of course not their bad idea.) But, alas, every approach to solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has serious problems associated with it. I'd leap at any that didn't have problems and that had a reasonable chance of resulting in security for every party and maybe even peace. Unfortunately, I don't know of any. The Jordanian option may well be unrealistic, and for all of the reasons Adam Garfinkle cites; but I'd be grateful if someone would identify an alternative option that—given what we know about politics, power, strategies, factions, ideologies, theologies and psychologies in the region—is likely to yield an actual, stable and long-lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace. The Jordanian option may well be, as Adam Garfinkle puts it, "an idea whose time never exactly comes." Fine. But which idea is one whose time has come? The difficulty in answering this question may well be why some opiners may be adopting the semblance of an idea—some kind of Jordanian option—that, a few years ago, they may have dismissed as being, at best, wishful thinking, or even, somehow, a Likudnik fantasy. Is it possible that the Jordanian option is, as Churchill said about another idea, the worst idea "except for all those others that have been tried from time to time"? One can walk away from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as insoluble—and maybe it is indeed insoluble. Or one can reconsider, because there's no alternative to doing so, ideas that were formerly dismissed—reconsider them not because they're without serious problems, but because other ideas have failed, or seem doomed to doing so. [4]Walter Reich is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/radical\\_pragmatism\\_and\\_the\\_jordanian\\_option/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/radical_pragmatism_and_the_jordanian_option/)
2. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/04/opinion/04friedman.html>
3. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TheTruthAboutIsrael/message/2795>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_reich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_reich/)

David Schenker (2008-06-05 15:42:15)

Here in Amman, Thomas Friedman's "[1]radical proposal" hasn't made much of a ripple. Amman is engulfed in its

own internal affairs at present, primarily related to the sales of government lands—which at the very least have been less than transparent, and at worst, are fueling fears of corruption in the palace. Top-level officials did not mention the Friedman proposal during recent meetings; when prompted, a former senior Jordanian official close to the palace told me today that increased Jordanian (military) involvement in the West Bank would constitute an unacceptable risk to the Kingdom, primarily related to a potential shift in the demographic balance of Jordan to 75 % Palestinian vs. 25 % East Banker Jordanian, effectively ending all vestiges of democracy. Despite pressures emanating from increased Egyptian involvement in Gaza, this well-connected former official told me that Jordan should avoid intervention in the West Bank at all costs. [2]David Schenker is a member of MESH.

1. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/04/opinion/04friedman.html>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david\\_schenker/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david_schenker/)

Harvey Sicherman (2008-06-05 16:14:26)

The Jordanian option has always been the eighth wonder of the political world. The closer you are to it, the further away it really is. The further away from it, the closer it really is. But it has not been a way of off-loading the Palestinians since the 1967 war. The late King Hussein often told the Israelis that he would take it over again if he got all the territory that was lost; when the Israeli prime minister of the day demurred, the king would reply, "Well then, go to Arafat and maybe you'll do better." Israel went to Arafat and did worse. Now it's too late. As Alan Dowty recently [1]observed, unless the balance of real powers among the Palestinians can be altered by diminishing Hamas, forget any diplomatic solutions. Thus the ironic impasse: Israel cannot safely withdraw from areas in the West Bank as part of a peace deal until it reoccupies and destroys the Hamas "sanctuary" in Gaza. [2]Harvey Sicherman is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/last\\_straw/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/last_straw/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey\\_sicherman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey_sicherman/)

## Iran's strategy in the Levant (2008-06-06 07:40)

From [1]Jon Alterman



A funny thing has happened in the Middle East: virtually all of the government opposition to the United States has gone away. After almost a half-century of Cold War battles to protect oil fields, deny Soviet access to warm-water ports, and commit hundreds of billions of dollars in aid, the number of Middle Eastern states hostile to United States can be counted on one hand, with several fingers left over. South Yemen merged into North Yemen in 1990, Saddam fell in 2003, Libya came in from the cold in 2004, and on they went. The only countries with truly adversarial relations with the United States are Syria and Iran, with Iran being the more consequential of the two.

This remaining opposition is not trivial. Indeed, the Iranians' return on their regional investments is breathtaking compared to the U.S. return on a far greater investment over the last five years. Relying on skillful diplomacy, artful proxies and strategic discipline, Iran has used its regional efforts to consolidate its rule at home and confound U.S.-led efforts to isolate it. At the same time, the states that are closest to the United States are hedging their relationships with us.

For the most part, Iran's regional allies are movements rather than states, and in a region in which

states dominate the politics within their own borders, that would seem to be a losing strategy. Yet, Iran has been able skillfully to play the hand it is dealt. While it would be hard for Iran's allies to topple U.S. allies in the Middle East, Iran can take comfort not only in these allies' growing power, but more importantly, in the ways in which they insulate Iran from U.S. and international pressure.

It is worth pointing out at the outset that the consistent thread running through Iran's efforts in the Levant is opposition to Israel. One could well argue that Iran has no business caring about Israel. Iran is a largely Shiite Persian nation rather than a Sunni Arab one. Jerusalem has been far more central to Sunni thinking than Shia, and before the Iranian revolution, hostility to Israel had been largely an Arab issue rather than a Persian or pan-Muslim one. In my judgment, the government of Iran uses its hostility to Israel strategically, as a way to open doors for a Shiite, Farsi-speaking power in the Sunni Arab heartland. By advertising its hostility to Israel—and supporting those who attack Israel—the Iranian government seeks to demonstrate to the disaffected throughout the region that it is more courageous and more true to their sentiments than their own governments. Iran is trying to obfuscate the fact that it is a foreign government with its own aspirations to regional dominance by portraying itself as a influential regional force agitating against the status quo, and a fearless rejectionist that dares to speak truth to power when other regional states cower under U.S. protection.

Opposition to the status quo is the core of Iranian strategy in the Levant. Israel is just one manifestation of that status quo, the other manifestations of which are regional weakness in the face of extra-regional powers, authoritarian governance, and economic malaise. Ironically, strong U.S. ties to regional governments—a U.S. policy success that has been nurtured over more than a half century—makes the United States complicit in the failure of these states and creates the dissatisfaction on which Iranian propaganda feeds.

Iran has played the game of Arab dissatisfaction far more skillfully than the United States. The U.S.-led effort to promote democracy in the region, which seemed robust just a few years ago, is in shambles. Arab publics never trusted U.S. intentions, governments carefully stoked nationalist sensitivities, conservative voices quickly drowned out liberal ones, and the United States found that a global emphasis on fighting terrorism quickly forced them into the arms of the local intelligence services who were most responsible for implementing anti-democratic measures. Cleverly, Iran has tried not so much to build a new order as to discredit the existing one, and it has met with some success.

A discussion of Iran's strategies in the Levant must start with Iran's most important state ally, Syria. Iran and Syria are, by some measures, improbable allies. Syria is a revolutionary secular regime, and Iran is a revolutionary Islamic one. Syria sees itself as the heart of the Arab world, a world that suffered through centuries of conflict with imperial Persia. Both regimes are highly ideological, yet their ideologies have little overlap.

Where they do overlap is in their opposition to the United States and to U.S. power and influence in the region. These two countries are drawn together in part because the United States opposes them using a variety of measures: bilateral sanctions, international pressure, and the occasional repositioning of troops to remind each of the reach of U.S. power. But they are also drawn together because they each seek to influence many of the same non-state actors in the Levant, from the Shia plurality in Lebanon to Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in the Palestinian Authority. In general, it seems that Iran is the more senior partner but also the more distant one; seen another way, Iran seems somewhat more strategic in its search for regional allies, while Syria seems more urgently and narrowly focused on protecting its interests in Lebanon.

Still, in my judgment Syria and Iran are bedfellows but not soul-mates. Syria is the principal bridge

through which Iran projects power into the Levant and a vital land link to Hezbollah. Most of Hezbollah's weapons are reportedly transshipped through Syria, and Syria provides a pro-Iranian base in the Arab heartland that Iran seeks to further its own campaign of regional influence. For its own part, Iran is Syria's only regional ally and an escape valve for pressure applied by the United States and the Gulf states. With the demise of the Soviet Union, Syria lost its patron. A dalliance with Saddam Hussein ended with his fall, leaving Syria literally with nowhere to turn but Tehran.

Yet, when unknown assailants assassinated the Hezbollah killer Imad Mughniyah in Damascus in February, Iran swiftly announced that Iranian, Syrian and Hezbollah representatives would jointly investigate his death. The announcement was a recognition of his Iranian ties. Yet, within days, Syria announced that no such joint investigation would occur. Whether Syria's rejection was due to a nationalist impulse, a reflection of having something to hide, or some other reason, we don't know and may never know.

In Iraq, Syria and Iran—by acts of omission and commission—have each supported armed groups whose greatest enemies are the other state's clients. Another sign of differing regional strategies are recent revelations that Syria is indirectly negotiating with Israel. Protestations of closeness in the last week seem to me to confirm the fact that there are serious rifts in this relationship.

While Syria is Iran's principal state ally, Hezbollah appears to be its most intimate ally. Linked to Lebanon's Shia plurality, Hezbollah was an Iranian creation that fights for Shia rights at the same time that it fights against Israel. Hezbollah set the mold for modern religious opposition parties, since copied by Hamas and others. It combines robust services with political agitation and armed struggle, all relying on local fundraising and substantial subsidy by foreign patrons. Iranian-Hezbollah ties seem as effortless as Iranian-Syrian ties seem forced. Iran does not feel an existential threat lurking in Lebanon, as Syria does, and it appears free to give Hezbollah considerably more leeway on tactical issues. In some ways, if fact, Iran seems to be using its own influence in Lebanon as a way to build Syrian dependence on Iran itself.

Overall, the Iranian bid in Lebanon seems to be one for influence rather than control over the country. A weak Lebanon with a virtually independent Shia region does Iran more good than an actual client state. Hezbollah gives Iran a stick with which it can poke Israel, Gulf Arab countries close to Lebanon, and the United States. At the same time, as a sub-national actor, it is harder to defeat in a conventional military conflict in which it would be badly outmatched by Israel and the United States. The 2006 war with Israel made this point perfectly, as Hezbollah hid behind Lebanese sovereignty to attack Israel. The Lebanese army cannot defeat Israel, but Hezbollah fighters on Lebanese soil can certainly damage Israel.

For its part, the current government of Lebanon is not capable of ending Iranian influence in the country and finds itself seeking to manage it instead. Iran has emerged as a foreign patron of a sectarian group, much as France has had a traditionally strong relationship with the Maronites and Saudi Arabia has been close to the Sunni community. Seen this way, Iran is not so much breaking the rules of Lebanese politics as reinventing them, especially since Hezbollah has been able to use the conflict with Israel as an excuse to remain armed. Just two weeks ago, we saw the effects of this on Lebanese internal politics.

Iran's support for Hamas is a different kind of relationship, as Hamas represents no sectarian group or other natural base that is logically sympathetic to Iran. Instead, Iran's support for Hamas—which appears to be a combination of cash and weapons—gives Iran ideological credibility in the Middle East at relatively low cost. While people in a classified setting can give better numbers, Iran's investment in Hamas is likely in the tens of millions of dollars per year, a mere fraction of its spending on Hezbollah, and also a fraction of international support for the government of Mahmoud Abbas.

Iran also supports Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a smaller and weaker group than Hamas with no ambi-

tions for political engagement or social service provision. In the current climate, PIJ seems to have left center stage as Fatah and Hamas struggle for power. Should Iran seek to disrupt peace moves in the future, however, Iran would likely use PIJ as an additional pawn with which it can further its own interests.

Like the government of Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority is hamstrung in its efforts to limit Iranian influence. Western patronage comes through the front door, but it often comes with restrictions and safeguards that hamstring the recipient bureaucrats. Iranian support for Hamas and PIJ comes through the back door in wads of cash and boxes of weapons and ammunition that are delivered to motivated and committed partisans. While Arab governments are generally alarmed at the prospect of Hamas coming to power in the Palestinian Authority—the prospect of a religiously inspired revolutionary movement seizing power makes every single regime in the region quake—they are generally sympathetic to the idea that less of a disparity in forces between Israel and the Palestinians would help draw Israel to the negotiating table. Their opposition to Iran’s support for Palestinian militant groups, therefore, is often muted.

Still, most of the states in the region are deeply troubled by Iran’s actions. King Abdullah of Jordan captured this disquiet most clearly in 2004 when he talked of a “Shia Crescent” emerging in the Middle East, a clear mark of concern about Iranian influence, but the concern is by no means limited to Jordan. The government of Egypt sees Iran as a key rival for regional influence and a proliferation threat for the entire Middle East, and the governments of both Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority see Iran pushing their populations toward extremism and division. Indeed, while one can make a case for some Iranian good works for the Shia in Lebanon, it’s hard to point to anything outside that arena where the Iranians are playing a constructive role in the region.

Even so, these governments seem to be drifting away from the U.S. embrace, partly as a consequence of Iran’s actions. U.S. standing in the Middle East grew at a time when governments felt their greatest threats came from beyond their borders. U.S. military support helped protect them and was welcomed. Now, the United States is able to offer far fewer protections from the things that governments most fear—internal threats against which a close U.S. relationship is more of a mixed blessing. Governments welcome the tools of U.S. counterterrorism—the communications intercepts, the paramilitary training, and the equipment—but they doubt the wisdom of the U.S. prescription of more open politics, respect for human rights, and the like. Instead, many have the sense that the United States is dangerously naïve; they see U.S. insistence pushing forward with Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2006 despite the disarray of Fatah and the gathering strength of Hamas as a prime example of that naïveté.

Iran not only profits from this split, but helps drive it. Iran does not threaten any of the Levantine Arab governments in a conventional military sense, but the growing feelings of anomie and disaffection that Iran helps fan drive a wedge between regional governments and the United States. The United States no longer leads the Free World, because there is no more Iron Curtain; the age in which the United States could act as if it enjoyed a monopoly on virtue is over. Governments and their citizens have a wider array of relationships to choose from—China, Europe, and even Iran are all carving out their own niches—and those relationships are increasingly complex. In addition, the apparent intimacy of the Information Age projects the United States into people’s lives as never before and sharpens the focus on blemishes and positive attributes alike.

What we are trying to do in the Levant is infinitely more difficult than what Iran is trying to do, but that does not account for all of our difficulties. Our inability to execute policy effectively, and some quixotic efforts to impose our own notion of moral clarity on the region, have taken their toll.

The core of countering Iranian malfeasance needs to be better execution of policy by the United States. Rather than advertise our desire to remake the region in our image, pursue maximalist goals or

loudly trumpet our sympathy toward Islam, we need to pursue our interests with quiet effectiveness. It is hard to imagine how this might be done without more direct U.S. government engagement in Arab-Israeli peacemaking and greater success in Iraq. I am somewhat more encouraged by the trendlines in the latter than the former, and even minimal progress on both fronts is both tenuous and easily reversible, but we need to be much more successful than we've been. To do that, we have to set more modest goals and be more effective achieving them. Put another way, we need to restore our position as a country that is not only predictable, but also reliable. When we say we will do things, we must deliver. We have lost that reputation, and it colors everything else we do in the Middle East and beyond.

Some might call this prescription European-style defeatism, but I view it as healthy American pragmatism. We have badly misjudged our influence over local events in the Middle East, and our influence has diminished as a consequence. We should neither abandon our ideals nor our friends, but we need to recognize that we serve neither when we over-promise and under-deliver. Some of our allies may be alarmed by a more modest American approach to the region and fear that rather than a recalibration it represents the beginning of an abandonment. Our response to their fears principally should be one of deeds rather than words.

There is a school of thought that suggests that much of our problem in the Middle East is one of messaging. If we can talk about ourselves in the right way and inspire the right people, this thinking goes, we can regain our previous position of influence. While it is vitally important that we better understand regional audiences, we cannot delude ourselves. Our problem in the Middle East is what we have done, what we have said we will do and not done, and what we have not committed to do. We have ceded ground to Iran—by seeking to defend unsustainable positions and letting spoilers derail peaceful progress—and thus played right into the hands of those who seek to cripple our policies.

None of this is to underestimate the fact that the United States is playing a difficult game in the Levant. We are seeking to build more effective governments and more robust societies, in part out of an expectation that they will emerge with some affection for the United States. That should remain an objective of U.S. policy.

Iran is playing a somewhat simpler game, seeking to undermine a status quo that few find desirable. Iran is not positioned to win, and I do not believe that it can win. Yet, Iran is certainly positioned to gain, especially as it seeks to slip from the cordon that the United States is seeking to place around the Islamic Republic. Iran is beset by internal problems, and it is hardly a model that many in the Middle East would seek to emulate. Still, its proxies will not soon go away, nor will our allies swiftly resolve their own internal challenges. We will be facing this challenge for some time to come, but with skill and patience, we can turn the tide.

Jon Alterman made these remarks to the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on June 5.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon\\_alterman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon_alterman/)

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Steven A. Cook (2008-06-07 17:34:05)

I want to thank Jon Alterman for his [1]excellent post detailing Iran's efforts to extend its regional influence. His comprehensive review is a sobering reminder of the both the failures of Washington's current approach to the Iranian threat in the Levant and the marked strategic changes in the Middle East with which the next president must grapple. While I appreciate Jon's effort to highlight the emerging differences between Damascus and Tehran, his comment that

the two countries are "bedfellows but not soul mates" struck me as a bit off the mark. Senators John Kerry and Chuck Hagel made a more egregious mistake in the *Wall Street Journal* this week when they [2]referred to Syrian-Iranian ties as a "marriage of convenience." I am not sure where this idea came from, but it is clear that the relationship between Syria and Iran is much more than a tactical move on the part of the parties. The rationale for the ties, which date back to 1979, are bound up in geo-strategy, economics (for the Syrians, at least), and the exigencies for Syria's ruling Alawi minority to gain and maintain some Islamic street cred. Moreover, despite the apparent divergence between Syria and Iran on a number of issues, Damascus has no place else to go. Although the Syrians regard the recent Arab summit as a success, they remain estranged from Arab heavyweights like Saudi Arabia and Egypt. To be sure, the Qatari role in the Doha Agreement—which word in the region says came with significant financial incentives to Damascus—indicates that Syria is not totally isolated. It is important to point out, however, that Qatar's foreign minister was coordinating with his Iranian counterpart all along the way. The Syrians may be, as some have surmised, talking to the Israelis in Ankara because they want to get out from under the Iranians and making nice with Israel is a sure-fire way of achieving that goal. While the dialogue in Turkey is positive, American policymakers should not lose sight of how troublesome the Syrians can be. Damascus has a long history of playing both sides of the fence. All that being said, I believe the Israeli-Syrian dialogue underway in Ankara is one of the most interesting recent developments in the region. I don't believe that an agreement is imminent, but the Turkish role is intriguing. If American strategy in the Middle East is geared toward containing Iran and if exploiting the differences between Damascus and Tehran is an important part of that plan, then Washington should be offering much more than its present tepid support for the Turkish-sponsored negotiations. Besides Sheikh Hasan Nasrallah, Bashar al-Asad is in the thrall of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, though how long he will be the PM is the subject of another post. There is clear evidence in Damascus of Syrian-Turkish cooperation as Turkey has become one of Syria's most important trading partners and Turkish companies help rehabilitate Syria's crumbling infrastructure. Washington should encourage this relationship in the hope that historical Turkish-Persian mistrust and enmity will create more daylight between Damascus and Tehran. Of course, this hoped-for gap is not going to happen overnight, but if any country can play a constructive role in this regard, it is Turkey. The Israelis have implicit trust in Erdoğan on Syria; Washington should follow Jerusalem's lead and ride the Turks on this one as far as they can take us. [3]Steven A. Cook is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/irans\\_strategy\\_in\\_the\\_levant/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/irans_strategy_in_the_levant/)
2. [http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121262346490946859.html?mod=opinion\\_main\\_commentaries](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121262346490946859.html?mod=opinion_main_commentaries)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven\\_a\\_cook/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven_a_cook/)

Jon Alterman (2008-06-09 08:59:34)

I think Steven A. Cook and I agree more than [1]he suggests. Syria has nowhere else to go, it is true, but if there were another place to go, where would Syria allow itself to be led? My argument, with which I think Steven agrees, is that it would be not quite as close to Iran (although I have no doubt that they would remain "friends with benefits"). I suspect the difference between us is not over substance, but instead with a middle-aged Washingtonian's understanding of the implications of being "bedfellows," versus those of a young whippersnapper in more libertine NYC. I am so old-fashioned... [2]Jon Alterman is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/irans\\_strategy\\_in\\_the\\_levant/#comment-631](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/irans_strategy_in_the_levant/#comment-631)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon\\_alterman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon_alterman/)

Lee Smith (2008-06-09 15:16:09)

Steven A. Cook makes the [1]textbook case for why, given their history and strategic interests, it would be very difficult to "split" Iran from Syria. It is not clear then why he believes that the Turkish role in Syria-Israel negotiations might be useful to Washington. Cook writes:

If American strategy in the Middle East is geared toward containing Iran and if exploiting the differences between Damascus and Tehran is an important part of that plan, then Washington should be offering much more than its present tepid support for the Turkish-sponsored negotiations.

But "exploiting the differences" between Damascus and Tehran is not part of that plan for the excellent reasons that he described above—i.e., there are few, if any, differences to exploit. U.S. strategy is to isolate both the Iranians and the Syrians, not throw them lifelines, or have allies in Jerusalem and Ankara do so. In February, the Treasury Department designated Syrian president Bashar al-Asad's cousin Rami Makhlouf in an effort to hurt the Syrian regime financially,

a tactic that seems to be working. Last week Turkcell reportedly opted out of a deal with Makhlouf's Syriatel, leaving Makhlouf with no choice but to swallow the 69 percent he was looking to sell to the Turks. So, it is doubtful at this point that Washington has any interest in Ankara, or anyone, helping to "rehabilitate Syria's crumbling infrastructure" when the regime's behavior has not changed one bit to Washington's liking. Who knows what the AKP government hopes to gain from its role as mediator? Perhaps Erdoğan, like Olmert, wishes to enhance his prestige domestically. Maybe the Turks, like other regional players, want to spread their bets—a little on the U.S.-backed regional order, and a little on the Iranian axis. It is also worth recalling that when the Israelis leveled the Syrian nuclear facility, they flew through Turkish airspace to get there, a fact that Erdoğan, if not necessarily the Turkish military, might wish for his terror-supporting neighbor in Damascus to forget as quickly as possible. At any rate, from Washington's perspective, it is hard to see how the Turkish role is any way constructive. [2]Lee Smith is a visiting fellow at the Hudson Institute.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/irans\\_strategy\\_in\\_the\\_levant/#comment-631](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/irans_strategy_in_the_levant/#comment-631)

2. [http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff\\_bio&eid=LeeSmith](http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff_bio&eid=LeeSmith)

Malik Mufti (2008-06-12 15:07:35)

Jon Alterman's [1]analysis of Iranian regional strategy is excellent in several regards, not least in highlighting the extraordinary usefulness of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict for a revisionist Shiite non-Arab state seeking to project its influence into the Sunni Arab heartland. Here I just want to add a few words on Turkey's role in this dynamic. In imperial times the Ottomans took the lead, for both geopolitical and sectarian reasons, in countering Persian encroachments in the Fertile Crescent. The embrace of secularism after the establishment of the Turkish Republic, however, coupled with the strong Kemalist aversion to associating with foreign powers in their regional policies (in a common Turkish formulation, refusing to serve as a local "gendarme" for the Americans), led Ankara to abandon this role for the most part. Nevertheless, as Steven Cook [2]suggests, there remain good reasons for Turkish concern today, ranging from Iran's enhanced position in Syria and Iraq, to its efforts to exacerbate a Palestinian-Israeli conflict that can still destabilize the entire region (including Turkey itself). The imperative of countering Iran, however, is paralyzed by Turkey's domestic pathologies—above all, its ongoing inability to accommodate Kurdish identity. Thus, far from viewing the Kurds as a potential conduit for the projection of its own influence into the Fertile Crescent, Ankara finds itself driven to collaborate with Syria *and* Iran in a common effort to suppress Kurdish nationalism. A recent confirmation of this collaboration came earlier this month when Turkey's land forces commander Gen. İlker Başbuğ acknowledged that the Turkish and Iranian militaries have been coordinating their operations in northern Iraq. A final point: Lee Smith ends his [3]comment by seeming to suggest that Erdoğan and the AKP government seek a closer relationship with Syria than the Turkish military might like. In fact, Turkey's military and civilian secularist elites have actively backed closer security and economic cooperation with both the Syrian and Iranian regimes in recent years. That is not likely to change as long as neither regime poses a direct threat to the primary concern of those elites: the preservation of their monocultural nationalist ideology at home. [4]Malik Mufti is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/irans\\_strategy\\_in\\_the\\_levant/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/irans_strategy_in_the_levant/)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/irans\\_strategy\\_in\\_the\\_levant/#comment-631](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/irans_strategy_in_the_levant/#comment-631)

3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/irans\\_strategy\\_in\\_the\\_levant/#comment-639](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/irans_strategy_in_the_levant/#comment-639)

4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/malik\\_mufti/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/malik_mufti/)

## Lebanon fault lines (2008-06-10 11:53)

From MESH Admin

The clashes in Lebanon last month revealed the underlying fault lines within the country. These two maps, prepared by [1]Lebanon-Support, are useful references to where they run.

The first one (thumbnail, left below) marks open roads, closed roads, and the sites of clashes in Beirut as of May 14. It does not specify the parties involved in the closures or clashes. The second one (thumbnail, right below) is a map of all Lebanon, showing the disposition of Lebanon's sects and the sites of clashes



throughout the country, as of May 10. Click on thumbnails to view the maps. (They may take a few moments to load.)



[2] . . . . . [3]

1. <http://lebanon-support.org/>
2. [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/61F4539B9C3AB962C1257458002E2352/\\$file/leb\\_ls\\_beirut-movement-map\\_14may08\\_2.jpg](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/61F4539B9C3AB962C1257458002E2352/$file/leb_ls_beirut-movement-map_14may08_2.jpg)
3. [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/78A1970D3A897B88C1257458002E9DDE/\\$file/leb\\_ls\\_clashes\\_10may08.jpg](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/78A1970D3A897B88C1257458002E9DDE/$file/leb_ls_clashes_10may08.jpg)

### The myth of linkage (2008-06-12 11:15)

From [1]Martin Kramer



Last September, when I arrived in Cambridge for my fall stay at Harvard, I opened the Boston Globe and saw this headline over an [2]editorial: "The Other Middle East Conflict." I immediately said to myself: well, I know what the Middle East conflict is—that's the Israelis and the Palestinians. So what is the other Middle East conflict? But as I read through the first sentence, it became clear that I was totally wrong. The editorialist, or the headline writer, assumed that most readers would understand "the Middle East conflict" to be the war in Iraq. By the "other Middle East conflict," it turned out, they meant the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, which was the subject of the editorial.

I began to wonder whether typical students, in a classroom, would know what I was talking about if I started discussing "the Middle East conflict" without defining it. And if I defined it as Israel and the Palestinians, would I be showing my age?

It also reminded me of something else that had surprised me: a 2005 National Geographic [3]survey of 18-to-24-year-olds, asking them to look at a blank map of the Middle East and locate Israel, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. I would have guessed that Israel would have loomed largest on the mental maps of young Americans today.

I would have been wrong. 37 percent can identify Iraq and 37 percent can find Saudi Arabia—not high percentages overall. But even fewer, 26 percent, can identify Iran, and still fewer, 25 percent, can find Israel on a blank map. Perhaps it isn't surprising when one recalls that war has cycled well over over

a million Americans through Iraq and Afghanistan—as soldiers, administrators, and contractors. It was Ambrose Bierce who once said, “War is God’s way of teaching Americans geography.” Thanks to war, the Middle East of early 21st-century America has been re-centered—away from Israel and toward the Persian Gulf. That is where conflict commands American attention.

But not everyone thinks it should. The last time I [4]counted papers at the Middle East Studies Association annual conference, about two years ago, there were 85 papers on Palestine-Israel, 30 on Iraq, 27 on Iran, and only 4 on Saudi Arabia. Here, too, the skewing is conflict-driven—that is, the judgment that the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians should command American attention.

And it isn’t just the specialists. They would be seconded by Jimmy Carter, who was recently [5]asked: “Is the Israel-Palestine conflict still the key to peace in the whole region? Is the linkage policy right?” Carter’s answer: “I don’t think it’s about a linkage policy, but a linkage fact.... Without doubt, the path to peace in the Middle East goes through Jerusalem.” [6]Likewise, Zbigniew Brzezinski: “The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the single most combustible and galvanizing issue in the Arab world.”

This is obviously meaningless unless one has weighed all the other issues. Is it more combustible than the Kurdish question? Is it more galvanizing than Sunni-Shiite animosity? How would Brzezinski know if it were? I have broken down all Middle Eastern conflicts into nine clusters, and have appended them [7]below. You decide.

But the bottom line is this: given so long a list, it is obvious that conflict involving Israel is not the longest, or the bloodiest, or the most widespread of the region’s conflicts. In large part, these many conflicts are symptoms of the same malaise: the absence of a Middle Eastern order, to replace the old Islamic and European empires. But they are independent symptoms; one conflict does not cause another, and its “resolution” cannot resolve another.

So the more interesting question is this: why is the idea of “linkage” so persistent in some quarters? Why are there still people who see one particular conflict as “the Middle East conflict,” and who believe that in seeking to resolve it, they are pursuing “the Middle East peace process”?

Some would answer this question by pointing to the world’s fascination with Israel. Unlike, say, the future of the Kurds, the future of Israel (and the Palestinians) fascinates the world. A conflict involving Jews, set in the Holy Land of Christianity and in a place of high significance to Islam, is destined to received more than its share of attention. There is also an illusion of familiarity with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. No one beyond the specialists can spell out the difference between Sunnis and Shiites, or understand why the (Muslim) Sudanese government is persecuting the (Muslim) people of Darfur. But many people believe (usually wrongly) that they understand the core of the issue between Israel and the Palestinians.

Others might point to the West’s self-imposed obligation to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In Europe, but to some extent also in America and even Israel, there is a perceived sense of guilt at having caused the conflict in the first place. There may be other conflicts that are more dangerous, but foreigners did not create the Arab-Persian or Shiite-Sunni conflicts, whereas the international community facilitated the creation of Israel and legitimated it by a U.N. resolution, along with a Palestinian state. Thus, many believe, the world has a special obligation to employ all means to bring peace to Israelis and Palestinians, by creating that Palestinian state.

Others might point to the fact that a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (and the leftover Israeli-Syrian conflict) still lies just around the corner, because it was once so tantalizingly close. All of the conflicts’ protagonists were regular guests in the White House and frequent guests of a succession of

Secretaries of State. No one knows what it would take to end other conflicts, but there are "parameters" for ending this one. The United States theoretically has enough leverage on Israelis, Palestinians, and Syrians, and if only it were prepared to use it, this conflict could be ended, along predictable lines.

All of these beliefs are widespread, and they explain why so much attention and effort have been lavished on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But they do not explain the belief in linkage. It is possible to be fascinated by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, feel obligated to resolve it, and think it is relatively easy to resolve, and still not believe in linkage—that is, that the success of your efforts will bring a greater reward across the Middle East, or that an absence of progress will have grave consequences across the region.

The concept of linkage requires another belief: that the Middle East is a system, like Europe, and that its conflicts are related to one another.

Europe in modern times became a complex, interlocking system in which an event in one corner could set off a chain reaction. In Europe, local conflicts could escalate very rapidly into European conflicts (and ultimately, given Europe's world dominance, into global conflicts). And Europe had a core problem: the conflict between Germany and France. Resolving it was a precondition for bringing peace to the entire continent. Churchill [8] put his finger on this in 1946: "The first step in the re-creation of the European Family," he said, "must be a partnership between France and Germany."

Linkage, I propose—and this is my original thesis—is a projection of this memory of Europe's re-creation onto the Middle East. The pacification of Europe was the signal achievement of the United States and its allies in the middle of the 20th century. It then became the prism through which the United States and Europe came to view the Middle East. From NATO to the European Union, from the reconstruction of Germany to Benelux, Europe's experience has provided the template for visions of the future Middle East.

It was this mindset that led analysts and diplomats, for about three decades after the creation of Israel, to interpret Israel's conflict with its neighbors as "the Middle East conflict." Like the conflict between France and Germany, the Arab-Israeli conflict was understood to be the prime cause of general instability throughout the region, as evidenced by repeated Arab-Israeli wars, in 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973.

The flaws in the analogy only began to appear after Egypt and Israel achieved peace in 1979. From that point onward, the Arab-Israeli conflict moved in fits and starts toward resolution. Yet other conflicts in the region intensified. Large-scale wars erupted—not between Israel and its neighbors, but in the Persian Gulf, where a revolution in Iran, and the belligerence of Iraq, exacted a horrendous toll and required repeated U.S. interventions.

By any objective reading, the reality should have been clear: the Middle East is not analogous to Europe, it has multiple sources of conflict, and even as one conflict moves to resolution, another may be inflamed. This is because the Middle East is not a single system of interlocking parts. It is made up of smaller systems and distinct pieces, that function independently of one another.

The myth of "linkage" persists, then, because many observers cannot shed the analogy of the Middle East with Europe. A good case is Brzezinski, a man who did play a role in reconstructing Europe, and who has [9] said: "The problems of the Middle East are conflated, and certainly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Iraq are interactive. That's absolutely a fundamental truth." This is no more than a profession of faith, mere habit and analogy substituting for analysis. In what way are these problems conflated? How are they interactive? Brzezinski offers no substantiation at all.

The myth of linkage also persists because, paradoxically, the neo-conservatives embraced it. They,

too, made extravagant claims about the likely effects of Iraq's "liberation" from Saddam's regime, which they understood as directly analogous to the destruction of Hitler's dictatorship. Former CIA director James Woolsey, before the war, [10]used precisely this analogy: "This could be a golden opportunity to begin to change the face of the Arab world. Just as what we did in Germany changed the face of Central and Eastern Europe, here we have got a golden chance." But it may have been a realist, Henry Kissinger, who first [11]claimed that "the road to Jerusalem will lead through Baghdad"—that victory over Iraq would produce a peace dividend for Israel. Saddam's fall hasn't had any such effect, but such claims have tended to validate the idea of linkage as a principle—that roads from here lead to there.

Finally, there is the deliberate effort by Iran, Al Qaeda, and others, to create linkage, or at least the illusion of it. In a bid for the sympathy of the fabled "Arab street," they seek to portray the conflict with Israel as a supra-conflict between Islam and evil. The globalized Arab media such as Al Jazeera effectively do the same. Then various Pew and Zogby polls pick up the reverberations, and spread the message to Western elites that nothing interests the "Arab street" so much as Israeli misdeeds and American support for them.

Take, for example, this [12]statement by Jimmy Carter:

There is no doubt: The heart and mind of every Muslim is affected by whether or not the Israel-Palestine issue is dealt with fairly. Even among the populations of our former close friends in the region, Egypt and Jordan, less than 5 percent look favorably on the United States today. That's not because we invaded Iraq; they hated Saddam. It is because we don't do anything about the Palestinian plight.

Carter, of course, has no idea what is in the "heart and mind of every Muslim." He simply picks up sound bites from pollsters and so-called experts on Arab opinion. He then avoids the inconvenient fact that while the United States has been accused for decades of doing nothing for the Palestinians, its popularity in places like Jordan and Egypt has only plummeted since the Iraq invasion—military action that removed a ruler, Saddam Hussein, who was beloved by the "Arab street" and Arab intellectuals.

I have called linkage a myth, both in past and present. It is a myth because the Middle East is not a single region. But is it destined to remain so?

I still believe Middle East is less integrated than Europe, but it does share one feature with early 20th-century Europe. Until now, the Middle East has had more geography than military power. States have been unable to project power very far beyond their borders. But the spread of missiles and, possibly, nuclear weapons, could change that, leaving states with too little geography and too much power. In these conditions, conflicts that have been localized could become regionalized. In this case, it would not be the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that would occupy the place of France and Germany. It would be the conflict between Iran and Israel, and between Iran and the moderate Arab states. Such a conflict could configure the Middle East as one region, collapse the distance between the Levant and the Gulf, produce arms races, spur nuclear proliferation and proxy wars, create tightly-integrated alliances—in short, make the Middle East very much like Europe in its darkest days.

Whether the United States will act to affirm the *pax Americana*, by checking Iran's rise, remains to be seen. Whether or not it does, but especially if it does not, the common understanding of "the Middle East conflict" seems destined to shift again. We may then look back with nostalgia to a time when the grandiose title of "the Middle East conflict" belonged to Israelis and Palestinians. The next Middle East conflict could be very different.

## Clusters of Conflict

- First, the Arab-Persian conflict (with its origins in earlier Ottoman-Persian conflict). This manifested itself in our time most destructively in the eight-year Iran-Iraq war, and it continues to inflame post-Saddam Iraq and other parts of the Arab/Persian Gulf (even the name of which is the subject of dispute). This is probably one of the oldest rivalries in the history of the world. It has been exacerbated by the bid of Iran, under the Shah and now under the Islamic regime, to restore lost imperial greatness and achieve hegemonic dominance over the Gulf and beyond.
- Second, the Shiite-Sunni conflict, which goes back in various forms for fourteen centuries, and which the struggle for Iraq has greatly inflamed, both within that country and beyond. There is some overlap here with Arab-Persian conflict, but the Shiite-Sunni conflict also divides Arabs against each other, in Iraq, Lebanon, and the Gulf countries. The ruthless violence between the sects in Iraq suggested the savage potential of this sectarianism, which has some potential to spread to other places in the Middle East where Shiites and Sunnis contest power and privilege.
- Third, the Kurdish awakening, which involves a large national group experiencing a political revival in the territory of several existing states. Over the past two decades, violent conflict generated by Kurdish aspirations has torn at the fabric of Turkey and Iraq. Kurdish groups have used terrorism, and states have used scorched-earth repression and chemical weapons against Kurds. Now that Iraqi Kurds have established a de facto state in northern Iraq, there is every prospect that the Kurdish awakening will generate more conflict, and that it will spill over borders, possibly involving Turkey, Iran, and Syria.
- Fourth, the inter-Arab conflict among Arab states over primacy, influence, and borders—the result of disputes created by the post-Ottoman partition of the Arab lands by Britain and France. In some places, these disputes are exacerbated by the inequities in nature's apportioning of oil resources. The most destructive example of such a conflict in our times was Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait—the attempted erasure of one Arab state by another. Other examples include Nasser's invasion of Yemen and Syria's occupation of Lebanon.
- Fifth, conflicts over the political aspirations of compact Christian groups with strong historic ties to the West. Foreign Christian minorities were turned out of the region decades ago, but the Maronites of Lebanon and the Greeks of Cyprus have held their ground. In the 1970s, wars were launched to deprive them of their political standing, leading in Cyprus to de facto partition between Greek and Turkish areas, and in Lebanon to a quasi-cantonization. These conflicts have defied all attempts at final resolution.
- Sixth, conflicts that arise from the quest of Arab states to preserve or restore parts of their pre-colonial African empires. The most significant conflicts in this category are the long-running war in Sudan, which has descended into genocide in Darfur, and the festering contest over Western Sahara.
- Seventh, the nationalist-Islamist conflicts within states, which are the result of failed modernization and the disappointed expectations of independence. The costliest of these conflicts in our time were the Iranian revolution in the 1970s (Islamists prevailed), the Islamist uprising in Syria in the 1980s (nationalists won), and the civil war that ravaged Algeria for much of the 1990s (nationalists triumphed). Smaller-scale conflict has occurred in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and is now afflicting the Palestinian territories.

- Eighth, numerous conflicts, centered in the Persian Gulf, generated by the addiction of the industrialized West to the vast oil resources of the region, and the need of the United States to maintain its hegemony over the world's single largest reservoir of energy. The United States essentially keeps the Gulf as an American lake, using aggressive diplomacy, arms sales to clients, and its own massive force to keep oil flowing at reasonable prices. This has put the United States in direct conflict with regional opponents—Islamic Iran, Saddam's Iraq, and a non-state actor, Al Qaeda—who have seen its dominance as disguised imperialism. In particular, U.S.-Iranian conflict for regional hegemony has escalated over the last thirty years, and is now being exacerbated by Iran's nuclear ambitions and pursuit of regional power status.
- Ninth, there is conflict involving Israel, on three planes: Arab-Israeli (that is, Israel versus Arab states), Palestinian-Israeli, and Iranian-Israeli. The Arab-Israeli conflict produced a series of four interstate wars in each of the four decades beginning in 1948. But since Egypt's peace with Israel, three decades ago, there have been no general Arab-Israeli wars, and Israel has negotiated formal or de facto agreements or understandings with neighboring states. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict periodically erupts and subsides (most dramatically in two intifadas), and continues to defy resolution, but hasn't led to a regional conflagration. The brewing Iranian-Israeli conflict isn't about the Palestinians; it is an extension of the contest between the U.S. and Iran for regional dominance. So far, this conflict has manifested itself in short but sharp contests between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Martin Kramer [13] presented a version of this post in the Director's Series at Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies on October 24.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)
2. [http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial\\_opinion/editorials/articles/2007/09/16/the\\_other\\_mideast\\_conflict/](http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/editorials/articles/2007/09/16/the_other_mideast_conflict/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/graph\\_americans\\_lost\\_on\\_map/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/graph_americans_lost_on_map/)
4. [http://sandbox.blog-city.com/mesa\\_the\\_academic\\_intifada.htm](http://sandbox.blog-city.com/mesa_the_academic_intifada.htm)
5. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nathan-gardels/jimmy-carter-takes-on-isr\\_b\\_36134.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nathan-gardels/jimmy-carter-takes-on-isr_b_36134.html)
6. <http://www.truthout.org/article/zbigniew-brzezinski-face-reality-iraq>
7. <file://localhost/mnt/ext/blogbooker/tmp/4p5x1k8v/4p5x1k8v-body.tex.lynx.html#C4>
8. [http://www.unizar.es/union\\_europea/files/documen/Winston\\_Churchill-\\_Discurso\\_en\\_.pdf](http://www.unizar.es/union_europea/files/documen/Winston_Churchill-_Discurso_en_.pdf)
9. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/6534/brzezinski.html>
10. <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200211/fallows>
11. [http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary\\_0286-26134191\\_ITM](http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-26134191_ITM)
12. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nathan-gardels/jimmy-carter-takes-on-isr\\_b\\_36134.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nathan-gardels/jimmy-carter-takes-on-isr_b_36134.html)
13. <http://cmes.hmdc.harvard.edu/node/876>

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Malik Mufti (2008-06-19 15:25:55)

Reading Martin Kramer's thought-provoking [1]essay brought to mind the archetypal image of my late graduate school professor Nadav Safran, sitting behind his desk with fingers intertwined, explaining how some recent string of regional developments were "all connected." Ever since President Truman's advisers warned him that supporting Israel's establishment would alienate the Arab and Muslim worlds, ever since John Foster Dulles returned from a trip to the Near East complaining that the Arab-Israeli conflict was a "millstone" around our necks as we sought to order the region in line with our geopolitical interests, that linkage has certainly been a truism for American officials and academics alike. Less thoughtful challengers of this truism set up a straw-man when they argue that defusing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict won't magically solve all the region's other problems—does anyone serious suggest that it would? The thrust of Kramer's more nuanced argument, as I understand it, is that there is not enough linkage to warrant even the claim that resolving the conflict will have an appreciably positive impact on the region's other disputes.

Looked at from the perspective of those other disputes themselves—Arab-Persian, Sunni-Shi'a, Muslim-Christian, Kurdish-Arab/Turkish/Iranian, etc., etc.—Kramer is surely right: none of those was caused by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Looked at from the perspective of the United States, however, Kramer is wrong. He says, for example, that even though the United States has been blamed for the plight of the Palestinians for decades, its regional popularity "has only plummeted since the Iraq invasion." But does this really suffice to dispel the linkage thesis? Was America's popularity really so high in the Arab and Muslim worlds prior to the Iraq invasion? Didn't that pre-existing alienation have anything to do with U.S. policies toward Israel? In fact, couldn't it plausibly be argued that a major reason for the failure of the United States to sell its vision for Iraq regionally, was precisely that so many people were already predisposed to see it as an attempt to enhance Israel's strategic position? This last observation points to where the linkage really lies—not in the intrinsic dynamic of the Near East's various disputes, but in the ability of the United States to address those disputes in a manner that advances its own national interests. American foreign policy is the missing link. Fairly or unfairly, the Near East will continue to be of vital geopolitical importance to the United States for the foreseeable future, and winning the hearts and minds of as many of its inhabitants as possible will therefore remain an important U.S. objective. Fairly or unfairly, Palestine will continue to matter a great deal to Arabs and Muslims in the region and beyond—indeed, all the more so as globalized media technologies accelerate the homogenization of attitudes around the Muslim world. Kramer dismisses "sound bites from pollsters and so-called experts on Arab opinion" in this regard. But the opponents of the United States harbor no such doubts, and view Arab and Muslim sentiments about Israel as a gift that keeps on giving. The historical record supports their view. Examples are myriad, but among the most recent and dramatic is the Hezbollah-Israel clash in the summer of 2006, which diverted intensifying American pressure on Syria and Iran and left both regimes in significantly stronger positions. Neither Assad and Ahmadinejad, nor Kissinger and Brzezinski, err in seeing a linkage between the Arab-Israeli conflict and the success of American endeavors throughout this vital region. Successive U.S. administrations of the last six decades have not been simply misguided or foolish for taking it into account. The linkage will vary in salience, but it is real, and will therefore continue to inform U.S. policy as it always has. [2]Malik Mufti is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the\\_myth\\_of\\_linkage/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the_myth_of_linkage/)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/malik\\_mufti/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/malik_mufti/)

Lee Smith (2008-06-24 16:29:22)

"Was America's popularity really so high in the Arab and Muslim worlds prior to the Iraq invasion? Didn't that pre-existing alienation have anything to do with U.S. policies toward Israel?" I think the answers are, no and not so much. Malik Mufti [1]notes that Truman's State Department warned him that supporting the establishment of Israel would alienate the Arabs, but the Soviet Union also immediately recognized the establishment of the Jewish state. While the Soviets started arming the Arabs in 1955, the Americans had already been allied with Riyadh for a decade, were close to Amman, were courting Nasser, and in 1958 would step in to protect the Lebanese government. Although the Soviets provided Israel with weapons in 1948 through the Czechs, the United States did not start to arm Israel in earnest until after the 1967 war, during which Nasser nonetheless claimed that U.S. pilots had flown sorties (even though it was the French who sold Israel Mirage fighter jets)—a fabrication whose effectiveness he could count on, since he as much as anyone had seen to it that the Americans were already hated in the region long before 1967. From Nasser to Nasrallah, the language of anti-Americanism has changed little in the last half century. Thus the origins of anti-Americanism in the Muslim Middle East are probably dated more accurately by Suez, when, after handing Nasser his only foreign policy success in a career of adventurist disasters, Eisenhower wondered why the Arabs hated the United States. Of course, after helping to ruin the French and the British position in the region, the United States was the only Western power left to hate. And so why the United States is hated has maybe a little to do with Israel, a little to do with American support for certain Arab regimes, and a lot to do with the fact that it is the far enemy 'other' that helps define Arabism. Anti-Americanism issues from the same social, political and cultural milieu that gave rise to the idea of linkage: Arab nationalism. Mufti writes that "linkage is real," but perhaps it is more accurate to say that many people believe it is real. Whether it is or not in fact, the regimes used it to consolidate domestic support (as it aided oppositionists in the same fashion), while it allowed them to project power in the region. That U.S. policymakers catered to the demands of Arab regimes from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea is partly attributable to clientitis, but is mostly a function of American regional interests, like securing energy resources, and, up until the 1990s, fighting the Cold War. Perhaps this helps explain why, as Michael Young rightly [2]observes, Washington is so obsessed with being loved in the region: It is not just narcissism, but schizophrenia insofar as the Americans for half a century have understood their regional interests through an ideological prism that also held them to be the enemy of the Arabs. Both linkage and anti-Americanism issue from Arab nationalism, with Palestine and anti-Americanism sealing the Arab nationalist covenant that ostensibly binds the Arabs together while it obscures the

other, deeper, inter-regional conflicts that have defined the Middle East for over a thousand years. The invasion of Iraq changed the balance of power in the Middle East and thus also the nature of American interests there. Since Iraq has exposed some of the other regional conflicts, described by Martin Kramer [3]above, it is no longer makes sense for the United States to operate in accordance with a view of the region that puts Palestine first. Martin has shown [4]elsewhere that the advantage of the Arab-Israeli peace process was to bolster the Pax Americana by compelling the Arabs to petition Washington if they wanted any concessions from Israel. But it is now difficult to imagine an Israeli government capable of giving up anything at this point, especially since it would be to the immediate benefit of Iran and its regional assets, which are also U.S. rivals or enemies. However, there are plenty of other points of conflict where the United States might strengthen its hand by exacting concessions from its allies—of course, after forcing supplicants to their knees. Indeed, given the amount of conflict in the region, and the number of players who have good reason to be scared of their neighbors, it is possible to argue that the American position as power-broker, gate-keeper, unmoved mover, etc., has never been stronger. Unfortunately, the Bush administration’s Annapolis process shows that Washington does not yet understand what it has wrought in the region, some of it all to the good. [5]Lee Smith is a visiting fellow at the Hudson Institute.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the\\_myth\\_of\\_linkage/#comment-683](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the_myth_of_linkage/#comment-683)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the\\_myth\\_of\\_linkage/#comment-689](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the_myth_of_linkage/#comment-689)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the\\_myth\\_of\\_linkage/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the_myth_of_linkage/)
4. <http://www.azure.org.il/magazine/magazine.asp?id=331>
5. [http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff\\_bio&eid=LeeSmith](http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff_bio&eid=LeeSmith)

Martin Kramer (2008-07-29 08:25:00)

I continue to build up [1]this thread as an archive of linkage myth-making. Today brings a [2]contribution by [3]Ron Pundak, director general of the Peres Center for Peace, who tags himself “one of the architects and negotiators of the Oslo Agreement.” It takes the form of an open letter by Pundak to the next U.S. president, whoever he may be. “The Israel-Palestine file is ostensibly not a major strategic issue in terms of American global policy”—so the knowing Pundak begins his tutorial. But be not deceived by appearances. “Yet history shows that without a hard and fast resolution of that file the conflict will continue to affect American strategic interests.” Which strategic interests? Oil is still flowing, allies are in line. So where is the effect? Here:

At a time when the US is at war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Arab and Muslim worlds will look differently upon America and upon an American president who is advancing Middle East peace processes.... It is easier to withdraw from Iraq and to fight bin Laden’s terror when America is taking the lead in a strategic peace process.

So those Arabo-Muslims will “look differently” upon us. And there is more. Just “take the lead,” Mr. President, you needn’t do more just yet, and the Iraqis whose country you now occupy will simmer down enough for you to leave, and the fierce hearts of the Afghans will become easier for you to win. Don’t worry, Mr. President, we’re not talking about the old do-gooder, thankless-task “peace process.” We’re talking about “a *strategic* peace process.” And did we leave something out? Iran? Of course not:

The dangerous tension between Iran and Israel can also be dispelled by energizing a peace process in the Arab-Israel sector. The day Israel establishes diplomatic relations with a Palestinian state—when Jerusalem is no longer an Israel-Arab or Jewish-Islamic *casus belli*—the regime in Tehran will have no rationale for threatening to destroy Israel.

Yes, Mr. President, maneuver Olmert and Abbas into signing a document on the White House lawn, have them exchange ambassadors within the walls of Jerusalem, and watch the threats of Ahmadinejad and Khamenei melt away. They’ll have no *rationale*, and in their famously rational minds, they will see the futility of their pursuit of hegemony and weaponry. Their threatening tongues will be dumb-struck. Jerusalem, Mr. President! Bring it peace and save the world. What does the present surge of linkage oversell tell us? As Americans increasingly experience the Middle East up close, they learn the region’s complexities, its histories, its many fault lines. And the more they know, the less they believe in the supposed magical power of the “peace process” to help fix anything else. The “peace process” junkies can only hope that an inexperienced president, who knows too little of the world, might give them another shot if he thought it would help to solve other conflicts, where America has troops on the line. Yes, by all means, the next president should put his shoulder to the wheel to bring Israelis and Palestinians around. But he should not



delude himself as to the prospects of success, or the significance of *any* success in fixing America's other problems in the Middle East. Linkage is to diplomacy what reflexology is to medicine—unproven, implausible, and positively dangerous if it causes America to neglect all that must be done to protect its strategic interests. [4]*Martin Kramer is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the\\_myth\\_of\\_linkage/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the_myth_of_linkage/)
2. <http://www.bitterlemons.org/previous/bl280708ed29.html#isr2>
3. <http://www.peres-center.org/ArticleResume.asp?id=2352>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)

Walter Reich (2008-06-12 14:45:57)

Martin Kramer's [1]post is a superbly-executed and much-needed act of intellectual hygiene about "linkage" and the "Middle East conflict." It's a corrective—to use a phrase that others, alas, have invented—to "stinkin' thinkin'" about one of the most important dimensions of international affairs. There's a constant conflation of the many conflicts going on in the Middle East, and an abiding tendency to link them all. And they're linked because they serve many purposes for many people and many causes. First of all, they fulfill the needs most of us have to simplify matters in all spheres, whether they have to do with international affairs or anything else in life. The simpler the explanation (or "narrative," as some academics like to put it) of something, the easier it is to remember, and the better we feel about having accounted for a lot of problems all at once and having stored that accounting away in one of our cognitive drawers. And they fulfill the needs of various parties. If you're a Palestinian, and you want your cause to not be forgotten, you say that every problem in the Middle East is linked to it, so everyone had better pay attention to your cause and solve it in the way you'd like it solved, because if it's not solved, all of these other problems will not be solved. If you're Osama bin Laden, then you point to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as he did in a recent pronouncement, in large measure because it makes sense to Western minds, which were left puzzled by the old reasons you used to dwell on in your declarations, which focused more on the miserable and ungodly regime in Saudi Arabia or the need to reform Islam or the war by the West on Islam or the pollution of the Islamic world by Western influences or the need to restore Islam to its rightful historical role and power. These latter sins sound strange if not bizarre to Western ears, while the sin of supporting Israel or of not supporting the Palestinians immediately makes sense. If you're an academic or ex-academic or ex-National Security Advisor or ex-President or journalist and have developed a theory or taken up a cause that sees the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as underlying and inextricably linked to all other Middle East conflicts, then nothing—not logic or even new information—will dislodge that theory or cause from your thinking. For you—as Don Quixote said—facts are the enemy of truth. Nothing will change your mind. I understand the common human tendency to grasp simple explanations that seem to explain everything. Most of us are drawn to a quick explanation that, if correct, could provide a quick fix. And most of us are, at least at times, a little lazy and prefer simplicity to complexity, which can give one a headache. I don't blame Palestinians, of course, for wanting their conflict to be seen as being linked to, and underlying, all other conflicts; it helps in their struggle. But I don't think we have an obligation to believe academics or ex-government officials or preaching moralists or journalists who latch onto and never let go of a theory about the linkage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to every other conflict in the Middle East. That theory constitutes "stinkin' thinkin'." And Martin Kramer's post, as a corrective, offers a fine dose of intellectual hygiene. Alas, it's a corrective that not all of the parties mentioned above, who so strongly need it, will either see as being in their interest or bother taking it to heart. Which is too bad. [2]*Walter Reich is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the\\_myth\\_of\\_linkage/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the_myth_of_linkage/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_reich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_reich/)

Walter Reich (2008-06-14 18:02:54)

Aaron David Miller makes some good points in his [1]comment, but only a small part of what he says deals with the fallacious tendency that Martin Kramer [2]identified. That tendency is to claim that every problem in the Middle East—the "greater" Middle East, which some now define as stretching from Morocco to Pakistan, and others now define, more narrowly, as stretching from Egypt to Iran and emphatically including Iraq—is linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and that if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were somehow solved then all the other problems in the Middle East, however it's defined geographically, would be more easily solved. That's the claim that Martin debunked in his original post. It's certainly true that such "linkage" isn't the only misconception that needs to be fixed with regard to the Middle East. But it's an important fix. Aaron would be right in responding that "linkage isn't the

problem” if Martin did indeed claim that it’s the only problem in understanding the strategic situation in the Middle East. But Martin doesn’t make that claim. And ”linkage” is an endemic problem among academics, journalists and U.S. government officials who deal with the Middle East, which is why I believe that debunking this fallacious idea is an important act of intellectual hygiene. [3]*Walter Reich is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the\\_myth\\_of\\_linkage/#comment-661](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the_myth_of_linkage/#comment-661)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the\\_myth\\_of\\_linkage/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the_myth_of_linkage/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_reich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_reich/)

Aaron David Miller (2008-06-13 15:17:08)

The issue isn’t linkage. From an American perspective the issue is what are American interests and how best to protect them. Right now and certainly into the next administration, if I had to rank in order what matters most to America in this divided, dysfunctional and rage-driven region, my list would be: (1) preventing another attack on the continental United States (if you can’t protect your homeland, you don’t need a foreign policy); (2) extricating the United States from the trillion-dollar social science experiment called Iraq in a way that protects our interests and credibility; (3) figuring out how to deal with Iran—a country right now that sits at the nexus of the things we do care about in this region: nuclear proliferation; Iraq; and the Arab-Israeli issue; (4) finally, treating the sixty-year headache called the Arab-Israeli issue, for which there is no conflict-ending solution right now. We need to pursue all of these in a way that’s smart and tough, in an effort to repair our image. We have stumbled for eight years under Bill Clinton over how to help make peace; and stumbled galactically for the past eight years under George W. Bush over how to make war. We are a great power in name only; we’re neither liked, feared nor respected in a region increasingly critical to our national security. We need a serious strategy that incorporates the four noted above. All are long movies, but we need to find a serious approach for dealing with them. [1]*Aaron David Miller is currently a Public Policy Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington and author of [2]A Much Too Promised Land. He served at the Department of State as an adviser to six Secretaries of State.*

1. [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=sf.profile&person\\_id=166535](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=sf.profile&person_id=166535)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/much\\_too\\_promised\\_land/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/much_too_promised_land/)

Michael Young (2008-06-20 16:31:02)

If I might disagree with Malik Mufti on one thing. He [1]writes: ”Less thoughtful challengers of this truism [of linkage] set up a straw-man when they argue that defusing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict won’t magically solve all the region’s other problems—does anyone serious suggest that it would?” I’m not sure if Jimmy Carter and Zbigniew Brzezinski are ”serious” (I think they are, which is often the problem), but I’m afraid that this linear linkage is precisely what many who think about the Middle East, including Carter and Brzezinski, mean when they seek to make a priority of a resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Linkage, even ”magical” linkage, is in fact not a straw-man to many people, whichever side of the ideological divide they stand on. For example in the Brzezinski [2]piece Martin links to, the former national security advisor draws a direct relation between Iraq and Palestine when he writes: ”Without significant progress toward an Israeli-Palestinian peace, post-occupation Iraq will be both anti-American and anti-Israel.” If such direct linkages are considered legitimate by observers, then it is fair to submit them to the [3]critical analysis that Martin and others do, and that Malik to an extent seeks to avoid by refocusing our attention on how American treatment of the various regional conflicts has affected its own national interests. Where I agree with Malik is when he asks: ”Was America’s popularity really so high in the Arab and Muslim worlds prior to the Iraq invasion?” America often seems so obsessed with whether it is liked in the Middle East, that achieving that result has become a vital aim of U.S. foreign policy. Being liked is doubtless important for a state’s ”soft power,” but it should not be the be-all and end-all of American political behavior. Effectiveness is far more important to a state (or ”being feared” to use Machiavelli’s term), and that was the real problem the Bush administration faced once it got bogged down in Iraq. Suddenly it looked disoriented, inviting scorn, particularly after the high ambitions voiced by the administration prior to the invasion. But if American popularity was not so high even before Iraq, as Malik affirms, then what amount of interest by Washington in helping resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will ever be enough to ”win hearts and minds” in the Arab world? After all, few administrations will ever expend more political capital and time than the Clinton administration did between 1992 and 2000 on the Palestinian-Israeli track, all to no avail. Despite that, Malik admits this effort failed to win the United States very many plaudits in the region. What disturbs me about the discussion on how America can win Arab hearts and minds is not that it is unimportant; it is just terribly insular, focused entirely on America. Suddenly the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been reduced to a matter of U.S. public relations, even as we ignore the very real structural obstacles to a settlement due to the actions and attitudes of the parties

directly involved. That's why I tend to side with skeptics like Martin on linkages. The region is caught up in very different and separate disputes that have structures, a momentum, and a logic of their own. At the same time, I must say I feel Martin overstates things when he writes "one conflict does not cause another, and its 'resolution' cannot resolve another." Perhaps he's right when it comes to causes and resolutions, but conflicts can impact on others in less absolute ways. I read Martin's final section in his essay, where he questions whether the myth of linkage will remain so in the future as a sign that he perhaps shares some of my doubts. [4]*Michael Young is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the\\_myth\\_of\\_linkage/#comment-683](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the_myth_of_linkage/#comment-683)
2. <http://www.truthout.org/article/zbigniew-brzezinski-face-reality-iraq>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the\\_myth\\_of\\_linkage/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the_myth_of_linkage/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_young/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_young/)

Martin Kramer (2008-07-28 04:42:52)

In my [1]post on the myth of linkage, I brought a number of exemplary quotes from figures such as Jimmy Carter and Zbigniew Brzezinski to illustrate my point. Now another quote can be added to the collection—[2]this one from Barack Obama, fresh from his quick tutorial in the Middle East:

I think King, King Abdullah [of Jordan] is as savvy an analyst of the region and player in the region as, as there is, one of the points that he made and 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 Hezbollah 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.

Thus is the myth of linkage perpetuated from generation unto generation. This same savvy King Abdullah, in a CNN [3]interview the day after 9/11, offered up the ultimate linkage thesis, when asked whether the attacks would have happened if Israelis and Palestinians had reached a peace agreement at Camp David in July 2000:

I don't believe so, because I think that if you had solved the problems of the Middle East, and obviously the core issue is that between the Israelis and Palestinians, I doubt very much that this incident would have taken place, and again, that was a reminder to all of us and why I think so many of us in the international community have been working so hard to bring a stop to the violence and bring people back to the peace process, because, in a vacuum, you do allow the extremists the upper hand and the chance to try things as what happened yesterday. And they will continue on trying until we can solve the problem once and for all.

Savvy indeed. [4]*Martin Kramer is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the\\_myth\\_of\\_linkage/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/the_myth_of_linkage/)
2. [http://current.com/items/89142383\\_obama\\_on\\_meet\\_the\\_press](http://current.com/items/89142383_obama_on_meet_the_press)
3. [http://www.jordanembassyus.org/CNN\\_09122001.htm](http://www.jordanembassyus.org/CNN_09122001.htm)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)

## Rice on violent groups in elections (2008-06-16 00:12)

In the current issue of Foreign Affairs, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has offered a parting [1]statement under the title "Rethinking the National Interest: American Realism for a New World." The section on the Middle East includes an elusive passage that would seem to acquiesce in the political inclusion of violent groups. The Rice quote appears in green. beneath her photo. MESH has invited a number of responses. Robert Satloff begins, followed in the comments by Martin Indyk, Michael Mandelbaum, Joshua Muravchik, Matthew Levitt, and Harvey Sicherman.

[241436112\_691d91604e\_m.jpg] "The participation of armed groups in elections is problematic. But the lesson is not that there should not be elections. Rather, there should be standards, like the ones to which the international community has held Hamas after the fact: you can be a terrorist group or you can be a political party, but you cannot be both. As difficult as this problem is, it cannot be the case that people are denied the right to vote just because the outcome might be unpleasant to us. Although we cannot know whether politics will ultimately deradicalize violent groups, we do know that excluding them from the political process grants them power without responsibility. This is yet another challenge that the leaders and the peoples of the broader Middle East must resolve as the region turns to democratic processes and institutions to resolve differences peacefully and without repression."

Condoleezza Rice, "Rethinking the National Interest: American Realism for a New World," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2008.

From [2]Robert Satloff

Secretary Rice is a powerful intellect with an impressive grasp of a broad range of issues, but on the question of providing access to the democratic process for armed groups that refuse to renounce their violent goals and their violence means, she has a blind spot. In this passage, for example, she mischaracterizes the situation with respect to the Palestinian election of January 2006 and the U.S. decision to press for Hamas' inclusion.

The facts of the situation were as follows:

- The West Bank and Gaza have been, since 1967, under Israel's military occupation. While one can debate certain aspects of that occupation, including settlement policy, one cannot debate the fact that Israel is under no requirement to permit political activity of terrorist groups committed to its destruction.
- The Palestinian Authority and all its relevant institutions, including the Palestinian Legislative Council, were established by virtue of agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. Their existence and their legitimacy derive solely from those agreements.
- [3]Annex II, article III, paragraph 2 of the Israeli-Palestinian Agreement of 1995 states the following: "The nomination of any candidates, parties or coalitions will be refused, and such nomination or registration once made will be canceled, if such candidates, parties or coalitions: commit or advocate racism; or pursue the implementation of their aims by unlawful or non-democratic means."
- Whatever ancillary social welfare activities Hamas may undertake, its *raison d'être* is the destruction of Israel and the principal means it has chosen to achieve that objective is terrorism.

Given the above, it is a mischaracterization of the situation to suggest that excluding Hamas from the election would have meant that, as Secretary Rice argues, "people are denied the right to vote just because the outcome might be unpleasant to us." That was never the issue. The issue was that the Bush Administration pressed Israel and the Palestinian Authority to disregard their agreed legal framework for holding

elections and to permit Hamas' participation. Indeed, there were rules—and we flouted them.

Scholars, experts and policymakers are engaged in a legitimate debate over whether Islamist parties—i.e., parties whose main objective is the imposition of Shariah law—can evolve into democratic parties. By that I mean not just parties "willing to play by democratic rules" but parties that embrace democracy, which by its very nature means that men and women, not divinity, determine the law of the land. This is the debate surrounding the PJD in Morocco, the AK Party in Turkey and other Islamist parties. A subset of that debate is whether the same evolutionary process applies to Islamist terrorist groups, such as Hamas.

However, that debate, I repeat, was never the issue in the Bush Administration's decision to compel Hamas' inclusion in the Palestinian elections of January 2006. At issue was whether the Administration recognized the supremacy of (to recall Al Gore's famous words) the "controlling legal authority"—the Oslo Accords—or to urge its local partners to disregard the law. It chose the latter. To suggest otherwise is revisionist history.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20080701faessay87401/condoleezza-ric/rethinking-the-national-interest.html?mode=print>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_satloff/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_satloff/)
3. <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Guide+to+the+Peace+Process/THE+ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN+INTERIM+AGREEMENT+-+Annex+II.htm#article3>

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Martin Indyk (2008-06-16 00:15:17)

Secretary Rice's [1]expression of the principle "you can be a terrorist group or you can be a political party, but you cannot be both," is a misstatement of a fundamental democratic principle that the Bush Administration has never upheld and now, apparently, would have it misapplied. The principle is "There can only be one gun, and it must be in the hands of the elected government that is accountable to the people." In its emphasis on elections as the means for promoting democracy, the Bush Administration willfully overlooked this principle. It started in Iraq where political parties were allowed to contest the elections without being required to dismantle their militias. Moqtada al-Sadr and the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council (aka SCIRI) thereby entered the government with their militias intact, both weakening it and taking over key ministries like Interior with devastating consequences. In Lebanon, UNSC resolution 1559 required both Syrian troops to leave Lebanon and Hezbollah to be disarmed. The Bush Administration insisted on the first but ignored the second, preferring to allow Hezbollah to contest the elections on some absurd theory that it could be disarmed afterward. Instead, Hezbollah entered the government with its militia intact and paralyzed it. Its recent takeover of West Beirut while the Lebanese Armed Forces stood idly by demonstrated the consequences of this folly: Hezbollah has forces that are now far superior to those of the Lebanese state. Never allowing reality to intrude, President Bush did it again, personally insisting that elections go ahead in the West Bank and Gaza against the expressed wishes of the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel, and (as Rob Satloff [2]points out) against the prevailing law too. Hamas was allowed to contest those elections with its militia and terrorist cadres intact, taking over the government first and then using its forces to take over Gaza by putsch. The Bush Administration now seems to have woken up to the problem but not to the principle of "one gun." The problem is not that Hamas and Hezbollah have been allowed to be both terrorist groups and political parties. It is rather that they are political parties with militias and terrorist cadres, and as long as their forces are not dismantled and disarmed the governments of Lebanon and Palestine should not allow them to run in elections. And the United States should not be in the business of encouraging those governments to turn a blind eye to this fundamental challenge to their authority and their fledgling democracies. [3]*Martin Indyk is director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings, and was ambassador to Israel and assistant secretary of state for Near East affairs during the Clinton Administration.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/ric\\_on\\_violent\\_groups\\_in\\_elections/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/ric_on_violent_groups_in_elections/)
2. <file://localhost/mnt/ext/blogbooker/tmp/4p5x1k8v/4p5x1k8v-body.tex.lynxcomments.html>
3. <http://www.brookings.edu/experts/i/indykm.aspx>

Joshua Muravchik (2008-06-16 00:17:09)

Secretary Rice is [1]right that this is a "difficult problem," but she muddles it. She is right to suggest that supporting elections only when we find the outcome "pleasant" would be morally bankrupt and probably also ineffective since our advocacy of democracy would be seen as hypocritical. The practical reason to support democracy abroad is not that elected governments will always be to our liking or wise rulers. It is that the practice of democracy serves to socialize populations in the values of compromise, truth-testing and moderation. However, to say that if we propound democracy we must be prepared to endure outcomes not to our liking does not mean that we must accept the participation of groups that refuse to commit themselves to democratic outcomes. Some say that to exclude any parties from the political process is a slippery slope to authoritarianism. But the Bonn Republic excluded both Nazis and Communists on the ground that their goals were to use the democratic process to destroy democracy. Under this exclusionary rule Germany achieved the solid democracy that had eluded it before. If it is practicable for a democracy to exclude parties with anti-democratic ideologies, it is perforce all the more justifiable to exclude parties that hold such ideologies and, to boot, carry arms in order to assert their power by undemocratic means. This, however, is all abstract. In the Middle East we are trying to foment democracy among peoples who have little or no experience with it, peoples for whom rule by armed groups is the norm that we hope to overturn. How to get from here to there is a daunting question. To lay a blanket rule that armed groups may not participate is morally sound but may lead nowhere. Arguably, elections in Palestine could have been postponed. But could there have been elections in Lebanon without Hezbollah or in Iraq without the various parties that have militias, e.g., the Kurds? Who would have imposed such procedures or enforced their outcomes? Prudential judgments are needed in every case. As for Palestine, I am not sure that the elections or the triumph of Hamas were bad things. Seven years of peace process had eventuated in the intifada. Why? In my judgment, for one reason above all. The Palestinian body politic was riven between those prepared to live in a state alongside Israel and those prepared to shed blood for as many generations as it might take to achieve one Palestine from the river to the sea. Yasser Arafat positioned himself squarely athwart this divide. Palestinian voters chose maximalism. Let them see what they get. This may be a necessary stage in their learning before peace becomes possible. Nonetheless, Rob Satloff makes a [2]compelling case about the legal dimensions of Hamas' participation in the Palestinian elections. Even if the practical consequences of Hamas' electoral victory are not intrinsically bad, the principle that agreements should be lived up to is overwhelmingly important. [3]Joshua Muravchik is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/rice\\_on\\_violent\\_groups\\_in\\_elections/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/rice_on_violent_groups_in_elections/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/rice\\_on\\_violent\\_groups\\_in\\_elections/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/rice_on_violent_groups_in_elections/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/joshua\\_muravchik/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/joshua_muravchik/)

Adam Garfinkle (2008-06-19 16:25:38)

There is no question that Secretary Rice's [1]comments bear an embarrassing internal contradiction: If she is clear that an organization cannot be a terrorist group and a political party at the same time, then that should have been as clear before the fact in the Palestinian elections as after it. As Rob Satloff says, there were "standards," but we're the ones who encouraged their violation. That is not very interesting, however, because it's so obvious. At the risk of overstepping the bounds of the discussion, it seems to me that Secretary Rice's comments about armed groups participating in elections is a subspecies of a larger conceptual error: that either a polity is democratic or it is a tyrannous. To think this way is not only to ignore the burden of history, it is even to ignore the late Jeanne Kirkpatrick! Secretary Rice speaks of a positive "right" to democracy, but there is no such thing. People do have a "negative" right not to be tyrannized, not to have to live under a government whose lack of legitimacy congeals in a thicket of reciprocal fear between rulers and ruled. People do have a right to organize their own social and political space as they choose. The assumption, however, that the end of tyranny presupposes the beginning of democracy is simply false, for there is more than one way to produce political legitimacy. For the U.S. government to insist in preachy tones that other peoples should exercise their democratic "rights" to unseat rulers they do not necessarily fear or think illegitimate violates its core commitment to genuine pluralism—even when we do not insist upon it from the rear echelon of a U.S. expeditionary force. This larger either/or fallacy, I suspect, begets the smaller one. If the U.S. government recognizes no form of legitimacy except democratic legitimacy, and if it sees all forms of non-democratic government as tyranny, it is liable to blind itself to the nuances that inevitably shape the diplomatic arts of the possible. Let one example illustrate the connection. The problem in Lebanon was not that Hezbollah was allowed to run in an election without first disarming—who, exactly, was going to enforce that?—but that the election was held prematurely, under an old Syrian-wrought election law, before Lebanon's sectarian communities could sit down and work out new post-occupation power-sharing arrangements. The Administration's view seemed to be that elections are inherently legitimating, and one can deal with any minor "unpleasantness" later. But in Lebanon, to simplify only

slightly, elections do not shape and legitimate power arrangements, they merely ratify them and fill in some personnel details. The real decisions are made through consensus-building processes, first within and then among confessional groups. This is not democracy as we understand it, but it is legitimate as most Lebanese have traditionally understood it. By failing to acknowledge even the possibility of non-democratic legitimacy, U.S. policy pushed an election that advantaged the least liberal and most anti-Western forces in Lebanese politics. This has not just been "unpleasant"; as in Gaza, it has been counterproductive and dangerous. Lesson: Misunderstand a major concept and you'll probably misunderstand minor ones, too. [2]Adam Garfinkle is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/rice\\_on\\_violent\\_groups\\_in\\_elections/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/rice_on_violent_groups_in_elections/)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)

Michael Mandelbaum (2008-06-16 00:16:12)

At the root of the difficulties the United States has had in promoting democracy abroad is a proper understanding of the term. Democracy represents the fusion of two distinct political traditions. One is popular sovereignty—rule by the people through freely elected representatives. The other is liberty, more commonly called freedom, which comes in three forms: economic (private property), religious, and political. (This is a major theme of my 2007 book [1]Democracy's Good Name: The Rise and Risks of the World's Most Popular Form of Government.) Without liberty there can be no democracy, no matter how freely the government has been elected. A Hamas-dominated Palestinian government cannot qualify as democratic no matter how it may come to power unless and until that group respects the rights of political opponents, non-Muslims, and women. (I see no evidence that the alternative to Hamas that the United States prefers, Fatah, respects these rights either.) Nor does the historical record, as I read it, provide much reason to believe, as Secretary Rice [2]hints, that the experience of wielding power will turn an undemocratic group into one committed to democratic principles. What, then, is to be done about democracy in the Middle East? It makes sense—in theory—to postpone elections until liberty is firmly established: to get right, that is, what is sometimes called, in the literature of democracy-promotion, "sequencing." Something like this happened (although not intentionally) in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in India. Great Britain implanted the institutions and habits of liberty over the course of a century of direct political control, and these survived when the British left and the Indians were able to practice self-government. Democracy was an effect, although not a deliberate purpose, of British imperial rule. Such a sequence is, however, impossible in the twenty-first century. No society will willingly submit itself to a period of "democratic tutelage" by others until it is ready for popular sovereignty. It also follows from a proper understanding of democracy that American efforts at democracy-promotion should be directed toward fostering liberty. In Democracy's Good Name I argue that the key to the establishment of political democracy in general, and the institutions of liberty in particular, is the experience of operating a working free-market economy. This, however, is at best the work of a generation or more. Over the long term, establishing democracy in the Middle East may well be the way to do what the Bush Administration hoped to accomplish with the invasion and occupation of Iraq: transform the countries there for the better. But that proposition, even if true, provides very little helpful guidance for American policy in the region in the here and now. [3]Michael Mandelbaum is a member of MESH.

1. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1586485148>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/rice\\_on\\_violent\\_groups\\_in\\_elections/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/rice_on_violent_groups_in_elections/)

3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_mandelbaum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_mandelbaum/)

Matthew Levitt (2008-06-16 00:18:07)

Secretary Rice's [1]analysis correctly points out that groups must choose between being a terrorist group and a political party if they want to be accepted by the international community as legitimate political parties. Indeed, the lesson is not that elections are bad. The lesson is that elections are not the sum total of democratic transformation; they must follow, not precede, the development of civil society; and they are the product of civil society, not the precipitant for it. Elections done right have positive transformative powers. Elections done wrong are just as powerful, but they are as likely to entrench as to transform, and are more likely to have negative rather than positive implications. The slow and not-so-sexy process of building the "democratic institutions" the Secretary refers to in passing must be prioritized over the quick-fix allure of holding elections prematurely. In the case of Hamas, which the Secretary cites, the international community's mistake was in only trying to force the "terrorist group or political party" choice upon Hamas *after* it participated in elections. Because it came after the group's electoral victory, forcing that choice after the fact was all that much more difficult. As I [2]argued almost a year ago in the wake of the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip, "The West made a critical mistake when it welcomed Hamas to participate in democratic elections without demanding that it adhere to democratic principles. The electoral laws in most Western European countries would

have [3]barred Hamas, an extremist party, from running for political office.” As the cases of Hamas and Hezbollah have both demonstrated, radical and violent groups have been painfully successful in walking that thin line between power and responsibility, for the most part enjoying the perks of political power without being constrained by political responsibility. They do this by explaining their exceptionalism in terms of their ongoing conflict with the enemy. That is, the “resistance” comes first and all other considerations—political or otherwise—come second. [4]Matthew Levitt is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/rice\\_on\\_violent\\_groups\\_in\\_elections/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/rice_on_violent_groups_in_elections/)
2. [http://www.atlantic-community.org/index/articles/view/How\\_to\\_Deal\\_with\\_Hamas](http://www.atlantic-community.org/index/articles/view/How_to_Deal_with_Hamas)
3. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2369>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew\\_levitt/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew_levitt/)

Harvey Sicherman (2008-06-16 23:42:51)

Secretary Rice’s [1]statement carries more than a whiff of ambiguity. On the one hand, we don’t want armed groups to participate in elections but, on the other hand, maybe the political process will tame them. So we should not deny elections just because they might bring the terrorists to power, an outcome described as “unpleasant” to us, perhaps the greatest understatement of the decade. There are three issues here. One is whether parties (violent or not) that do not recognize the constitutional framework of an election should be allowed to run in one. Despite its rejection of the Oslo Accords, Hamas was permitted to do so as part of an Abbas-brokered cease-fire early in spring 2005, evidently because he thought he could win while demonstrating his ability to end the intifada. When Abbas feared for the election and hoped to put it off with Israeli Prime Minister Sharon willing to play the heavy by denying the vote to Jerusalem residents, Secretary Rice was more confident of Fatah’s victory. We know the results: neither democracy nor peace. A second issue is whether terrorists should be permitted a political role while retaining the violent option in the hopes that the “process” will “deradicalize” them. Evidence—certainly seen in the Lebanese case—suggests that this gives the group two votes, one in the streets, the other in politics; if you don’t like one you can always revert to the other. But deradicalization (grotesque word) derives from defeat in the field, not sweet parliamentary reason or political tricks. We are told that “excluding them from the political process simply grants them power without responsibility,” but it is even more likely that including them in the political process grants them more power. It is not clear to me why, after the Hamas, Hezbollah, and Sadr experiences, anyone should forecast “responsibility” from parties advocating violence and jihad. They deliver what they promise. Finally, the third issue is whether people should be denied the right to vote “just because the outcome might be unpleasant to us.” No one denies the rights of Palestinians or the Lebanese or the Iraqis to vote, only that democratic elections are for those who declare their respect for the rules. American support for any other kind of election legitimizes those who would destroy democracy. Among the other challenges facing us in the Middle East, this is an easy one: don’t do it! [2]Harvey Sicherman is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/rice\\_on\\_violent\\_groups\\_in\\_elections/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/rice_on_violent_groups_in_elections/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey\\_sicherman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey_sicherman/)

## Saudis, oil, and U.S. elections (2008-06-18 13:43)

From [1]Gal Luft



What’s behind the sudden burst of willingness on the part of the Saudis, who announced that they will increase oil output by 500,000 barrels per day in the coming months? After all, for many months they were quite unfazed by the economic havoc caused throughout the world by the rise in oil prices. Even two visits by President Bush, loaded with offers of sophisticated weapons, nuclear technology collaboration and other goodies, didn’t convince them to open the spigot. So what changed? And why are



the Iranians so opposed to the Saudi newfound goodwill? "If Saudi Arabia takes a measure to unilaterally increase [oil] output, it is a wrong move," complained Mohammad Ali Khatibi, Iran's new representative to OPEC, repeating the mantra that "the oil market is saturated."

Here is a theory: The dispute within OPEC between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the first and second largest exporting members, has, in part, to do with the upcoming presidential elections. Unlike the Iranians who would like the United States to withdraw from Iraq so they can turn the country into another Iranian satellite, the Saudis dread nothing more than a strengthened and emboldened Iran and prefer the United States to stick around for a while. Their concerns about the regional destabilization associated with a nuclear Iran, and hence their loss of points in the centuries-old Sunni-Shiite rivalry, is only part of the story. What keeps the Saudis awake at night is the challenge to their ability to control the oil fields in the Eastern Province where most of Saudi Arabia's oppressed Shiites happen to live. Iranian hegemony in the Persian Gulf could inspire a Shiite intifada in the place where Saudi Arabia's wealth is generated, constituting a real danger to the survival of the House of Saud.

From a Saudi perspective, an American president who plans to withdraw from Iraq while being conciliatory toward Iran is bad news. The Saudis, therefore, vote McCain; Iran goes for Obama.

Pouring oil into the global market five months prior to the elections could influence the tight race in a non-trivial way. The state of the U.S. economy and high energy prices are at the top of the voters' agenda. Most oil contracts are traded three to six months prior to delivery. The Saudi announcement would therefore signal to speculators that more supply is on the way, driving prices down in the futures markets. This could have a calming effect on the economy in the coming months, which is likely to benefit McCain. The question now is whether Iran will do something in response to help Obama.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal\\_luft/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal_luft/)

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Thomas W. Lippman (2008-06-19 17:18:43)

Having just been in Saudi Arabia and talked to many people there, I don't buy Gal Luft's [1]theory at all. I subscribe to a different view, which goes like this: Right up to and including the time of President Bush's most recent visit, King Abdullah and his senior half-brothers were content to leave oil policy in the hands of Ali Naimi, where it has resided for years. There didn't seem to be any reason to get alarmed, because in the past, oil prices have usually gone back down after a while. And after all, it was true, as Ali Naimi kept saying, that there was no fundamental imbalance between supply and demand, so there was no reason for the Saudis to take strong action. Now, having heard from Bush, the Spanish, the Pakistanis and others about the problems the oil prices are causing, the king and the princes have taken oil policy back into their own hands (as King Khalid did when OPEC split on prices back in the 1970s). This isn't about oil supply and demand any more, it's about global politics and about the long-term threat to Saudi interests posed by the rush to alternative fuels. People have begun to recall Ahmed Zaki Yamani's famous line: the Stone Age didn't end because we ran out of stone, and the oil age won't end because we run out of oil. In other words, the time will surely come when we find some other way to power our vehicles and trains and aircraft, and when that happens, too bad for Saudi Arabia. So why accelerate that day? Hence the dusting off of the old "producer-consumer dialogue" formula long articulated by Hisham Nazer, Naimi's predecessor. I don't think it's about Iran, and I don't think the Saudis would prefer McCain over Obama. Everyone I saw in Riyadh was looking forward to an Obama presidency because, if nothing else, it won't be a Bush presidency. [2]Thomas W. Lippman is adjunct scholar at the Middle East Institute in Washington, and the author of [3]Inside the Mirage: America's Fragile Partnership with Saudi Arabia.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/saudis\\_oil\\_and\\_us\\_elections/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/saudis_oil_and_us_elections/)

2. <http://www.mideasti.org/scholars/thomas-w-lippman>

3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0813343135/>

### 'A Choice of Enemies: America Confronts the Middle East' (2008-06-19 00:36)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Sir Lawrence Freedman is professor of war studies at King's College, London. His new book is *A Choice of Enemies: America Confronts the Middle East*.

From [1]Lawrence Freedman

[2] ✖ This book is about the trials and tribulations of a superpower trying to operate in an unusually fractious part of the world. It started with a simple aim, which was to try to explain what was going on the Middle East to people who found the situation confusing (in the first instance, my daughter during the 2006 Lebanon war). I soon realized that the trouble with this simple aim was that the story had many distinct but intertwining strands, and that one—Iran, Iraq or Israel—could not be understood without reference to the others.

Then there was the problem of where to start. Sometimes it appeared in American discussions that history had begun on September 11, 2001, or possibly with the end of the Cold War. I sensed that to do the job properly I should go back to colonial times, but to make the project manageable I decided to open with the events of 1978-79. This was a momentous period, encompassing the Camp David summit and the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, the overthrow of the Shah in Iran and the seizure of diplomatic hostages, and the attempt to impose communism on Afghanistan culminating in the Soviet invasion.

This struck me as a critical transitional period, as the Nasserite, secular, pan-Arab movement (what I call the first radical wave) was rejected by Sadat and entered terminal decline, while Islamism (the second radical wave) began to make its mark. From these events, and their combined impact, can be traced the rise of Al Qaeda, the desperation of the Palestinians, the partnership and then confrontation with Saddam Hussein (who made himself Iraqi president in 1979) and almost continual tension with Iran. While I wanted to say something about the internal dynamics of the region, I felt it made sense to focus on American policy-making. In part, this was because this is my comfort zone and I would not want to pretend to be a Middle Eastern specialist, but also because one way or another, Middle Eastern issues have dominated American foreign policy over this period, particularly when it comes to the use of armed force.

I was well aware, especially as a non-American, of the political minefield I was entering. These are issues that excite strong feelings. The polarization of opinion is often reflected in books that are seen as being for or against Israel, sympathetic to the Iraq war or unremittingly hostile, cynical or forgiving about official motives. Single, simplistic explanations are offered, pointing to the influence of the "Israel Lobby" or Big Oil or neo-conservatives. With such dramatic material it would be impossible to find a bland and inoffensive middle course, but I have sought to respect the evidence, interpret it with care, avoid polemics and try to do justice to this fascinating though frequently tragic story.

[3]Order from Publisher | [4]Amazon

1. <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/schools/sspp/ws/staff/lf.html>
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51gScbQ4X7L.jpg>
3. <http://www.publicaffairsbooks.com/publicaffairsbooks-cgi-bin/display?book=9781586485184>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1586485180>

## Politics and Change among the Baluch in Iran (2008-06-20 01:32)

From [1]Stephen Peter Rosen and [2]Martin Kramer



We are pleased to announce a new paper, the second in our Middle East Papers [3]series. [4]Philip Carl Salzman, professor of anthropology at McGill University and a member of MESH, offers an interpretation of what he calls "Islamic intensification" among the Baluch of southeastern Iran. Often it is assumed that ethnic and tribal loyalties compete with Islam. Salzman suggests that Islamic assertion complements Baluchi identity in Iran: for the Baluch, their adherence to Sunni Islam is the one area in which they can claim superiority over the dominant Persian (Shiite) center. The more they adhere, the more superior they feel.

There is much more fascinating information in this paper about the social structure of the Baluch in Iran, the role of segmentary opposition, and the relationship of periphery to center. [5]Download here (pdf).

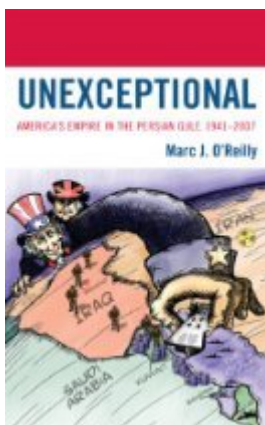
1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)
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5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/06/baluch\\_salzman1.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/06/baluch_salzman1.pdf)

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## 'Unexceptional: America's Empire in the Persian Gulf' (2008-06-23 12:38)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Marc J. O'Reilly is assistant professor of political science at Heidelberg College in Tiffin, Ohio. His new book is *Unexceptional: America's Empire in the Persian Gulf, 1941-2007*.

From [1]Marc J. O'Reilly



[2] *Unexceptional* started as a Ph.D. dissertation. As a graduate student in political science and history in the late 1990s, I wanted to write on a U.S. foreign policy topic with contemporary relevance and historical antecedents. I had read some works on empire—a fascinating, albeit

maligned, subject—and wondered if American behavior in the Middle East could be considered imperial, rather than simply hegemonic. In those pre-9/11 days, very few political scientists and historians were writing on the issue of U.S. empire. Yet, given America's imposing military presence (especially in the Persian Gulf), vested interest in Gulf hydrocarbons, and political role in the Middle East, I thought the case could be made that the country had created and evolved a regional imperium comparable to the British, Ottoman, and other previous empires. Historian Doug Little, with whom I discussed the matter, thought so as well, but only if I confined my case to the Persian Gulf. With his advice in mind, I spent three years researching and writing on the U.S. experience in the Gulf since 1941.

The United States never intended to reprise the British role in the Middle East, especially in the Gulf. But global and regional events, as well as developing geopolitical and economic interests, prompted Washington to intensify its involvement in that part of the world. The American role proved modest initially, as administrations mostly sought to assist London to maintain regional authority. As British power receded in the late 1960s in the wake of two exhausting global wars, and with Cold War imperatives preoccupying U.S. policymakers, Washington graduated to a new status in the early 1970s.

As the primary extra-regional power in the region, the United States adopted a number of imperial strategies (which I dub proxy, alliance, and unilateral) in an effort to achieve its national-security objectives. Some of those strategies, which pre-dated the Nixon Doctrine, worked well; others disappointed or failed. The history of empires recounted many similar episodes, yet many scholars I encountered at conferences dismissed the comparison. I finished my dissertation in August 2001 still convinced that an "informal" U.S. empire existed in the Persian Gulf, but cognizant that my conclusion invited much academic skepticism.

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003 and the bungled occupation that followed rekindled the empire debate in the United States, essentially dormant since the Vietnam War. In short order, many scholars, journalists, and policymakers were enthusiastically addressing the formerly taboo issue of American empire. A plethora of books and articles, many of them insightful, examined this controversial subject. These works provided valuable additions to my literature review on empires and the U.S. variant and enabled me to rethink my manuscript.

I inferred, for example, that the American empire possessed both classical and liberal features. From International Relations scholar John Ikenberry, I realized that the United States could proceed hegemonically in Europe, a zone of peace that emphasizes economic competition via well-established institutions, but imperially in the Persian Gulf, a zone of conflict where violence (or the threat of it) could still carry the day. America's classical-liberal hybrid was well suited to a post-colonial world but, like all empires, subject to setbacks and defeats. My students may typically think of an empire as omnipotent and therefore always successful, but imperial history belies such thinking.

Although much literature emphasizes the supposedly inevitable "rise and fall" of empires, I argue in my book that imperial trajectories tend to mimic the dramatic lines on a seismogram during an earthquake. For me, such a sequence of apexes and nadirs called to mind the spectrum of U.S. experiences in the Gulf since 1941. Each of the stages I discuss in my book (1941-47, 1948-58, 1959-72, 1973-89, 1990-2000, 2001-7) highlights parts of the sequence. In 1957, for example, the United States achieved a post-World War Two peak following the Suez crisis. However, from 1958, the year of the Iraq coup, until the 1979 Iranian revolution, American influence steadily declined. Following the hostage crisis, Washington started to reassert itself. Its success culminated in April 2003, when its position in the Gulf seemed unassailable. Yet four years later, America seemed ensnared in a familiar imperial conundrum in Iraq. As Washington pondered what to do, its influence within the region ebbed and popularity plummeted. Ironically, its "formal" empire in Iraq was undermining its informal imperium (what Chalmers Johnson calls the "empire of bases") in the Gulf Cooperation Council area.

The juxtaposition of formal and informal empire in the Gulf underscores two issues. First, achieving successful formal empire in the twenty-first century seems near impossible and therefore not worth the considerable military, economic, and political efforts necessary. Second, informal empire can work, especially if you do not call it that. This variant has not guaranteed perpetual U.S. success in the Gulf, but it has secured American objectives better than any alternative.

Several scholars disagree with that assertion, but at least they admit to the existence of an American empire, both in the Gulf and worldwide. Although Michael Mann and others consider the global U.S. empire a failure, Bradley Thayer considers it exceptional. My analysis contradicted his assertion, however, so I edited my introduction to reflect the new impetus of my work. If the U.S. empire qualifies as exceptional, then its behavior ought to be easily distinguishable from that of previous empires. Yet my case study underscores that, in the Persian Gulf, the United States proceeded in a manner similar, if not identical, to the British, Ottoman, and other imperia. Thus, I characterize the American empire in the Gulf as unexceptional.

My hope is that Unexceptional contextualizes the current U.S. occupation of Iraq and the overall American position in the Persian Gulf. The U.S. experience in that region is not new, nor is it particularly innovative. Americans may not recognize it as imperial, but as Walter Lippmann wrote in 1927, they do not know how empire should feel. Does that mean that, like most imperia, the U.S. empire in the Gulf is doomed to an ignominious end? Not necessarily. But the history of empires should be instructive as Washington considers how to proceed in the coming years, if not decades, especially if the price of oil remains high and the threat of transnational Islamic terrorism continues.

[3]Order from Publisher | [4]Amazon

1. <http://people.heidelberg.edu/~moreilly/>

2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51lhvuC66EL.jpg>

3.

<http://www.lexingtonbooks.com/Catalog/SingleBook.shtml?command=Search&db=~DB/CATALOG.db&eqSKUdata=0739105906>

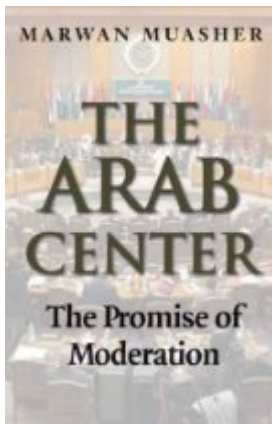
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0739105906>

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### 'The Arab Center: The Promise of Moderation' (2008-06-25 00:03)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Marwan Muasher has held many high-level positions within the government of Jordan, including deputy prime minister, foreign minister, ambassador to the United States, and first Jordanian ambassador to Israel. His new book is *The Arab Center: The Promise of Moderation*.

From [1]Marwan Muasher



[2] To be a moderate in the Arab world has been described as an act of courage by some, a leap of faith by others, or just plain suicidal by many. And yet, there has never been a time when moderation is more needed in the region than now.

This book is about Arab moderation, its successes and its failures. It attempts to show through a firsthand account—drawn from my experience with the peace process since Madrid—the valiant, proactive efforts of Arab moderates to bring about a peaceful and lasting end to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Contrary to western conventional wisdom that Arab moderates do not exist, I show that with regards to the peace process, the Arab moderates put very forthcoming initiatives on the table, namely the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 and the Middle East Road Map of 2003, fought radical positions within the Arab world, and had their arguments prevail.

Arab politicians rarely record their experience in office, and of those who do, few are inclined to do so in English, leaving it to others to document the region's history from the periphery. This why I have written this book in English, to record my almost twenty years of experience with issues of peace, reform and the fight against terrorism in the region, to discuss linkages between them, and to suggest courses of action.

I have also attempted to show the human side of the conflict, and explain to a western reader the psychological divides both sides have to cross to achieve peace. Again through firsthand anecdotes of my time as Jordan's first ambassador to Israel, or the last six months of King Hussein's life when I served as Jordan's ambassador to the United States, the complex issues of the Middle East are explained through a human, not just an analytical, lens.

The book shows why the Arab Center is not holding, and what it takes for that center to regain credibility. It makes the argument that the center needs to focus its attention not only on issues regarding peace, but also expand its moderation to other areas of concern to Arab society—governance, political reform, economic well-being and cultural diversity. It addresses the so-far struggling process of political reform in Arab countries, and suggests a process of opening up political systems in the Arab world and the struggle to push for policies of inclusion as an alternative to the current stalemate that has trapped Arab citizens between the status quo, dominated by ruling elites who have often failed to deliver development, freedom and good governance to their people, and the more radical forms of political Islam, which many believe might curtail political, social and personal freedoms.

This book need not be an account of missed or lost opportunities, but rather a reminder of roads built but not traveled and a needed resolve to end a long journey of bloodshed. It is a call for both Arabs and Israelis to embrace diversity and adopt policies of inclusion. It makes the point that if Israel wants to finally abandon its iron-wall policy and be accepted in the region, it needs to accept, indeed work for, the right of Palestinians to live on their land free of occupation. And if the Arab Center is to triumph, ridding itself of the image its opponents paint of an apologist for the West or a compromiser of Arab rights, it must plant the

seeds for a time when the peace process will end and the challenge of a robust, diverse, tolerant, democratic and prosperous Arab society remains.

[3]Order from Publisher | [4]Amazon | Author interview [5]Download

1. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/0,,contentMDK:21260972~pagePK:51123644~piPK:329829~theSitePK:29708,00.html>
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/516fJHDxRGL.jpg>
3. <http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/book.asp?isbn=9780300123005>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0300123000>
5. <http://audio.wnyc.org/lopate/lopate061808dpod.mp3>

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### Assign Iran to Israel? (2008-06-26 00:01)



Earlier this month, Israel sent more than 100 warplanes on military maneuvers across the Eastern Mediterranean. An unnamed U.S. official described the exercise as practice toward honing the skills for a long-range strike. The assumption is that the maneuvers signal an Israeli willingness and capability to strike Iran's nuclear facilities, if all other measures to stop Iran's program fail.

MESH has invited a number of responses to this question: Assuming the United States decides that Iran must be stopped, and that only military action can stop it, should the United States delegate Israel to conduct the necessary military operations? Or should the United States undertake the operations itself, and insist that Israel stay on the sidelines (as it did during the two Iraq wars)?

Josef Joffe begins, followed in the comments by Mark T. Clark, Mark N. Katz, Stephen Peter Rosen, Martin Kramer, and Chuck Freilich.

From [1]Josef Joffe

Israel's well-publicized war game in the Eastern Mediterranean was a classical signaling stratagem. The message to the European Union and the United States is: "Unless you get serious about real sanctions, we'll go the Samson route. We'll throw some 100 F-15s and F-16s against the Iranians, and we don't care what they do to the rest of the Middle East. Whatever they do, escalation dominance is ours because we have the nukes and they don't. And our threat would be credible because our existence is at stake."

This Schellingesque game ("if you don't do what we want, we'll lose control over ourselves and take the plunge") makes perfect sense for the Israelis, being the only nation on earth that is existentially threatened by the Khomeinists. It also makes some sense for the United States to have Israel strain against its chain in order to soften up Iran. But it does not make sense to "delegate" Israel or to let it strike on its

own. Here is why.

The basic problem is the divergence of interest once you go beyond the shared loathing of the Tehran regime and the common U.S.-Israeli abhorrence of Iranian nukes. Since these threaten Israel's existence, other items like oil fields in Saudi Arabia, tanker traffic in the Gulf or terror in Iraq are logically secondary concerns. For the United States, on the other hand, these "secondary" concerns are primary ones. In the war in Iraq, it matters a great deal how the Iranians would respond on that front line. Forget the Mahdi Army; even Moqtada Sadr is not a flunky for the "Supreme Leader." But how about a straightforward lunge of the Revolutionary Guards into the Basra province—oil wells and all?

For the world's economic Number One, it matters whether burning oil fields and sinking tankers add up to short-term oil prices of \$300 or \$400 per barrel. So Israeli and U.S. interests on these "secondary" items are not alike, whence two conclusions follow.

First, the global power can't "delegate" to its "continental sword" in the Middle East. If you're in on the crash, you want to be in on the take-off. The idea that the United States could pretend non-involvement is absurd. At a minimum, the United States would have to give overflight permission for Iraq as the Israelis would hardly fly around the Arabian Peninsula to strike Iran from the sea. To permit is to condone, and to condone is to be in cahoots. "Who, me?" is not an American option in this highest-stakes game. As predestined target of retaliation, the United States would want to be in the cockpit *ab initio*—especially since this has to be done right the first time round.

Hence the second and properly strategic reason why the United States can't outsource this act of pro-active de-proliferation. This would not be a one-afternoon cakewalk as against Iraq's Osirak reactor in 1981. This would have to be a massive and sustained air campaign the Israeli air force could not prosecute (though it is larger than the German or French air forces). And it would have to be flanked by a serious naval engagement, which only the United States can mount.

The war, given those crucial American "secondary" interests, would have to consist of three parts.

- One, lasting, say, a week or even two, would take out all of Iran's air defenses. The drill is well-known, it has been executed twice over Iraq and once over Serbia. But remember: we could never detect, let alone destroy, all of Saddam's mobile missile launchers.
- The second campaign would have to proceed almost simultaneously. Its purpose would be the elimination of all Iranian assets—naval or air—that could threaten tanker traffic in the Gulf. This is where the U.S. Navy comes in. Before that first cruise missile is launched against Bandar Abbas, the United States would want to establish an intimidating (or shall we say: terrorizing?) presence in the Gulf so as to sharpen Iranian risk assessments.
- The third campaign would be launched consecutively against those nuclear targets proper. This author does not believe that we don't know where all of these targets are; the Israelis for sure know the addresses and ZIP codes. But some of them are hardened, and others are located within cities. So the bombing will have to be smart, surgical and repetitive. Again, it is better to think in terms of weeks rather than days.

The Israeli air force cannot stage such a three-pronged campaign. Nor would it have to because even \$300 oil pales in significance to national survival. For the United States as the global power, however, Iranian retaliation in Iraq or against oil assets matters greatly. Therefore, these threats would have to be eliminated along with the Bushehr reactors and the enrichment and reprocessing plants.



Hence, it is either a real war or none at all. Israel cannot be "delegated." Nor should it be.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef\\_joffe/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef_joffe/)

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Robert O. Freedman (2008-07-01 20:55:49)

In my view, and this should be no surprise, the United States has a greater capability of destroying Iranian nuclear facilities than does Israel, Israel's recent exercise over the Mediterranean notwithstanding. Where Israel can help is to provide information to the United States (if it has not already done so) as to where Iran's secret nuclear facilities and nuclear scientists are located. The Mossad has had responsibility for finding out this information for more than a decade, and Iran's periodic announcements that it has captured Israeli spies would appear to indicate that the Iranian regime is concerned about Israel's clandestine activities. The question for the United States, however, is not one of capability but of will. With the situation still insecure in Iraq, with a rising insurgency in Afghanistan, and with the possible Talibanization of Pakistan a growing concern, there are influential voices in Washington, led by the Secretary of Defense, which are opposed to a U.S. strike on Iran. If these voices prevail, then it would appear Israel would have to do the job itself. [1]*Robert O. Freedman is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)

Martin Kramer (2008-06-27 20:36:56)

Aside from operational and moral arguments (and I found it refreshing that my colleague Stephen Rosen [1]used the word "shameful" to describe any U.S. evasion of the lead role), there are two more strong arguments for the United States to lead a strike from the front. First, the Persian Gulf has long been a zone of exclusive U.S. dominance—so much so that maintenance of this dominance rises to the level of a doctrine. Were the United States to abdicate or divide its responsibility for enforcing order in this zone, we really would be in a post-American Middle East. Israel's role in the Pax Americana has been limited to the Levant. That role has been invaluable, obviating the need for the United States to deploy its own forces there; would that the United States had an Israel-equivalent in the Gulf (where it has no security allies, only dependencies). But the United States does not have such an equivalent, and importing Israel into the Gulf to fulfill the task of order-enforcer there would signal American weakness, not strength. It may add weight to diplomatic efforts for Israel to seem to be chafing at the bit. But if push came to shove, Israeli action would be as detrimental to the U.S. interest as it would have been in Iraq in 1991 and 2003. Second, while Mark Katz [2]may be right in calculating that an Israeli lead role might salvage some pro-American opinion in Iran, its effect on opinion elsewhere would be so negative as to endanger the very success of the operation. A U.S.-led operation would stand up far better at the Security Council, it would gain more discreet and open nods of approval from European and Arab governments, and it would be considered, by those so inclined, to be an action undertaken on behalf of the world's collective interest by the sole superpower. When it comes to legitimacy in the use of force, especially over days or weeks, size matters. [3]*Martin Kramer is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/assign\\_iran\\_to\\_israel/#comment-711](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/assign_iran_to_israel/#comment-711)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/assign\\_iran\\_to\\_israel/#comment-708](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/assign_iran_to_israel/#comment-708)

3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)

Mark N. Katz (2008-06-26 07:06:48)

Although I personally would prefer that neither Israel nor the United States attack Iran and that this situation be resolved by diplomatic means, I recognize that the U.S. and Israeli governments may well decide that military means are necessary to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. The question posed, then, is an urgently important one. It seems to me, though, that the United States is not in a position to delegate Israel to conduct the attack. Instead, the Israelis appear to be signaling that unless the United States undertakes this mission, Israel will. There will, of course, be a negative Iranian reaction whether the United States or Israel does so. In either case, Iran can be expected to step up its support to its allies in Iraq. It may also cause problems for U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan. Perhaps Hezbollah and/or Hamas will react in some violent way. The Iranians, though, will need to be cautious. After all, the United States could do something that it has not done up to now: support separatist groups in Iran such as the Azeris, Kurds, Arabs, and Baluchis. This is something that Tehran does not want to see happen at all. The future

of not just the Islamic Republic, but Iran itself would be in doubt. In my view, though, Iran would react somewhat differently depending on whether the attack came from Israel or the United States. A direct American attack would make it difficult for those Iranian groups seeking improved relations with Washington to continue doing so. As I have argued before, there is a wellspring of positive feeling toward the America in Iran. Washington may not be aware of this, but the Iranian government is—and fears it. Washington could lose this good will if it attacked Iran directly. Indeed, Ahmadinejad and those virulently opposed to improved relations with the United States may actually benefit from a U.S. attack on Iran if this sours Iranian public opinion on the United States. Many in Iran, of course, would see America as behind an Israeli attack as well. An Israeli attack, though, might well lead to an understanding in Iran that Tehran may need better relations with the United States in order to restrain Israel. There is, however, no guarantee that there will be any such realization. Still, even the possibility of this is important for the United States to consider, because there is a strategic case to be made for improved Iranian-American relations. While many focus on the threat posed by Iran, the United States and its allies face other threats—including a resurgent one from Russia. Russia appears to be trying to dominate Eurasian energy routes to Europe. Improved relations with Iran could lead to Iranian gas flowing to Europe via Turkey. Iran could also allow Central Asian and Azeri oil and gas an alternative route to Western markets. A direct American attack on Iran would make achieving these goals more difficult than an Israeli attack, in my judgment. On balance, then, if there is going to be an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities, American interests would be better served if this was done by Israel and not the United States itself. [1] *Mark N. Katz is a professor of government and politics at George Mason University.*

1. <http://www.marknkatz.com/>

Stephen Peter Rosen (2008-06-26 09:52:15)

The question of whether the United States should tacitly delegate the job of destroying the Iranian nuclear weapons material production sites to Israel has been posed. The answer is “no,” for all of the reasons [1] noted by Joe Joffe, and then some. If the Israelis attacked alone, the United States would still bear all of the political costs of the attack. The attack would be less effective if it were not carried out with the full might of the United States, and it would simply be shameful to allow a weaker and more vulnerable ally to carry American water. Everyone knows this, and knows that the final decision will rest with the United States. For that reason, the recent Israeli exercises were not particularly useful, and suggest that the American government gave the green light to them because it was willing to grasp at anything in order not to have to grapple with reality. The reality is that the current Iranian government will not give up the nuclear program. The reality is a non-nuclear strike at the Iranian nuclear facilities would have to be executed by both the United States and Israel, would combine cruise and ballistic missile strikes with manned air strikes and special operations against Iranian command and control facilities, surface-to-air missile installations, and naval installations, as well as the nuclear facilities, all in a matter of a day or two. Forces would also be held ready for follow-on or retaliatory strikes on the logistics facilities that feed weapons from Iran into Iraq and Lebanon, depending on the effectiveness of the initial attacks and the response of the Iranian government and people. The reality is that neither the United States nor the Israeli government can be sure where the Iranian nuclear facilities are. Here I must respectfully disagree with Joe Joffe. In 1990, before the war, the U.S. government was confident that it knew where the Iraqi nuclear installations were, but discovered dozens more after UN inspectors got into the country. We still are not sure what the North Koreans have in terms of a uranium enrichment capability. If long tunnels and large caverns were dug in Iran for the enrichment facilities, we cannot know where the centrifuges are underground. We cannot know what kind of blast doors and partitions were constructed underground to limit damage, nor what preparations have been made to add expedient protection if there is warning of an attack. Even a perfectly placed human intelligence agent can make mistaken assessments, as we have seen. Initial air strikes would, most probably, have to be followed with more strikes in weeks or months, to stop Iranian repair and recovery. Would Russia and China cooperate with the United States after a preventive air strike to limit Iranian acquisition of replacement technology? This seems unlikely. So what, really, are our options? A massive, sustained aerial campaign is one option. The political costs seem much too high. Measures to slow the Iranian program down and to help the opponents of Ahmadinejad may be possible, though how effective they would be is impossible to judge from outside the government. Policies and capabilities to limit the political gains the Iranians will seek from their nuclear weapons are possible, and I have discussed them in earlier postings. A retaliatory doctrine that holds Iran responsible for nuclear weapons use in the region, backed by the United States, Israel, and NATO, if possible, should be the subject of discussion now. There will be many problematic scenarios involving attacks that cannot be immediately and clearly linked to Iran. These will have to be explored, along with the appropriate responses. My suggestion is that in the event of an anonymous nuclear attack that we suspect to be linked to Iran, that Iran be given 48 hours to prove, to our satisfaction, that they were not involved. If they do not, we and our allies will retaliate in a manner that is as massive as necessary, and as discriminate

as possible. There are, perhaps, better options. But they need to be identified, discussed, and put in place before the Iranians get their first weapon. Submarines with nuclear armed missiles need to be in place in waters south of Iran as a dedicated retaliatory force. Coastal and missile defenses need to be strengthened, and so on. There is a last unpleasant reality that must be faced. The Israeli military and the Israeli clandestine intelligence services have, in the past, misled the Israeli government and drawn them into confrontations they did not anticipate or want. This is a matter of historical record, before 1956 and in the first Lebanon war. In the current confrontation with Iran, there may be Israelis who believe that Israel is faced with extinction, that the Israeli government is unable to do what is necessary, and that true Israeli patriots are obligated to save the Israeli people by whatever means necessary, even if this means taking unauthorized actions that people will later thank them for. It is in the interest of Israel and the United States that we also face this possibility clearly and make sure that it is eliminated. [2]Stephen Peter Rosen is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/assign\\_iran\\_to\\_israel/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/assign_iran_to_israel/)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)

Mark T. Clark (2008-06-26 00:04:08)

Chuck Freilich has done more than anyone to show the many obstacles to a comprehensive U.S.-Israeli military response to the Iranian nuclear program ([1]here). While preventing Iranian nuclear weapons is in the interest of both countries, as well as many others in the region and outside of it, Israel has the greatest stake in nuclear prevention, given the existential threat that a nuclear-armed Iran would pose. Furthermore, Israel has spent more time and effort on the Iranian nuclear program than just about any other nation, including the United States. It seems to me likely that Israel will act before the United States decides to tackle the Iranian program militarily. Short of Iran declaring its nuclear weapons capability publicly through announcement or testing, or some new IAEA discovery, the United States will remain constrained in its ability to tackle the problem on its own. In addition to the heavy overseas commitments of U.S. forces and preoccupation with two wars, the December 2007 National Intelligence Estimate on Iran's nuclear program, with which many other nations disagreed, probably pulled the rug out from under any public support in the United States for such an action. Many critics argue that Israel cannot do to Iran's nuclear program what it did to Iraq's. However, Whitney Raas and Austin Long, in their article "Osirak Redux? Assessing Israeli Capabilities to Destroy Iranian Nuclear Facilities" ([2]here), argue that a rough net assessment of Israel's capability to cripple key nodes of the Iranian nuclear program demonstrates it is more robust and capable than many imagine. Of course, this neither guarantees that Israel will strike this way nor that such a strike would succeed with near-perfect reliability, as in the Osirak example. Moreover, there are several difficult choices Israel will have to make in order to effectuate this strike plan. However, the window of time for a successful, damage-limiting strike against the Iranian nuclear program may be rapidly closing. The *New York Sun* recently [3]reported several "nightmare scenarios" U.S. intelligence agencies are considering in the event the U.S. or Israel strikes Iran's nuclear infrastructure. While the account makes it seem as if Iran has a full range of targets to select for retribution, its actual choices are more restricted. Patrick Clawson and Michael Eisenstadt do a great job ([4]here) of showing that Iran's responses to previous attacks have been mixed and its possible responses to a U.S. or Israeli strike are limited. Iran would take a drubbing should it try attacking ships of the U.S. Fifth Fleet, and the oil fields of Saudi Arabia are harder targets than they might seem. The most likely responses would be asymmetric, of the kind Iran has been engaged in for years, through its intelligence services, the Qods Force, and through its proxy in Lebanon, Hezbollah. However bad such "nightmare scenarios" might seem to a non-Israeli audience, they cannot compete with the holocaust-like threat of a nuclear-armed Iran to the Israelis. Further, Israel has been dealing with the asymmetrical threat from Iran and Hezbollah for years. The United States, too, has been in a low-intensity conflict with Iran for decades, ever since the revolution of 1979. The only new twist would be whether Iran directs Hezbollah to take its form of warfare to America. A June 19 ABC News [5]report indicated that Hezbollah sleeper cells may have already been activated in Canada, with the presumed goal of attacking "soft" Jewish targets as revenge for the assassination of Imad Mugniyah in Syria last February, for which Israel credibly denies involvement. It is no stretch to imagine Hezbollah selecting soft targets in the United States as well. The United States will be blamed for an Israeli strike, whether it "delegates" the job to Israel or not. For that, the United States will need to prepare for a possible Iranian riposte. In the event, however, the United States may well want to help Israel ensure the strike's success and limit the amount of damage to non-military targets. Such cooperation may be effected through real-time intelligence feeds and behind-the-scenes military support. Certainly the United States will need to mitigate the diplomatic storm against Israel after the event. [6]Mark T. Clark is a member of MESH.

1. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=284>

2. [http://web.mit.edu/ssp/Publications/working\\_papers/wp\\_06-1.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/ssp/Publications/working_papers/wp_06-1.pdf)
3. <http://www.nysun.com/foreign/irans-nightmare-scenarios-mulled/80568?>
4. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC07.php?CID=405>
5. <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/story?id=5203570&page=1>
6. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_t\\_clark/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_t_clark/)

Efraim Inbar (2008-07-01 16:58:36)

Destroying the nuclear capability of a strong revisionist power is not a job to be [1]assigned to a regional ally. If the United States wants to be a superpower, it is the duty of Washington to demonstrate its capability to maintain its preferred international order. American action is what most Middle Easterners expect and hope for. While Iran poses a severe security threat to Israel, an American ally, it primarily constitutes a challenge to the hegemony of the United States. What is at stake is the political and moral status of America. Israel may decide to take military action in order to remove temporarily the nuclear threat. It will do so after it will reach the sad conclusion that it has been left once again alone to face enemies intent on destroying the Jewish State. Desertion of Israel is precisely what some Iranians are expecting of what they call the Christian World (the West). As a realist, I know that we live in a self-help system and the Ayatollahs may be right. [2]*Efraim Inbar is professor of political studies at Bar-Ilan University and director of the Begin-Sadat (BESA) Center for Strategic Studies.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/assign\\_iran\\_to\\_israel/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/assign_iran_to_israel/)
2. [http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/efraim\\_inbar/](http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/efraim_inbar/)

Chuck Freilich (2008-06-29 16:03:45)

Stephen Rosen [1]believes that a "non-nuclear" attack would have to be carried out by both the United States and Israel. I do not believe that there is any doubt that the United States has the military capability to do it alone, though it might have to "go in" more than once if the sites attacked were not fully destroyed, or new ones became known. Minimizing the adverse reactions, however, would require close U.S.-Israeli coordination, and as I have shown in [2]previous research (thanks to Mark Clark for referencing it), this may not be as easily achieved as some might imagine. Finally, I could not disagree more with Steve's characterization of the potential behavior of the Israeli military and intelligence organizations. There is *no* danger whatsoever of unauthorized rogue actions on their part. [3]*Chuck Freilich is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/assign\\_iran\\_to\\_israel/#comment-711](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/assign_iran_to_israel/#comment-711)
2. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=284>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck\\_freilich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck_freilich/)

## Mapping of vulnerabilities in Lebanon (2008-06-30 00:05)

From MESH Admin



[1] This map of Lebanon, prepared by [2]Lebanon-Support, seeks to identify areas of "vulnerability" within Lebanon—what might best be described as potential flash points—as of June 2008. The map's authors describe the map's layers in these terms:

- Political layer, displaying the electoral weight of the opposition and "loyalists" in each of the electoral districts of the 2005 general elections.
- Confessional layer, displaying a rough presentation of the geographic distribution of Lebanese confessions.
- Security layer, displaying the areas that have witnessed tensions and conflicts in the May 2008 events, as well as current conflicts in the North, Sidon, and the Bekaa.
- Deprivation layer, displaying areas with a high percentage of "deprived households" on the district level, as well as areas with a high concentration of "deprived households" as a percentage of the total population in Lebanon.

Click on the thumbnail to download the map (pdf).

1. [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps\\_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/00BD785A71C24C8885257474007067B1/\\$File/ls\\_SEC\\_lbn080626.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/00BD785A71C24C8885257474007067B1/$File/ls_SEC_lbn080626.pdf)
2. <http://lebanon-support.org/>

## 2.7 July

### What will Iran do, if hit? (2008-07-01 00:02)

From [1]Chuck Freilich



Thirty years ago, in his magnificent book on [2]Perception and Misperception, Robert Jervis argued that people's views are self-reinforcing. Once we believe something to be the case, we further develop an array of arguments to discount those pesky doubts that we may harbor and to fully convince ourselves that our initial position is indeed correct. Opponents of military action against Iran thus tend to believe that its negative consequences will be broad and severe, whereas those who believe that action may be necessary, if not preferable, tend to believe that the costs are far more limited. Of course, we may all be wrong.

But before I offer my own assessment of costs, here is the good news. As I recently [3]wrote in the Jerusalem Post, Iran is highly vulnerable to external pressure and we may never have to reach the stage of military action, if the West gets its act together. What is needed is a comprehensive policy of heavy sanctions, combined with a big diplomatic carrot.

To this end, I believe the United States should seek to fully engage Iran and offer a "grand bargain," an array of incentives, in exchange for the nuclear program. Those who take a hard line on Iran should be especially supportive of a policy of engagement. Only if the United States exhausts all diplomatic possibilities, does it stand to gain support for major economic sanctions, let alone future military action. Iran will probably reject the offer, as it has all others, but we will only know if the option is pursued, and it is a vital way station on the road to stronger measures. Talking to Iran does not have to imply acquiescence

or appeasement; it would only be a "Munich" if so conducted.

However, the United States and the West should engage from a position of strength, by imposing stringent sanctions now, such as heightened restrictions on trade credits, international banking transactions and investments in Iran. Moreover, Iran imports 40 percent of its refined gasoline products. If the West banned these sales, its economy could be brought to its knees. Oil exports make up 80 percent of Iran's state budget. Were imports of Iranian oil banned, its economy would be brought to a standstill. Iran's automobile industry is domestically produced, except for engines. Cut sales of engines and its economy would be greatly weakened. Should these and other measures fail, or sufficient international cooperation not be forthcoming, the United States could unilaterally impose a naval embargo on Iran, which would have the combined affect of most of these measures and then some.

Only if this, too, failed, would there be a need to consider direct military action, primarily an aerial operation, with little or no ground forces. (I believe that any such action need not be nearly as broad as some have suggested. The number of critical nodes is small.)

Those who vociferously oppose and fear the use of force against Iran anticipate "disastrous" consequences (The New York Times) or a regional conflagration (IAEA chief ElBaradie). Military action will incur costs for the United States, but far from being "disastrous," or even heavy, I believe they will probably be limited. We should not engage in unwarranted and self-detering risk aversion, or forget who wields the incalculably greater "stick." Iran certainly will not.

What would be Iran's likely response? There is little doubt that Iran will respond to a direct attack, or a blockade, but its options, heated rhetoric notwithstanding, are actually limited. What can it do in the Gulf? Attack American ships, block the Gulf? It might deliver a pinprick for the sake of appearances at home, but beyond that, the risks of escalation and the costs to Iran's economy are too great. Iran is extremist, but not irrational. It knows perfectly well that any serious moves against U.S. forces, or an attack on Saudi oil wells, would result in a massive American retaliation. Does Iran want to invite an American attack on its oil installations as well? The nuclear sites are not enough? Who truly wields escalation dominance? Yes, oil prices will further skyrocket and Iran could add to the crisis by cutting output. But anything beyond limited temporary measures would be tantamount to Iran's cutting off its nose to spite its face.

Iran may very well cause the United States greater difficulty in Iraq, and increased terror can be expected against U.S. and Western targets there. It is highly unlikely, however, that Iran would be willing to go beyond limited actions and risk direct military escalation—not when the United States has 150,000 soldiers on its doorstep. What some view as 150,000 American targets, look far more like a strike force to Tehran. Unlike the insurgency in Iraq, in this case we are talking about missions of the kind that the U.S. military has already been proven to be trained and equipped for. Moreover, U.S. preparations can greatly reduce, though not eliminate, the dangers of Iran's potential responses, on all levels.

Iran is far more likely to respond against Israel, indeed, to open up with everything it, Hezbollah and Hamas have: large scale terror, rocket attacks blanketing Israel, ballistic missiles. Israel may pay a heavy price, and there is a significant danger of confrontation with Hezbollah, Hamas and, conceivably, Syria. It is a price Israel should be willing to pay.

Finally, there will undoubtedly be a strong public reaction in the Muslim world, though Arab regimes will be quietly relieved to be free of a nuclear Iran and will presumably be able to contain popular fury. If the United States plays out the diplomatic route first, international reaction will be muted.

Of course, even a fully "successful" strike would only destroy the known program. Iran, having largely mastered the technology, might be able to reconstitute it. A two-year reprieve may not be worth even the limited costs outlined above. But five years probably would be.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck\\_freilich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck_freilich/)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0691100497>
3. <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1214132686901&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

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Andrew Exum (2008-07-02 23:37:27)

Over the past few weeks, I have been repeatedly asked to imagine how Hezbollah might respond to an Israeli or American strike on Iran's nuclear facilities. Invariably, the question that gets asked is whether or not Hezbollah would strike civilian or military targets outside the battlefields of southern Lebanon and northern Israel—where Hezbollah has concentrated the overwhelming majority of its operations. Chuck Freilich's [1]post seems like a good place to weigh in with some thoughts. In some ways, I feel that I am poorly qualified to offer any informed comment. As a social science researcher with expired security clearances and no access to classified intelligence products, I cannot make any authoritative claim about Hezbollah's external activities and capabilities. The best presentation I have heard on Hezbollah's alleged external operations and capabilities was given by MESH member Matt Levitt not too long ago, and part of what made Matt's presentation so compelling was his humility. He was up front and honest about how little we know and admitted that most of what is out there in unclassified reports is largely speculative. That said, even if Hezbollah possesses a potent external operation, I feel attacks on Western targets outside the Middle East are highly unlikely. First, I agree with Freilich that it is significant that Hezbollah did not attack targets external to southern Lebanon and northern Israel in 2006 despite coming under direct, heavy pressure by the combined might of the Israel Defense Forces in July and August of that year. We can sit back now, in 2008, and reason that Hezbollah was never threatened existentially in 2006. But I'm not sure that's the way it appeared to Hezbollah in the first week or so of the war—when the Israeli air force was seemingly attacking at will and a powerful ground invasion appeared likely. So if Hezbollah is not going to attack external targets when it is under attack itself, would it attack external targets in the event of an attack on Iran? Maybe, but this leads me to my second point. As recently as January, the United States had 196,600 military personnel deployed to Iraq and surrounding countries. It had 25,700 personnel deployed in support of operations in Afghanistan. If you're Iran, your nuclear program is attacked, and you decide to respond against the United States, why would you order terror attacks external to the region when you can simply make life miserable for the United States in Iraq? The past year and half have demonstrated that despite impressive gains in Iraq and a truly heroic effort by our soldiers and diplomats, a large portion of that country's security environment is determined by the Iranians, who have leverage with nearly all of Iraq's political parties and factions. If Iran desires to turn the heat up there or elsewhere in the region, it can. And punishing the United States in such a way for an attack on Iran's nuclear program makes a lot more sense than Hezbollah-orchestrated external terror attacks. This is also why I suspect an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear program would be greeted with outrage among America's uniformed officer corps. Although Israel cannot be expected to act in the interests of any nation but Israel, an Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear program has the potential to erase many if not all of the hard-won gains in Iraq and to make the environment there and elsewhere in the region much more dangerous for U.S. servicemen. I am in agreement with Patrick Clawson and Mike Eisenstadt that Iran's response to an attack on its nuclear program would largely depend on what kind of attack it was—and that there is much that we do not know about how Iran would respond given various scenarios. But as a veteran of both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and with many close friends still serving in each country and elsewhere in the region, I would certainly understand why an Israeli attack on Iran would, at this moment, not be welcomed (to put it mildly) by those operating in already difficult political-military environments in Iraq and elsewhere. [2]Andrew Exum is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/what\\_will\\_iran\\_do\\_if\\_hit/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/what_will_iran_do_if_hit/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew\\_exum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew_exum/)

Michael A. Ledeen (2008-07-01 14:19:09)

I like Chuck Freilich's [1]work a lot, and I always learn from him. I have three comments: 1. American presidents since Carter—including G.W. Bush—have attempted to reach a bargain with Iran for nearly thirty years, and every one has failed. I don't think there is any reason to believe the Iranians will change their minds now, when they think they're

winning the whole pot. I think Chuck agrees; 2. I do not agree that Iran is not irrational. The people at the very top of the regime are fanatics, I think they would welcome a showdown with the Satanic forces; 3. Chuck's scenario is too static, and oddly leaves out the Iranian internal dynamics. I cannot imagine a quiescent population. Depending on how and where an attack happens, there are many different possible developments, ranging from "rallying round the mullahs" to "seizing the moment" and assaulting the regime in the major cities. I don't think anyone can predict such things, and I don't want to witness what actually happens. I think the regime is hollow, and that we would be much better advised to support political revolution than to expend all our energies on debating a terrible scenario. [2]Michael A. Ledeen is Freedom Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/what\\_will\\_iran\\_do\\_if\\_hit/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/what_will_iran_do_if_hit/)
2. <http://www.aei.org/scholars/filter.all,scholarID.35/scholar.asp>

### Is it over for America in the Middle East? (2008-07-03 00:54)

MESH marks the Fourth of July by asking this question: Is the American era in the Middle East over? The argument was first made by Richard Haass in an [1]article published in 2006:



The American era in the Middle East... has ended.... It is one of history's ironies that the first war in Iraq, a war of necessity, marked the beginning of the American era in the Middle East and the second Iraq war, a war of choice, has precipitated its end.... The United States will continue to enjoy more influence in the region than any other outside power, but its influence will be reduced from what it once was.

The theme continues to reverberate in a new [2]article by Haass on "nonpolarity," and in Fareed Zakaria's book [3]The Post-American World, which announces "the end of the Pax Americana." ("On every dimension other than military power—industrial, financial, social, cultural—the distribution of power is shifting, moving away from U.S. dominance.")

Has the American era ended in the Middle East? Is the obituary premature? Is it all hyperbole? Or maybe there never was an American era to begin with? MESH has asked a number of distinguished authorities for their views.

Update, July 17: At the invitation of MESH, Richard Haass replies [4]here.



[5]J. Scott Carpenter :: "Reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated." So telegraphed Mark Twain in response to "news" of his passing. America could respond similarly to Fareed Zakaria and Richard Haass, the latest in an inglorious parade of hand-wringers who see the waning of American influence in the Middle East and the world.



Contrary to Fareed's assertions, there is no sphere in which the United States is not now dominant in the region and there's no reason to believe its influence will be eclipsed by any other power or concert of powers. In a distinction without a difference, Richard asserts the end of the American moment and the beginning of a non-polar world—in which the United States has the predominant capacity to lead. In fact, there is no substitute for American leadership in the Middle East. Does anyone really believe China or Russia or Iran present serious long-term challenges to the United States? Or worthy models of emulation? Or solutions?

Iran? Sure, a dangerous nut case with nuclear dreams threatens the region, but America is leading the coalition to contain or confront it. Not even China or Russia seriously questions its leadership or the need for it. Politically, Iran is a model for no one. Its economy deteriorates by the day as its peoples' restiveness grows. Fed up with revolution, they would happily embrace real democracy (and the United States) if permitted. At the same time, Sunni chauvinism in the rest of the region limits Shiite influence.

Russia? Its dual Czars, Medvedev and Putin, have restored Russians' pride in their state, but the Kremlin's pretensions of expanding its influence in the Middle East remain anemic at best. Just look at the weakness of Russia's earnest but ineffective participation in the Quartet.

China? China has a thirst for energy that makes it a demandeur having little interest in actively shaping events in the region. Plus, China's vastly undervalued currency and overheating growth promise future challenges that will keep its government focused internally. Earthquakes and floods are portents in Chinese political culture that its leaders are well aware of.

Europe? Europe craves American leadership and increasingly works in cooperation if not outright collaboration on key policies. It is true the EU has influence in the Maghreb thanks to its large economic transfers. but it has little weight in the Gulf and no ability to project power. With France under Elvis-loving Sarkozy, transatlantic cooperation under U.S. leadership is poised to take off. A U.S. diplomat in Paris recently told me the relationship has never been better or the areas of cooperation more diverse.

So why the angst? The United States faces real challenges but they are hardly the heralds of the end of U.S. influence in the Middle East—or the world. We have overcome worse and will do so again. As a leading media figure in Dubai told me two weeks ago, "Many people would like to believe America is down but it's always a mistake to underestimate its resilience and power. And dangerous." I, for one, agree.

[6]J. Scott Carpenter is Keston Family Fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy and a member of MESH.



[7]Lawrence Freedman :: Few attempts to predict the future of U.S. power and influence in terms of the most recent trends, or as a transformational moment, have survived the events they have sought to anticipate.

Looking back, the U.S. position in the Middle East was, at different times, due to be eclipsed by the rise of a pro-Soviet pan-Arabism and then OPEC. Now it is the turn of Islamism and Iran. At the start of the 1980s the U.S. position looked poor as a result of the loss of the Shah and the debacle over Beirut. A decade later it looked good because of the successful management of the 1991 Gulf War and the

effort which led to the Madrid Conference. As Saddam's regime was toppled in 2003 for a moment U.S. power was presented as almost irresistible. As the rationale for the war was undermined by the failure to find WMD and the mismanagement of the occupation America's reputation began to plummet. The Bush Administration appeared to have lost the plot in the war on terror, found little useful to do on the Israel-Palestine issue and kept on being wrong-footed by Iran.

For the moment the United States barely has a functioning government. Even Israel is currently conducting its regional diplomacy with barely a nod in Washington's direction.

Does this all represent a trend or a blip? Early next year a new administration will be in place. Simply by being different to Bush, it will enjoy something of a honeymoon, though historically the first months of new administrations have been times of maximum error, so a lot will depend on how the new president responds to the first major crisis that comes his way.

Furthermore, as one of the big questions about the United States is always sticking power, continuing with the broad thrust of the current Iraqi strategy will be important, even while looking for a way to see the progressive reduction in the American role. Apart from the currently unanticipated events (Egypt? Yemen? Algeria?) that might change the political agenda dramatically, the most important known test will be Iran, as 2009 will be a critical year.

Obviously the context in which U.S. foreign policy operates changes all the time. There may be no other power in a position to displace America, but a lot will depend on the policy choices being made elsewhere in the region, including in countries with which current relations are poor. The safest bet for a historian is to observe that the future is likely to be as complex as the past.

[8]Lawrence Freedman is Professor of War Studies, King's College London.

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[9]Josef Joffe :: The United States is finished, its president, a pious idealist, the laughing stock of the world. This was the take on Jimmy Carter's America after that Keystone Kops attempt ("Desert One") in 1980 to free the U.S. hostages in Tehran. A few months into Reagan, who had quietly threatened obliteration of Tehran, the laughter had died.

Now it's decline time again (it tends to come in twenty-year cycles). But you wonder what the "end of the American era in the Middle East" means? Is it like the end of the French and British era when they were forced out for good by the United States, in the wake of the Suez War of 1956? Hmm, let's see.

Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the lesser Gulf states are all security clients of the United States. Israel, the regional superpower, is America's "continental sword." Turkey is an American ally, and Iraq an American possession, with 130,000 U.S. troops, where the war has turned in favour of the United States since last summer. Which leaves Syria, isolated, impoverished, and mulling a return into the Western fold. And Iran, the current would-be hegemon of the region.

Influence-wise, this is not a bad line-up, especially when considering that in the 1960s and 1970s, three key Arab players, Syria, Iraq and Egypt, were firmly ensconced in the Soviet camp.

Now let's look at more tangible sources of influence: bases. Haifa is practically homeport of the

Sixth Fleet, Bahrain is where the Fifth Fleet's forward HQ is located. Qatar hosts an American air base that is said to be the largest outside the country, supporting up to 10,000 U.S. personnel. The UAE (Dubai and Abu Dhabi plus some smaller sheikdoms) also hosts a significant U.S. presence. The ports of Jebel Ali and Fujaira supply the U.S. Navy and Air Force. Al Dhafra Airbase serves as a major intelligence hub and as a staging grounds for tankers and UAVs. Oman has been an American base since 1979.

For a has-been power, the United States simply must have forgotten all those accoutrements of American influence strewn across the region. But this is no accident, comrades, as the Soviets used to say. The Middle East is to the 21st century what Europe was in the 20th: a key strategic stake and a main battle ground for hegemonial conflict. As a result, America's shadow there will lengthen, Obama or McCain.

Another way to approach the issue of influence is to ask: Who else? The end of Britain and France in the region was marked by the permanent intrusion of the United States. Who would push out the United States? Or make it more practical: Who is going to assure regime survival in Egypt, Jordan et al? Not France, Britain or Germany. Who has the convening power to bring Israel and Palestinians to the bargaining table? Not China. Who can organize sanctions against Iran? Not Russia. Come to think of it: Who disposes of the world's largest economy, the world's largest military spending? None of the above.

The point is this: Under Bush, the United States has suffered a vast loss in legitimacy and reputation. But it has not lost its vast physical power, nor the sources of its global influence. The United States remains the default power—the power to which everybody will turn once the United States returns to the golden rule of all leadership: pursue your own interests by taking care of those of others.

[10]Josef Joffe is the Marc and Anita Abramowitz Fellow in International Relations at the Hoover Institution, and a member of MESH.

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[11]Mark T. Kimmitt :: The era of Pax Americana in the Middle East is over? One has a hard time suggesting that such an era ever existed.

The post-World War Two era in Europe was, truly, Pax Americana: 60-plus years in West Germany, with over 500,000 American troops (and their families). Our security guarantees ensured that the Soviet Union was held in check, our presence ensured that American culture was predominant throughout the continent, our cross-Atlantic trade and social exchanges resulted in a continent that assimilated the American experience wholesale.

Our presence in the Middle East during this same period was a fraction of our presence in Europe. Our troop numbers never exceeded the low thousands, except for the wars of 1990-91 and 2003 to today. Our security presence was mostly "over the horizon" and provided by maritime troops and aircraft afloat. A security shield to be sure, but nothing close to Pax Americana.

Today, the globalization of commerce and the insatiable worldwide demand for hydrocarbons will ensure that the Middle East remains an open playing field for commerce and industry, and no particular actor will have a hegemonic advantage in finance, culture or diplomacy. The only area in which the United States will enjoy a competitive advantage remains in security. The regional presence of U.S. forces, even in a post-Iraq environment, will sustain regional stability. However, the model envisioned remains a rotational model. Forces will rotate in and out on a scheduled basis, their families will remain in the United States,

and exercises will be held in remote areas far from population centers.

That is hardly comparable to the Pax Americana of postwar Europe, but it is a model that has worked for decades in the past, and can work for decades to come. Less an end of an era, and more a continuation of the past.

[12]Mark T. Kimmitt is Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East, and has just been confirmed as Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs.

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[13]Martin Kramer :: America's era in the Middle East has only just begun. Until 2003, the United States was positioned off-shore, attempting to manage the region through diplomacy, aid, arms sales, and the occasional cruise missile. Since the Iraq invasion, the United States has immersed itself in the nitty-gritty of engineering the reconstruction of a major Arab state. In the process, it has made just about every possible mistake, but it has also learned almost every possible lesson, and we see the results in gains made in Iraq. The knowledge acquired in Iraq, by trial and error, has put the United States on par with Britain and France at the height of their sway over the Middle East.

The Middle East is full of what America wants and needs: dictatorships to be broken, oil to be explored and exported, a religion in need of reformation. For Americans, the Middle East will never be analogous to southeast Asia, no matter how sticky it gets. But it probably won't ever get that sticky: the region is sufficiently fragmented that the United States will never manage to enrage everyone at once. The United States is likely to remain on-shore in the Middle East, overtly or behind a veil, for a long time to come.

Only Americans can put an end to the American era, by talking themselves out of it. Elie Kedourie, in his famous essay "The Chatham House Version," showed how the spread of declinism in Britain's political elite forced the country's total and abject abandonment of every British position in the Middle East. The drums of retreat are now being pounded by the American equivalents of Arnold Toynbee. But when Britain pulled up stakes, it knew the vacuum would be filled by America. If we leave, it will be Iran. (Haass has called Iran "a classic imperial power.") Here is my prediction: America won't let it happen.

[14]Martin Kramer is Olin Institute Senior Fellow at Harvard University and a member of MESH.

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[15]Walter Laqueur :: End of an era? This is not entirely wrong but a typical journalistic exaggeration (small earthquakes do not sell copies). Facing major economic problems and various setbacks in the foreign policy field, many Americans, including many belonging to the political class, favor retrenchment. "Measured disinvolvement" and "partial disengagement" were the terms used by the neo-isolationists in the 1970s.

But in truth there never was an "American era" and it is not over yet. (There certainly was no Pax Americana.) Had there been one, things would have happened—in Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Israel/Palestine—which did not take place. On the other hand, a certain weakening of the American position could lead to opportunities that did not exist before. Everyone is ganging up against a single superpower,

whereas in future, with the appearance of new threats and the coming internal conflicts in the Middle East, America will be more needed and more in demand than before—unless it opts for isolationism and total withdrawal, which seems unlikely.

Whether these opportunities will be used depends partly on the balance of power (or its absence) in the Middle East in the years to come, on which one can only speculate. It depends above all on the political intelligence and farsightedness, will and steadfastness of the next president and his advisers and the support they will have. *Sapienti sat*, as the medieval monks used to conclude.

[16]Walter Laqueur is Distinguished Scholar at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, and a member of MESH.



[17]Robert J. Lieber :: The proposition that "The American era in the Middle East has ended" is part of a larger declinist argument. The United States does face serious problems at home and abroad, but there is an unmistakable echo of the past in current arguments.

While there are challenges to the U.S. Middle East role, no other country has anything like its influence and impact there. As an unmistakable symbol, no other country could have convened the Annapolis Conference last November and on short notice attracted leaders from some 60 countries including China, Russia, the EU and virtually the entire Arab League. Iran does pose a severe regional danger, but Richard Haass' claim that its "effort to become a nuclear power is a result of nonpolarity" fails to take into account that Tehran's covert program began more than two decades ago when there was plenty of polarity. Indeed, Haass himself concedes that the U.S. "will continue to enjoy more influence in the region than any other outside power."

Previous crises have involved challenges more daunting than those of today. For example, the 1973-80 period included the Yom Kippur War and Arab oil embargo, two oil shocks, Watergate and the Nixon resignation, a humiliating withdrawal from Vietnam, the Iranian revolution, the seizure of the U.S. embassy hostages in Tehran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a severe economic downturn at home (with figures for recession, unemployment and inflation far beyond anything likely to occur in the current period), and Jimmy Carter's "malaise" speech.

Fareed Zakaria refers to the U.S. as an "enfeebled superpower." But the idea that shifts in the distribution of power would deprive America of its world role isn't novel, and was common in the 1970s and early 1980s. In 1972 President Nixon depicted an emerging balance among five major powers: the U.S., Russia, China, Europe and Japan. But despite the rise of the "BRICs" (Brazil, Russia, India, China), the growing importance of an expanded EU and a flourishing East Asia, other powers are not balancing against the United States. No other country comes close to combining all the power attributes of the United States and none has emerged as a true peer competitor. And important regional powers (Japan, India, Indonesia, Germany, France) have even improved their relations with Washington.

In an [18]article in the summer issue of *World Affairs*, I make the case that declinist arguments exhibit a-historicism, over-reaction to singular events, and a lack of appreciation for the adaptability, robustness and staying power of the United States. Declinist forecasts in previous eras have been wrong, and it is a good bet that the current crop will prove to be similarly mistaken.

[19]Robert J. Lieber is Professor of Government and International Affairs at Georgetown University.

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[20]Michael Mandelbaum :: The American role in the Middle East has been the product, since the 1950s, of three conditions. The first has been political instability there with the associated threat of regional domination by a power hostile to Western interests—variously the Soviet Union, Nasser’s Egypt, Saddam’s Iraq, and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Such a threat would have been of strictly local concern but for the second condition: the location, in the Middle East, of the largest readily accessible supplies of the world’s most valuable mineral. A hostile power dominating the region would be in a position to deny oil to, and thus gravely damage, the rest of the world. It was, therefore, necessary to prevent such a circumstance, and in the absence of any other force able to perform this task, it fell to the United States—the third defining condition.

Through deterrence, proxy wars, and direct military intervention, American power has preserved a certain order in the Middle East and assured the global economy reliable access to petroleum. In this way the United States has supplied one of the several governmental services it provides to the rest of the world, which for the most part neither acknowledges nor appreciates them and contributes almost nothing to paying for them. (The full version of this argument is set out in my 2006 book [21]The Case for Goliath: How America Acts as the World’s Government in the Twenty-first Century.)

The two most consequential events of recent years—the American struggles in Iraq and the skyrocketing price of oil—have not abolished the three conditions. If anything, they have aggravated the first two: Iran looms as a larger threat to the region, and the global supply of oil is more precarious because there is so little spare capacity. As for the third condition, the “realist” approach to the understanding of international relations would predict that, in the face of the Iranian threat, the Arab oil producers would band together to form an effective military bloc and make common cause with the two regional powers that are also wary of the Islamic Republic, Turkey and Israel. Readers of this blog will not need to be persuaded of the implausibility of such a scenario.

To be sure, the United States is not certain to continue as the regional gendarme, but if it fails to do so this will not be because conditions in the Middle East and the global economy no longer require one, or because some other country or group of countries has assumed the role. Rather, it will be because, frustrated by Iraq, angry at the hemorrhaging of wealth to the oil producers, and preoccupied with domestic concerns, the American public declines to continue its fifty-year pattern of engagement in the Middle East. In that case, a new era will indeed have dawned, an era all too likely to make Americans, Middle Easterners, and others nostalgic for the old one.

[22]Michael Mandelbaum is Christian A. Herter Professor of American Foreign Policy at the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, and a member of MESH.

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[23]Aaron David Miller :: The notion of an American era in the Middle East has always been an illusion, certainly if that implies American dominance over a region that, since the end of World War Two, has become too complex, too dysfunctional and too ornery ever to be controlled or shaped



by a single outside power. A better way to describe American influence would be a series of "American moments" when the United States succeeded in Arab-Israeli peacemaking (1973, 1979, 1991) or war making (1991) which temporarily boosted American credibility and influence in discrete areas. Clearly since 1991, we've had very few of even those moments. For eight years under Bill Clinton we failed at Arab-Israeli peacemaking; and for eight years under George W. Bush we failed at making war in a region critical to our national security interests. As a result, we are neither feared nor respected to the extent we need to be.

At the same time, we need to understand that we are in an investment trap in this region; we can't fix it and we can't escape it. We must however do a better job of protecting our interests. If we presume to be a great power, we should start acting like one: defining policies driven by American interests, not Arab or Israeli interests; and not allowing our domestic politics or grandiose schemes of a new Middle East to substitute for smart and tough-minded policies. This region is not a land of wonderful diplomatic and foreign policy opportunities; it's a trap, but one in which we have no choice but to compete and survive. My concluding advice: read history; see the world as it is not the way we want it to be; and above all avoid big ideas (this region hates them) and failure. In life, the world's most compelling ideology isn't nationalism, democracy or even capitalism. It's success, because success generates power and constituents. Failure generates the opposite.

[24]Aaron David Miller is a Public Policy Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington.



[25]Joshua Muravchik :: Seeing things that are not apparent on the surface is the essence of the analyst/pundit business. That's why they pay us the small bucks.

It is, however, an inherently dicey business. The farther an observation is from the surface, the more impressive or exciting it is, but also often the more difficult to prove or disprove and often, also, to make any use of. Usually, the grander the generalization, the vaguer the terms.

The all-time master of this art was Karl Marx who discovered the laws of history, and although the terms were never defined clearly nor their relationship to each other, and although the specific embedded predictions have not come true, his immense influence endures even, dare I say, in the august center of learning that MESH calls home.

There is a huge audience eager to know the future which is why many times more people read the astrologers' columns than ours.

America's dominance of the world scene has been underway for 60-plus years, and this period has been punctuated by numerous sightings of the country's decline. No doubt they will prove true, whether in a decade or a century or a millennium.

I didn't know that the American era in the Middle East commenced in 1991. I ask myself what I would have done differently or advocated differently or written differently these last 17 years had I known it. I also wonder whether Saddam or Khamenei or Bashar or Nasrallah or Yassin or even Arafat, despite spending many nights at the White House, knew that that was the American era. If so, what would they have done differently had it not been? And if not, what difference does it make that it was?

As for the American era having just ended or being in the process of ending, what does that tell me? Does it mean that if we drop bombs on Iran's nuclear facilities, they will not explode? And if they do explode and we block Iran's hopes for a bomb; and if, as now seems possible, we come away from Iraq with a win, will our era be over nonetheless? And if it is, despite our gaining our policy objectives, what difference would that make?

[26]Joshua Muravchik is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and a member of MESH.



[27]Robert Satloff :: Cheer up, America, the doomsayers are wrong: America's moment in the Middle East is not about to go the way of Britain's, at least not anytime soon.

Despite all the hand-wringing of recent years, certain truths about Middle East politics and America's role in it are enduring. These include the following:

- Militarily, from thousands of miles away, America remains the most potent force in the Middle East. While the sagacity of how it employs this force is at times open to question, the fact of America's military superiority is beyond dispute.
- Diplomatically, America remains the party to whom both Arabs and Israelis turn as the indispensable actor in "the peace process," the "honest broker" that can reduce risks, condition the environment, bridge gaps, subsidize agreements and oversee their implementation.
- Ideologically, America remains the lodestar for the region's beleaguered democrats as well as the preeminent satanic foe of the region's radical Islamists. Despite the misadventures of the "freedom agenda," civil society groups across the Middle East continue to dismiss fashionable parlour-talk about Washington's "kiss of death" and instead seek our support and blessing for their causes; despite our alleged weaknesses, our enemies still rank "Death to America"—and not "death to nonpolarity," for example—as their most cherished motto.
- Culturally, America too remains the most admired, as well as the most feared, country in the Middle East. On the one hand, tens of thousands of Middle Easterners are shelling out billions of dollars for one of our principal exports—American-style education—which (depending on the actual quality) will ensure American cultural dominance for at least the next two generations. And, on the other hand, there is compelling evidence that it is Hollywood—and neither the Sixth Fleet, nor Israel's F-15s nor the eventual fall of oil prices—that drives fear into the heart of Iran's Supreme Leader.

Did America overreach in the Bush Administration? Well, we certainly made huge mistakes, from the execution of the post-war in Iraq to the topsy-turvy, elections-first effort on democracy promotion. But with a measure of wisdom, some of these errors are repairable while others can be overcome. In the larger sense, there is little reason to believe that they herald the impending demise of our unique role in both the minds and imaginations of Middle Easterners. On this Fourth of July, that's something to celebrate.

[28]Robert Satloff is executive director of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy and a member of MESH.





[29]Harvey Sicherman :: By my count, the American era, a/k/a the American empire, has risen and fallen several times since the end of the Cold War. This is a nice little industry for some authors (similar to the "transatlantic crisis") and, unlike other industries, it never knows a recession. So, a pox on the pax.

The real issue is whether the United States, alone or in combination, can secure its interests in the Middle East. Three have endured since the late 1940s: access to oil; security of Israel; and a region not dominated by hostile powers. Other interests have come and gone, including "modernization." Democratic transformation, too, may soon join its predecessors on the heap of foreign-induced reform in the Middle East, always a chronicle of dashed hopes and unintended consequences. But these have not displaced the critical threesome.

Do we have access to oil? Yes. Is Israel secure? More or less. Does a hostile power dominate the region? Not now. The prolongation of this situation depends, however, on our capacity to secure Baghdad, find some solution to the Palestinian problem, and take the Iranians down a peg, possibly through (1) a reduction of their influence in Iraq, (2) financial penalties that accelerate Ahmadinejad's wrecking of the economy, or (3) a bloody nose that brings home to them the danger of their nuclear and terrorism enterprises. Can enough of this be done to secure our interests? Of course. Will we do it? I surely hope so.

[30]Harvey Sicherman is president and director of the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia and a member of MESH.



[31]Richard N. Haass :: Is it over for America in the Middle East? Of course not. And no one to my knowledge is arguing that it is. I certainly am not; as [32]I wrote in the November/December 2006 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, "The United States will continue to exert more influence in the region than any other outside power...."

But this is not the end of the discussion. U.S. influence will decline from what it has been. We are at the end of one historical era (unipolarity) and the outset of another (nonpolarity). This is true generally and for the Middle East.

So what is the problem? Few of those commenting here seem to understand the distinction between an end to an era and an end to influence. What makes an era is that the character of what is being discussed (in this case, a part of the world) is both clear and enduring. There can be exceptions, but they are just that: exceptions to a prevailing pattern.

The previous era in the Middle East was dominated to an uncharacteristic degree by the United States. It was the result of the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union. But it was also the consequence of concerted American effort, be it to reverse Saddam Hussein's conquest of Kuwait or to promote peace between Israel and its neighbors.

The era came to an end both for structural reasons—globalization, the shifting balance between energy supply and demand, the weakening of some national entities and the strengthening of other national

and non-state actors alike—and for reasons related more to U.S. policy, in particular the Iraq war and the lack of priority accorded the “peace process.”

The new era will be one in which U.S. power and influence will be considerable but on balance less dominant. Other actors, including Iran, a divided but assertive Iraqi government, Hezbollah, Hamas, national oil companies and the governments behind them, sovereign wealth funds, terrorist organizations, China, Russia, the EU, political factions within Israel, religious authorities, and the Muslim Brotherhood, will count for more.

What does this mean? It means the United States will not be able to insist on what it wants or shape events as much as it would like. It is an open question whether the United States can stop Iran’s nuclear progress, cobble together a viable and independent Iraq, broker peace between Israel and Palestinians, or promote reform and guarantee stability in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. U.S. ability to do such things in the past was never total, but whatever it was then, it is less now. This is not an argument for standing aloof—to the contrary, neglect is almost always counter-productive, and how policy is designed and implemented will make a difference. But it is my judgment that American foreign policy and those making it will have to contend with a less benign environment, including more constraints and greater opposition, factors that are likely to raise costs and lower results.

[33]Richard N. Haass is president of the Council on Foreign Relations.

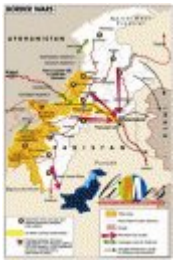
1. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20061101faessay85601/richard-n-haass/the-new-middle-east.html>
2. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20080501faessay87304/richard-n-haass/the-age-of-nonpolarity.html?mode=print>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/039306235X>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/is\\_it\\_over\\_for\\_america\\_in\\_the\\_middle\\_east/#haass](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/is_it_over_for_america_in_the_middle_east/#haass)
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17. <http://explore.georgetown.edu/people/lieberr/?PageTemplateID=156>
18. <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/2008%20-%20Summer/full-Lieber.html>
19. <http://explore.georgetown.edu/people/lieberr/?PageTemplateID=156>
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31. <http://www.cfr.org/bios/3350/>
32. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20061101faessay85601/richard-n-haass/the-new-middle-east.html>
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## Border wars: Pakistan and Afghanistan (2008-07-07 01:56)

From MESH Admin



[1]

The online journal [2]Heartland: Eurasian Review of Geopolitics devotes its [3]latest issue to "The Pakistani Boomerang," and provides this map of the situation on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, as prepared by [4]Limes, an Italian review of geopolitics. The map shows the tribal areas, sites of clashes between Pakistani forces and jihadists, and cross-border infiltration routes of the Taliban and other jihadists. Click on the thumbnail to view the map.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/07/borderwars.gif>
2. <http://www.heartland.it/>
3. [http://www.heartland.it/\\_lib/\\_docs/2008\\_01\\_the\\_pakistani\\_boomerang.pdf](http://www.heartland.it/_lib/_docs/2008_01_the_pakistani_boomerang.pdf)
4. <http://temi.repubblica.it/limes>

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## Yemen's hidden war (2008-07-08 11:59)

From MESH Admin



[1] Fighting between government forces and Shiite rebels in the mountainous governorate of Sa'ada in the far north of Yemen has displaced approximately 130,000 people since 2004. The Washington Post ran an [2]article a month ago, explaining the context of the fighting. This new situation map, prepared by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and accurate as of July 3, 2008, shows the affected districts, the concentrations of displaced persons, and the sites of fighting and blocked roads. Click on the thumbnail to view the map (pdf).

1. [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps\\_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/D59AD8EF9C9AAEBEC12574800034A9B1/\\$File/ocha\\_CE\\_yem080703.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/D59AD8EF9C9AAEBEC12574800034A9B1/$File/ocha_CE_yem080703.pdf)
2. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/06/06/AR2008060603977.html>

## West Bank barrier projections (2008-07-10 10:15)

From MESH Admin



[1] This map, by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, provides an update on the status of Israel's West Bank barrier, showing segments completed, under construction, and planned, as of July 2008. The barrier's total length is now projected to be 723 kilometers, more than twice the length of the 1949 Armistice Line (Green Line) between the West Bank and Israel. The total area located between the barrier and the Green Line is 9.8 percent of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem and the pre-1967 No Man's Land enclave).

The map projects the numbers and identifies locations of four Palestinian populations whose access to the rest of the West Bank may be impeded by the barrier. Two of these populations will be on the opposite side of the barrier from the West Bank:

- Approximately 35,000 Palestinians with West Bank identity cards will be located between the barrier and the Green Line.
- The majority of the 250,000 Palestinians with East Jerusalem identity cards will reside between the barrier and the Green Line.

The other two populations will have fewer or less direct means of access to the West Bank than in the past:

- Approximately 26,000 Palestinians in two enclaves will be surrounded entirely by the barrier, and their access to the rest of the West Bank will be by tunnel or road connection.
- Approximately 125,000 Palestinians will be surrounded by the barrier on three sides.

To view the map, click on the thumbnail (pdf). (And go [2]here for two previous West Bank maps.)

1. [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps\\_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/A2F1CA97F72A0BDE85257480006765FA/\\$File/ocha\\_SEC\\_pse080708.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/A2F1CA97F72A0BDE85257480006765FA/$File/ocha_SEC_pse080708.pdf)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/west\\_bank\\_in\\_maps/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/03/west_bank_in_maps/)

## Media mapping of Iran's missile range (2008-07-11 11:13)

From MESH Admin

This week, Iranian television showed missile test launches that included a new version of the Shahab-3 missile, which Tehran claims can travel 2,000 kilometers, or 1,250 miles. Various media outlets accompanied this news with maps showing the range of the Shahab-3. An interesting variation in these maps involves just how much of Europe (Russia excluded) is included within that range, and how much emphasis is given to Israel.

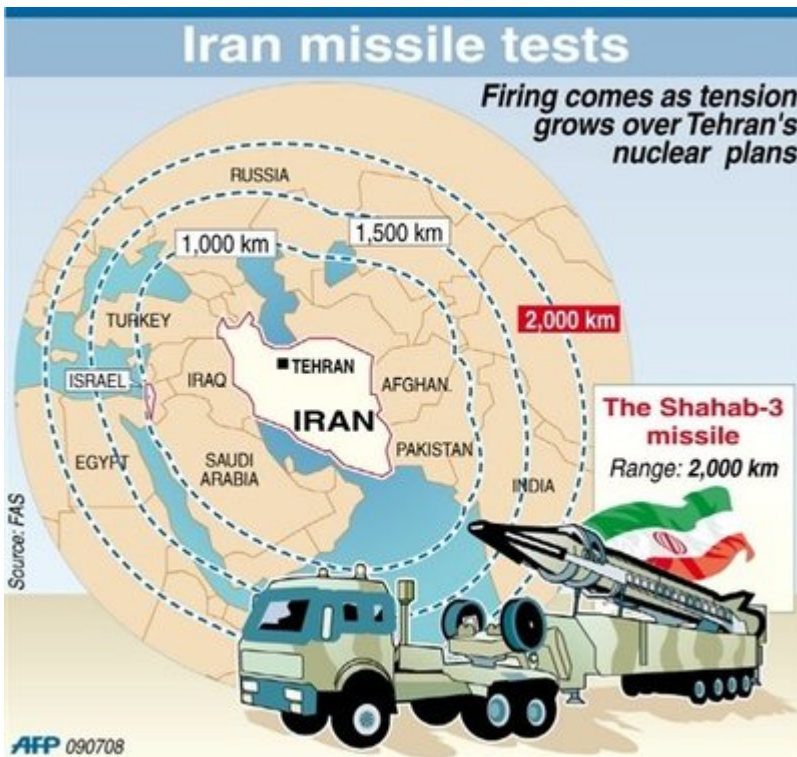
- This map, from the BBC, shows Iran's missile range covering the eastern edge of Europe, and specifically names Greece and Romania as falling within that range. The context of this map is a story on U.S. efforts to establish a missile defense umbrella over Europe, and so it specifically names potential U.S. partners Poland and the Czech Republic. It also shows one city, Moscow, capital of Russia, which opposes the U.S. plan. Israel is shown but not emphasized. The map implies the U.S. view that Iran's capabilities are a European problem, and perhaps should be a Russian one too.



- This map, from the New York Times, shows the most extensive coverage of Europe, specifically naming Greece and Ukraine and showing their entire territory within range. Israel is not singled out.



- This map, from Agence France-Presse, includes somewhat less of Europe in Iran’s range, and does not name any European country. Israel is emphasized.



- This Los Angeles Times map does not show any part of Europe within missile range of Iran, not even the small part of Turkey in Europe. The map highlights Israel in bold. The message: It’s Israel vs. Iran.



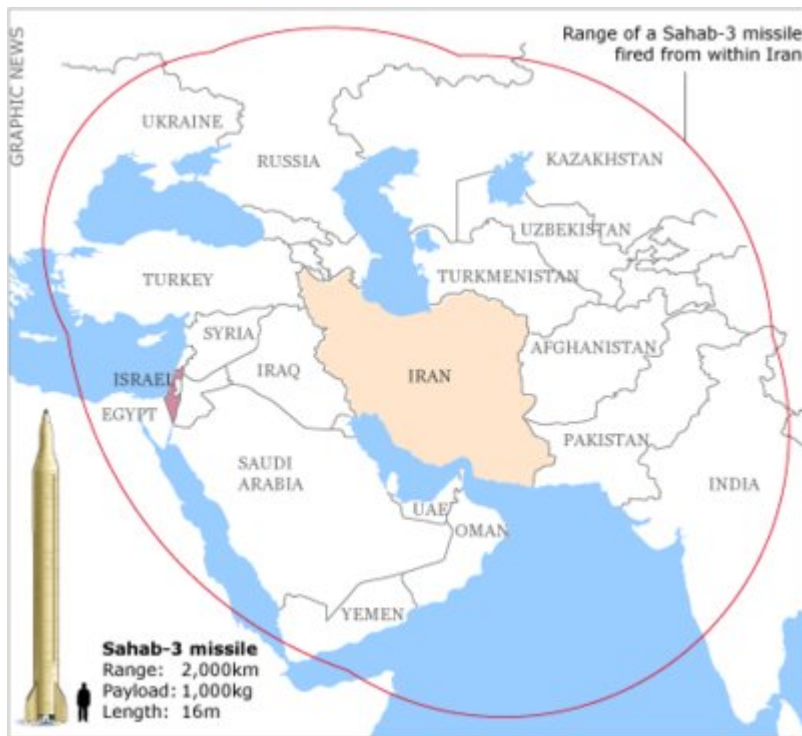
### Iranian missile test

Among the nine Iranian missiles test-fired was a new version of the Shahab-3 that Iran claims has a range of 1,250 miles and the ability to carry a 1-ton conventional warhead.



Sources: ESRI, U.S. Department of Defense; Graphics reporting by TOM REINKEN MARK HAFER Los Angeles Times

- This London Guardian map includes a sliver of Europe, and Ukraine is named, but the emphasis is clearly on Israel.



## Making Mediterranean waves (2008-07-13 01:48)

From MESH Admin



Today (Sunday) is the inaugural conference in Paris of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). French President Nicolas Sarkozy, father of the idea, originally proposed a body independent of the EU, linking together all the states bordering the Mediterranean sea. He also proposed that the new Union take a lead in Arab-Israeli peacemaking, since it would include both Israel and Arab states.

But opposition within the EU to a separate entity has led to the inclusion of the full EU membership in the UfM, as well as its incorporation within the existing Barcelona Process, the EU's own decade-old Euro-Med initiative. Arab opposition to normalization with Israel has also reduced the Union's initial agenda to promotion of development projects. Nevertheless, the conference will be attended by a wide range of Middle Eastern prime ministers and presidents, including Ehud Olmert and Bashar Asad. This [1]paper, by the Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission (EuroMeSCo) provides some context.

The French newspaper Le Figaro, which has an [2]online dossier of articles about the UfM, has prepared an interactive map (in French) showing the current likely composition of the UfM, the scope of Sarkozy's original plan, likely co-presidents, possible sites of the secretariat, development projects, and budget. (If the map doesn't appear right below, [3]click here.)

[kml \_flashembed movie="http://www.lefigaro.fr/assets/flash/europe-UPM.swf" width="500" height="600" wmode="transparent" /]

1. <http://www.euromesco.net/images/paper68eng.pdf>
2. <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/union-pour-la-mediterranee.php>
3. <http://www.lefigaro.fr/assets/flash/europe-UPM.swf>

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## U.S. support for the Lebanese army (2008-07-14 02:45)

From [1]David Schenker



A lot of people have asked me lately about U.S. funding of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). The current interest in U.S. assistance to the LAF comes as little surprise: Congress is currently reviewing the FY09 budget, which is said to include a significant aid package for



the LAF.

From 2005 to 2008, the U.S. Government provided over \$1 billion to Lebanon, including nearly \$380 million in assistance to the LAF. During this time, Washington's generosity toward the LAF made Lebanon the second-largest recipient of U.S. foreign military assistance per capita, after Israel.

Several recent developments have sparked the debate about this previously uncontroversial U.S. assistance provided to the military of the only pro-West, democratically elected Arab government. First, as a result of Hezbollah's May 2008 blitz on Beirut, the Shiite militia cum terrorist organization has rejoined the Lebanese government, with important *de jure* powers (i.e., the blocking third in the parliament). Questions are also being raised about the utility of funding the LAF, particularly following the organization's actions—or inactions—this past May. Essentially, the LAF was missing in action. At a minimum, the army did not protect national institutions; some accuse the LAF of colluding with Hezbollah in the raid.

At the same time, statements made by March 14th ruling coalition leaders in July regarding Samir Kuntar have eroded some of their government's appeal. In particular, in the run-up to the impending prisoner exchange between Hezbollah and Israel, several top leaders of March 14th have indicated that they will join Hezbollah at the hero's welcome for Kuntar—the terrorist best known for crushing the skull of a four-year-old Israeli girl in 1979. In the process, March 14th has seemingly blessed Hezbollah's continued possession of weapons.

The debate regarding U.S. support for the LAF has been fueled by a contentious and factually inaccurate [2]op-ed in the *New York Times* written by Nicholas Noe in mid-June. In his article, "A Fair Fight for the Lebanese Army," Noe claimed that Israel was preventing the LAF from acquiring the type of armaments—advanced anti-tank weapons, armed attack helos, and intelligence gathering equipment—it requires.

Because the Bush Administration caved to Israeli demands, Noe claims, "the army was left without the equipment that would have enabled it to be a more forceful mediator in the street battles involving Hezbollah and its rivals" in May. Noe likewise claims,

this lack of equipment also contributed to the military's inability last summer to quickly roust a group of [Fatah al-Islam] Islamist militants from a Palestinian refugee camp in northern Lebanon.

Finally, Noe argues that if the LAF receives this kind of advanced equipment in future, it will help Lebanon to solve the problem of Hezbollah's weapons:

Give the Lebanese an army able to meet the perceived threats emanating from Israel (primarily involving water, territory and a possible future expulsion of Palestinians to Lebanon), and then, Hezbollah has said, its independent weaponry can be tackled.

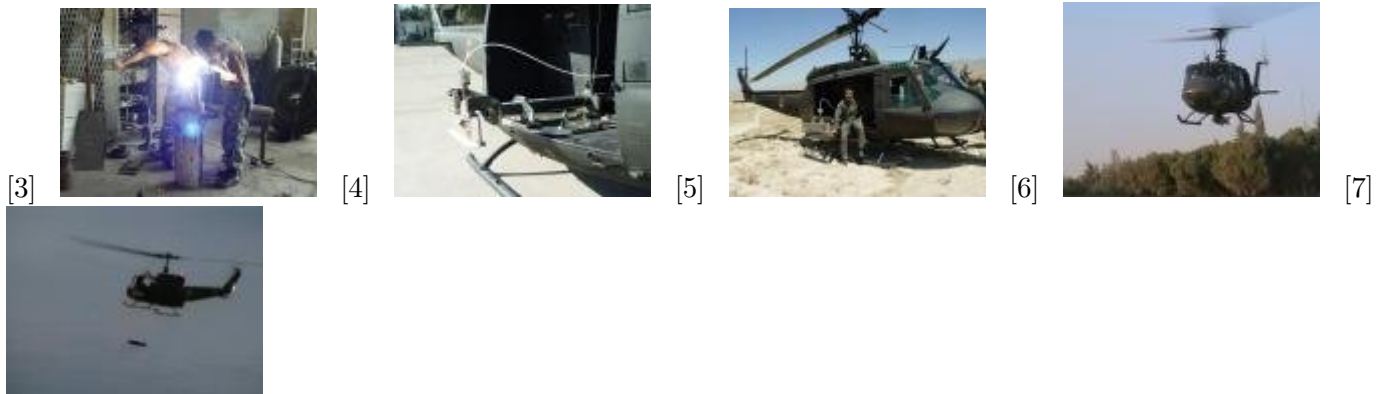
No doubt, the *Times* received a flood of critical letters about Noe's article. Not surprisingly, it did not run any. Nevertheless, I still think it's worth debunking some of the more egregious inaccuracies and bad thinking in Noe's piece.

Prima facie, Noe's article neglects to even mention the deep divisions in the LAF that are the primary constraint on the long-term prospects for making the military an effective national institution. Yet despite these limitations, Washington has fully backed the LAF. Indeed, contrary to Noe's assertion, the United

States expedited the shipment of over 40 C-130 transport planes brimming with military materiel to Beirut immediately after the outbreak of fighting in Nahr el Bared. This was no mean feat. It required a lot of creative thinking—the United States used an ACSA mechanism to dispatch the weapons and ammo quickly—and a real effort to cut through standard timelines and procedures.

The materiel provided by the United States was what was required for the operation and what could be absorbed by the LAF. Shipments at the time included over 10 million rounds of all types of ammunition, as well as—according to the State Department—“the same front-line weapons that the U.S. military troops are currently using, including assault rifles, automatic grenade launchers, advanced sniper weapons systems, anti-tank weapons, and the most modern urban warfare bunker weapons.” This and subsequent assistance has not been subject to Israeli veto, but rather is based on a careful assessment of LAF operational requirements carried out by the United States and France.

Moreover, Noe falsely claims that the United States blocked the transfer of rockets to be employed by UAE-donated Gazelle attack helicopters, and that, “As a result, soldiers were forced to drop shells from the helicopters by hand, destroying much of [Nahr el Bared].” What actually happened was that the LAF ingeniously retrofitted their U.S.-made Bell UH-1 “Huey” helicopters—with Washington’s blessing—with hydraulic systems to drop their own retooled bombs targeting Fatah al-Islam terrorists. Here is how it was done (click on thumbnails for images):



So Noe gets it wrong on the helos and the arms transfers. His assessment that, once the LAF is “able to meet the perceived threats emanating from Israel,” Hezbollah’s weapons “can be tackled,” also strains credulity. Hezbollah has an ever-expanding list of prerequisites for disarmament, ranging from the liberation of Jerusalem to the end of Lebanese government corruption. Noe’s supposition that Hezbollah’s weapons will be on the table when the LAF is better armed is more wishful thinking than reality.

No doubt, Israel has some concerns about the LAF. Based on the LAF’s apparent collusion with Hezbollah in the firing of the Chinese-made Iranian-provided C-802 land-to-sea missile—which hit and almost sank an Israeli SAAR 5-class warship during the summer 2006 war—these concerns are well founded. But the fear that the LAF would somehow transfer U.S.-made weapons to the Shiite militia is likely not at the top of the Israelis’ list. First, the LAF has a very good record in this regard; and second, Hezbollah has received an arsenal from Moscow, Syria, and Iran that is so highly advanced, that it need not covet LAF stocks.

In the coming weeks, Washington may choose to modify its aid package to the LAF. If this occurs, it will be because of Hezbollah’s recent political and military gains, not Israeli complaints. By blaming Israel for a weak LAF, Noe is essentially repeating Hezbollah’s justification for retaining its army and arsenal.

It is in Washington’s long-term interest to see the LAF develop into a strong national institution. But

it's important to understand that the strength of this institution does not primarily rely on its capabilities, but rather on its will to take on difficult missions on orders from the democratically-elected government of Lebanon. No amount of U.S. military assistance will change this current dynamic.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david\\_schenker/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david_schenker/)
2. [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/18/opinion/18noe.html?\\_r=1&ref=opinion&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/18/opinion/18noe.html?_r=1&ref=opinion&oref=slogin)
3. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/07/laf1.jpg>
4. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/07/laf2.jpg>
5. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/07/laf3.jpg>
6. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/07/laf4.jpg>
7. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/07/laf5.jpg>

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Timur Goksel (2008-07-20 07:06:46)

What is missing in the debate on the Lebanese Army is a reality check. With all its flaws—including serious deficiencies in training, lack of equipment and supplies, and an over-bloated and underemployed senior officer corps—that army is still the only national institution with nationwide acceptability and credibility. When an army spends more than 90 percent of its budget for personnel expenses, it doesn't have much left for anything else. The battles against Fatah al-Islam have exposed these weaknesses, and much has been done since to provide the army with its basic material needs, with the assistance provided by the United States and other friendly countries. But this still doesn't mean it will ever be an army that David Schenker [1]wants taking on his bad guys in internal strife, or a fully combat-ready force capable of stopping the Israeli army that Nicholas Noe [2]hopes for, so that Hizbullah will agree to disarm. The army is improving. With appropriate material infusion, along with strong questioning by friends, and with the essential infantry training [3]advocated by Andrew Exum, it will continue to play the essential role of the national unity pillar. But if we keep on insisting that it should take on a full internal security role, that army will be quickly politicized and face the real risk of disintegration. Today it is the army that is called out to intervene even with minor incidents, while a 25,000-strong Internal Security Force watches. What is first needed are the baby steps to improve the ISF performance and public credibility. This could start by teaching its personnel that merrily cruising around with their brand new U.S.-provided vehicles doesn't mean you let go with your sirens to express your appreciation of the impeccably groomed women of Beirut or to say hello to colleagues; and that Beirut streets belong to the state and not to private security companies, building concierges and shopkeepers. People crave a serious public security service. But there is hope. I think U.S. officials have at last recognized the dangers of pushing the army to handle internal security in such a volatile political environment. The army's needs are now being realistically assessed while a crash program appears to be in progress to upgrade the ISF. Now, if only that program also addresses what needs to be done to make *that* force nationally credible... [4]*Timur Goksel is former senior advisor of UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon). He is a security consultant and teaches courses on the UN and conflict management in the Middle East at the American University of Beirut.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/us\\_support\\_for\\_lebanese\\_army/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/us_support_for_lebanese_army/)
2. [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/18/opinion/18noe.html?\\_r=1&ref=opinion&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/18/opinion/18noe.html?_r=1&ref=opinion&oref=slogin)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/us\\_support\\_for\\_lebanese\\_army/#comment-792](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/us_support_for_lebanese_army/#comment-792)
4. [http://wwwlb.aub.edu.lb/~webpspa/Faculty\\_Profile/Short\\_Biography/t\\_goksel\\_bio.html](http://wwwlb.aub.edu.lb/~webpspa/Faculty_Profile/Short_Biography/t_goksel_bio.html)

LAF senior officer (2008-07-20 05:33:23)

I am a senior officer in the Lebanese Armed Forces, and I wish to remain anonymous. The LAF had been under Syrian domination from 1990 until 2005. From that date until today it had undergone only *one* attempt at reorganization, which was a total failure. I refer to reorganization of the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th mechanized infantry brigades, after personnel reductions due to the deactivation of conscription. Instead of merging brigades to make them larger, the planners proceeded to create what they called "light brigades," which are not equipped with tank and artillery battalions, and which have been remarkable failures. If, during the Nahr el Bared battle, one of these light brigades had been on the front line with Fatah al-Islam, the battle would have spread from the Shekka tunnel (20 kilometers to the south) up to the Arida border post with Syria, It was the the old and established 5th,

organized on the U.S. model in 1983 (with an M48A5 tank battalion and an M198-equipped artillery battalion) that confined fighting to the proximate vicinity of the "new camp." Tanks and artillery are what stopped Fatah al-Islam. On the other hand, we know that due to the reluctance of Gen. Michel Sleiman to engage Fatah al-Islam, and due to poor organization at the operational level of the Army, we gave Fatah al-Islam *ten whole days* before changing from a containment tactic to an aggressive counterattack. This counterattack too, instead of being conducted according to basic war criteria—massing necessary troops, firepower concentration and unity of command—was conducted incrementally, because of the non-existence of two major organisms in the Operations Staff: strategic assessment and tactical assessment. No commander was appointed as head of these operations until very late during the battle. The result: many mistakes, lost time, and the loss of fifty soldiers to friendly fire. The average Lebanese soldier is, in my humble opinion, a model of courage and self-sacrifice, and this was the main contributor to the Army's success in that battle. That soldier deserves to be better commanded. No army today can plan for its future without taking into consideration the organization of friendly armies, as well as enemy ones, and the main sources of threats it will likely have to face, as the previous posts indicate. It makes no sense that the LAF has two monstrous tank regiments, with 12 tank companies each, but only *one* mechanized infantry with three platoons, and with an inadequate staff for conducting operations. If the LAF is not *first* helped to reorganize its Operational Headquarters system, it will not benefit from any help, whatever its nature. Until then, the LAF's body will be unable to digest any "vitamin"—equipment, training, weapons—or profit from them optimally. *The identity of the author of this comment is known to MESH.*

Tony Badran (2008-07-21 16:49:29)

I'm glad David Schenker [1] took on this issue, and dissected the factually problematic op-ed by Nicholas Noe. David pretty much hit everything on the head, including the unsubstantiated claims that the United States interfered with the UAE and Russia to prevent arms transfers to Lebanon. I will only offer some complementary thoughts here, especially now that I've read the [2] responses by Msrs. Exum and Goksel, as well as the very helpful comment by the anonymous LAF officer, that I think lay at the heart of the op-ed's weakness. David talks about the sectarian fragility of the LAF and the political constraints on its actions. All of this, as well as the political burden of it being the "only unified national institution," have rendered the actual functions of the Army quite diverse, even inchoate, while simultaneously constricting what it can do and placing stress on force coherence. Here one can ask what, for example, does Noe's "forceful mediator" actually mean? I have my own ideas on that, especially since this term resembles the role that Hasan Nasrallah wishes to proscribe for the Army, as evident from both his recent speeches as well as his militia's recent actions. Aside from that, there are the issues of procurement and doctrine, which were indirectly raised in the other comments. First, with regards to procurement, as the LAF officer notes, what is the Lebanese Army actually capable of digesting and integrating, before we even talk about "advanced weaponry"? (To conflate that with the issue of Hezbollah's disarmament is just silly, especially given Hezbollah's [3] recent [4] utterances—revealing what the less credulous among us somehow knew was the case—that its weapons are not related to the Shebaa Farms, are not a consequence of occupation, but rather are "a doctrine, a method, a way of life, a vision, a Jihad and a [religious] legal responsibility" and a proscription for Hezbollah's vision of Lebanese society.) Second, what is the Army's doctrine, and what would be a realistic one for it? As the comment by the LAF officer demonstrates, it would be most fruitful for the United States to train solid officers and build a relationship and trust with the officer corps, helping them identify proper needs and formulate a realistic and effective national security strategy. Already the United States has begun certain programs, such as [5] this one. It has also [6] begun training programs for the Internal Security Forces. Building their capabilities will allow them to define their role and tasks as well as those of the LAF, to Lebanon's benefit. [7] *Tony Badran is research fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/us\\_support\\_for\\_lebanese\\_army/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/us_support_for_lebanese_army/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/us\\_support\\_for\\_lebanese\\_army/#comment-792](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/us_support_for_lebanese_army/#comment-792)
3. <http://www.nowlebanon.com/Arabic/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=48705>
4. <http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=48255>
5. <http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=50625>
6. <http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=49421>
7. [http://www.defenddemocracy.org/biographies/biographies\\_show.htm?doc\\_id=360842](http://www.defenddemocracy.org/biographies/biographies_show.htm?doc_id=360842)

Andrew Exum (2008-07-15 06:02:31)

I respect my former colleague David Schenker and Nicholas Noe both, but I tend to side with David's [1]criticisms of the *New York Times* op-ed and would only add an additional criticism—one I raised with Nicholas himself not long after his op-ed was published. I was confused by Nicholas's argument in favor of the United States providing more expensive, 'prestige' weapons systems to the LAF—as if what the LAF needs to be successful on the battlefield is the latest tank or aircraft. The U.S. defense industry would no doubt love the Lebanese government to invest in such programs, but the fighting which took place in and around Nahr el Bared last summer illustrated the LAF's need for much more 'low-tech' training and equipment. The LAF badly needs basic light infantry equipment and a long-term advisory program to help develop the tactical skills of the LAF's infantry units. The United States, as David points out, has been very helpful with the former, and I would like to see us more active with the latter. I, like David, am all in favor of a more robust military partnership with the LAF. But we need to think hard about the likely missions the LAF will be called upon to execute in the near future. To my mind, threats emerging from within Lebanon—along the lines of groups like Fatah al-Islam—represent a more realistic adversary than the Israel Defense Forces. (The LAF, remember, largely avoided being drawn into the fighting between Hezbollah and the IDF in 2006.) Besides, I do not believe Israel really fears a stronger Lebanese army—even one with advanced weapons systems. Conventional threats and armies, after all, are something Israel has grown quite comfortable in dealing with. Unconventional groups like Hezbollah are something else entirely, and I would remind Nicholas that at its heart, Hezbollah's military wing is little more than a very good light infantry unit—not some advanced Western army fighting with the latest combined arms technology. I applaud much of the advocacy Nicholas has performed for Lebanon—and the excellent summer exchange program he has developed for scholars interested in working on the country. All the same, I find his analysis on defense issues weak. But I would love to read his response to our criticism. [2]*Andrew Exum is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/us\\_support\\_for\\_lebanese\\_army/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/us_support_for_lebanese_army/)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew\\_exum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew_exum/)

## No tango in Paris (2008-07-16 11:57)

From [1]David Schenker

This is a great video. The scene: the end of the Bastille Day festivities following the Mediterranean Union meeting in France last weekend. Syrian President Bashar Asad and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert stand just meters away. It's an awkward moment. (Click [2]here if you do not see the embedded clip.)

[kml \_flashembed movie="http://www.youtube.com/v/tY5Z4OKq28o" width="425" height="350" wmode="transparent" /]

Olmert moves toward Asad, but is temporarily thwarted when he is forced to shake hands with dignitaries. Asad senses the impending contact and moves away. But Olmert persists in the quest for the historic handshake. He stops to say hello to Egyptian President Mubarak.

Meanwhile, Asad remains just out of reach, chatting with UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and Qatari Emir Hamid bin Khalifa bin Thani. Moon breaks himself away from Asad to greet Olmert, perhaps relaying to the Israeli Prime Minister that Asad does not seek contact. Asad is shepherded past Olmert by the Emir. He stands alone, but out of the danger zone.

The scene really seems to capture the dynamic of the Turkish-sponsored Israeli-Syrian negotiations.

Israel pursues, Syria plays hard to get. From the video clip, one might reasonably infer that Asad isn't particularly interested in the peace endeavor. Or maybe Asad just believes that direct engagement now would be premature—some kind of reward for Israel.

We don't know what Asad was thinking when he was ignoring Olmert. But we do know what he was saying during the meeting about the kind of deal he envisions with Israel. According to the [3]summary of Asad's interview with Al Jazeera that appeared on the Syrian Government Champress (thanks to Tony Badran of FDD for the link), Asad apparently does not envision "normalization"—'alaqat tatbi'iyah, the formulation in the Arab Initiative—but rather, 'alaqat 'adiyah, or "routine" relations with Israel.

Although this likely won't be a deal-breaker, this is already setting the bar pretty low. In any event, it certainly won't generate confidence that Damascus will meet the Israeli quid pro quo of distancing itself from Tehran. But given the effort in Paris that Olmert was making to just touch Asad, one wonders whether this, too, might be negotiable.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david\\_schenker/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david_schenker/)
2. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tY5Z40Kq28o>
3. [http://champress.net/?page=show\\_det&select\\_page=1&id=28507](http://champress.net/?page=show_det&select_page=1&id=28507)

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Itamar Rabinovich (2008-07-22 15:17:18)

Asad's evasiveness is hardly surprising. For the Syrians, since the beginning of the Madrid process every aspect of normal interaction would only be conceded at a price. Handshakes, sharing a cup of coffee or a joint photo had to be extracted. This had a very negative effect on Israeli public opinion. It was difficult for Ehud Barak to mobilize Israeli opinion to support withdrawal from the Golan when Faruq al-Shara refused to shake his hand in public. The efforts invested by us Israeli negotiators and the U.S. peace team in persuading Hafez al-Asad that without public diplomacy there would not be a deal, failed. His son persists in this line and this has been exacerbated by two other facts: • Both he and Olmert, when they began this give and take (remember, this is not even a negotiation, these are proximity talks through Turkey), were interested in the process and not necessarily in the substance; both saw tactical advantages accruing to them. • Olmert is on his way out and Asad does not even try to conceal the change in attitude. At this point, Asad is the clear beneficiary. Olmert facilitated his rehabilitation and Asad gave him nothing. [1]Itamar Rabinovich was Israel's chief negotiator with Syria. He is visiting professor of public policy at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

1. [http://ksgfaculty.harvard.edu/Itamar\\_Rabinovich](http://ksgfaculty.harvard.edu/Itamar_Rabinovich)

## Over for America? Haass replies (2008-07-17 03:09)

For the Fourth of July, MESH prompted a [1]discussion on whether the American era in the Middle East had ended, taking as its point of departure this quote from Richard Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations:



The American era in the Middle East... has ended.... It is one of history's ironies that the first war in Iraq, a war of necessity, marked the beginning of the American era in the Middle East and the second Iraq war, a war of choice, has precipitated its end.... The United States will continue to enjoy more influence in the region than any other outside power, but its influence will be reduced from what it once was.

Nearly all of the participants in that discussion took issue with the quote. At the request of MESH, Richard Haass has provided a reply.

From [2]Richard N. Haass

Is it over for America in the Middle East? Of course not. And no one to my knowledge is arguing that it is. I certainly am not; as [3]I wrote in the November/December 2006 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, "The United States will continue to exert more influence in the region than any other outside power...."

But this is not the end of the discussion. U.S. influence will decline from what it has been. We are at the end of one historical era (unipolarity) and the outset of another (nonpolarity). This is true generally and for the Middle East.

So what is the problem? Few of those commenting here seem to understand the distinction between an end to an era and an end to influence. What makes an era is that the character of what is being discussed (in this case, a part of the world) is both clear and enduring. There can be exceptions, but they are just that: exceptions to a prevailing pattern.

The previous era in the Middle East was dominated to an uncharacteristic degree by the United States. It was the result of the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union. But it was also the consequence of concerted American effort, be it to reverse Saddam Hussein's conquest of Kuwait or to promote peace between Israel and its neighbors.

The era came to an end both for structural reasons—globalization, the shifting balance between energy supply and demand, the weakening of some national entities and the strengthening of other national and non-state actors alike—and for reasons related more to U.S. policy, in particular the Iraq war and the lack of priority accorded the "peace process."

The new era will be one in which U.S. power and influence will be considerable but on balance less dominant. Other actors, including Iran, a divided but assertive Iraqi government, Hezbollah, Hamas, national oil companies and the governments behind them, sovereign wealth funds, terrorist organizations, China, Russia, the EU, political factions within Israel, religious authorities, and the Muslim Brotherhood, will count for more.

What does this mean? It means the United States will not be able to insist on what it wants or shape events as much as it would like. It is an open question whether the United States can stop Iran's nuclear

progress, cobble together a viable and independent Iraq, broker peace between Israel and Palestinians, or promote reform and guarantee stability in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. U.S. ability to do such things in the past was never total, but whatever it was then, it is less now. This is not an argument for standing aloof—to the contrary, neglect is almost always counter-productive, and how policy is designed and implemented will make a difference. But it is my judgment that American foreign policy and those making it will have to contend with a less benign environment, including more constraints and greater opposition, factors that are likely to raise costs and lower results.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/is\\_it\\_over\\_for\\_america\\_in\\_the\\_middle\\_east/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/is_it_over_for_america_in_the_middle_east/)
2. <http://www.cfr.org/bios/3350/>
3. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20061101faessay85601/richard-n-haass/the-new-middle-east.html>

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### Behind Druze kisses for Quntar (2008-07-19 02:21)

From [1]Michael Young

This report of the return of Samir Quntar to his home village of Abay on Thursday is how you would expect a news story like this one to play in a foreign media outlet. (If you do not see an embedded clip, click [2]here.)

[kml \_flashembed movie="http://youtube.com/v/ETpofNCoeQc" width="425" height="350" wmode="transparent" /]

No imagination. No real sense of what's going on. Just an examination of the superficial paradoxes of the scene, particularly Druze leader Walid Jumblatt's welcoming of Quntar as a resistance fighter when only two months ago Jumblatt's followers were fighting Hezbollah. Oh Lebanon! Land of contradiction, of fickleness!

What is really going on is far more interesting. Roughly speaking, the Druze have a dual political leadership structure in their community, with Jumblatt heading one faction and Talal Arslan heading the other, in the latest reflection of the traditional Jumblatti-Yazbaki dichotomy. Arslan's power happens to be vastly more limited than Jumblatt's, even as Jumblatt has a vested interest in puffing Arslan up to protect the dual structure of power tilted to his own advantage, to maintain Druze unity, and to prevent the emergence of Druze upstarts.

Even before Quntar, a Druze, was released from prison in Israel, both Jumblatt and Arslan realized he might be co-opted by Hezbollah and used against them. Indeed, the first thing the party did to the released prisoners was dress them up in military fatigues and send them out on a round of welcoming ceremonies. That's why Quntar arrives in Abay in a Hezbollah uniform. Jumblatt's and Arslan's rally for Quntar was motivated by the need to avoid Druze ill feeling by ignoring their coreligionist; but more importantly by a desire to defend their leadership over the Druze by containing Quntar, which they did by embracing him to better defuse him. Although Quntar presents no threat to their power base, he could emerge as a small headache. For example, he could conceivably be brought into parliament in next year's elections in the Baabda constituency, where Hezbollah and the Aounists, if they decide to bother Jumblatt, have considerable electoral sway.



What is interesting in this context is that the Syrian intelligence services have set up a similar such figure in the Druze community. His name is Wiam Wahhab, and while his Druze support is negligible, he has retained public attention because he is one of Damascus' megaphones in Lebanon. Wahhab's rise had threatened Arslan much more than it did Jumblatt, though Arslan and Wahhab are both close to Syria. In a new reversal, Quntar's release threatens Wahhab, while Arslan, thanks to his collaboration with Jumblatt, has re-entered the Druze political scene in relative force after a period of relative quiet. This was made possible because last May the Jumblatts and the Arslanists united in fighting Hezbollah.

A sign of Quntar's limitations among the Druze was not recorded in this video. When the Hezbollah representative, Muhammad Fnaysh, made a speech, he was booed on several occasions; and when Quntar praised Syria in his statements, he was booed as well. The Abay gathering had little to do with Samir Quntar. It was about the traditional Druze leadership affirming itself against Hezbollah, against an interloper, by neutralizing what Jumblatt and Arslan fear may be a Hezbollah creation in their midst.

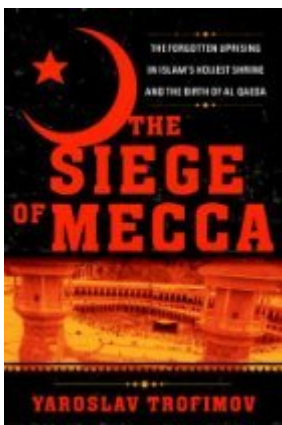
1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_young/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_young/)
2. <http://youtube.com/v/ETpofNCoeQc>

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## Summer reading 2008 (2008-07-21 06:10)

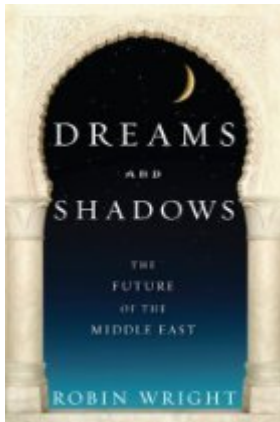


With August fast approaching, MESH has asked its members to recommend a book for summer reading. (For more information on a book, or to place an order with Amazon through the MESH bookstore, click on the book title or cover.)

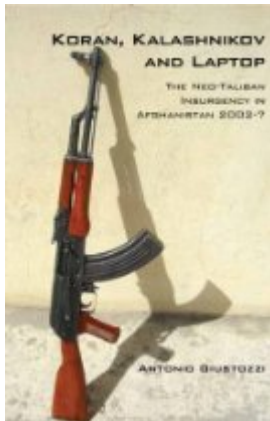


[1] [2]Daniel Byman :: Yaroslav Trofimov's [3]The Siege of Mecca: The Forgotten Uprising in Islam's Holiest Shrine and the Birth of al-Qaeda (Doubleday, 2007), is a fast-paced, informative, and tight book about how Saudi zealots took over the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979. Trofimov appears to have excellent access to some sources that others have not tapped, and he sheds light on an event that has long been known but not well understood in the West. We learn a tremendous amount not only about the bloody combat in the holy shrine itself, but also about Saudi ineptitude and the motivations of the zealots. The only annoying thing about the book is that the author repeatedly stretches to make links to Al Qaeda that are at best weak and at times rather fanciful. My guess is an editor pushed

him to have a "9/11 link" even though the rest of the text is gripping and illuminating without tying it to Bin Ladin and Al Qaeda.

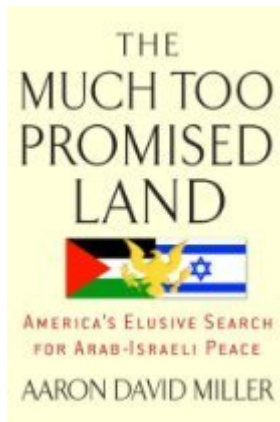


[4] [5]J. Scott Carpenter :: Summer reading should be stimulating, informative, and, most crucially, fun. Robin Wright's new book, [6]Dreams and Shadows: The Future of the Middle East, while flawed, fits the bill. Wright whisks the reader from Morocco to Iran introducing us to the men and women engaged in the contest for the soul of the region, the dreams and shadows of her title. For a region associated with autocrats and suicide bombers, the reformers she introduces are like a breath of mountain air. Their dreams are our own. But like haze on a hot summer day, those dreams are threatened by men of dark vision such as Iran's Ahmadinejad, Hamas' Mishal and Hezbollah's Nasrallah, all of whom Wright lets speak for themselves. She's an optimist in the end, but be fair-warned, she is also partisan and ambiguous about U.S. power to shape the region (the chapter on Iraq is best avoided). Still, there's more right than wrong here. (Penguin, 2008.)

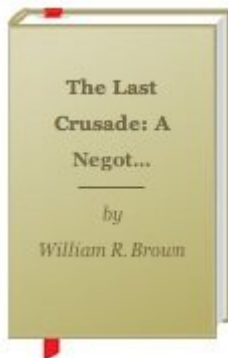


[7] [8]Mark T. Clark :: Antonio Giustozzi's [9]Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan (Columbia University Press, 2007) traces the emergence of the neo-Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan after the defeat of the Taliban in late 2001. He notes how the Taliban have become more flexible in interpreting Sharia, using innovative guerrilla and terrorist strategies as well as technology in their quest for power. He shows that neo-Taliban successes have stemmed from three things. First, the Taliban have exploited the political weaknesses of Afghanistan's new government, especially between central and local arms. Second, they have adopted new strategies and tactics in fighting the Afghan army, its militias and its "foreign" supporters. And third, the insurgents have confronted an inconsistent and ineffective counter-insurgency strategy against them. When Giustozzi pieces together the recent history, he is at his strongest; when he interprets elements of strategy, he is at his weakest. The

work is worth reading, if only to understand some of the recent "successes" the insurgency has scored and anticipate some counters we may soon employ.



[10] [11]Steven A. Cook :: When I saw Aaron David Miller at the Council on Foreign Relations shortly after his book was published, he told me that it would make me “laugh and cry.” The author knows his work, as I found myself cackling in between moments of great despair while making my way through Miller’s terrific account of his time working the Arab-Israeli account. I can pile the number of Arab-Israeli conflict books ceiling-high in my office, but what makes [12]The Much Too Promised Land different is its sobering and thus refreshing examination of American policy. Miller, it seems, has lost patience with Arabs, Israelis, and the follies of American policymakers who have been led down the garden path of the peace process by visions of the Nobel prize. I hope the next team that takes on the unforgiving task of managing the Arab-Israeli conflict learns the lessons that Miller has taught us. (Random House, 2008.)

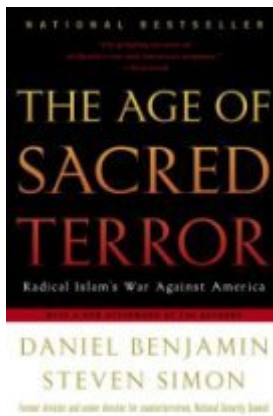


[13] [14]Adam Garfinkle :: About 28 years ago, a Chicago publisher called Nelson-Hall put out [15]The Last Crusade: A Negotiator’s Middle East Handbook, by William R. Brown. The book is an analysis of Henry Kissinger’s step-by-step diplomatic odyssey from Kilometer 101 to the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, written by a U.S. official who was along for much of the ride. As far as I can tell, the book was not widely reviewed (perhaps because of its unfortunate title; who knows?). Foreign Affairs just squibbed it, with the then doyen of the Middle East section, John C. Campbell, devoting two whole sentences to Brown’s effort. But the second sentence was this: “Brown’s background in public service is largely in the Arab field, and his analysis of Arab perceptions is particularly apt.”

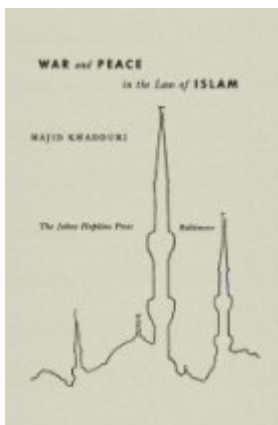
Damn right it was. Before political correctness made it uncomfortable for State Department Arabists even to believe what they saw with their own eyes, let alone to write about it, Brown evinced a knack for keen insight, honest analysis and crisp prose. Consider, for just one out of dozens of examples, this remark: “The Arab perceives a single community of faith and language that contrasts sharply with

our emphasis on competing but mutually adjusting political factions. In the West, politics has a flavor of controlled conflict that the Arab regards as destructive to community.... In the Middle East the purpose of political institutions is to facilitate the constant unfolding or revelation of a popular consensus. According to the liberal democratic norms of the West, political institutions are dedicated to enacting the wishes of a tolerant majority.”

The Last Crusade is not in print—hasn’t been for decades—but copies are [16]available through Amazon. It’s fun to locate Brown’s more general conclusions, distilled out of the dense diplomatic interactions of the Kissingerian era, and throw them into the headwinds of today’s Middle Eastern storms to see how they fly. On the whole, they fly pretty well.

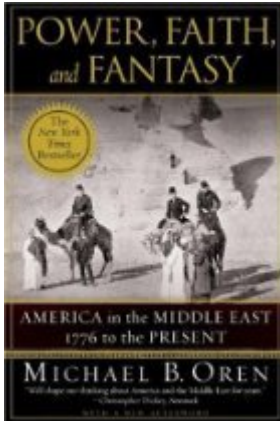


[17] [18]Michael Horowitz :: While it is a bit older, I would like to encourage people that have not already done so to go out and purchase a copy of [19]The Age of Sacred Terror by Dan Benjamin and Steve Simon (Random House, 2002). The book remains one of the best descriptions of Al Qaeda in the period up until 9/11. The rich historical detail, supplemented by the insights Benjamin and Simon gained from working on terrorism and Al Qaeda-related issues as National Security Staff members during the Clinton administration, provides a great deal of important information. They describe both the inner workings of Al Qaeda from its genesis through 9/11 and the efforts by the United States government to respond. Whether as an introductory text for advanced undergraduates interested in terrorism issues or a handy reference tool for more advanced scholars, The Age of Sacred Terror significantly contributes to our understanding of Al Qaeda.

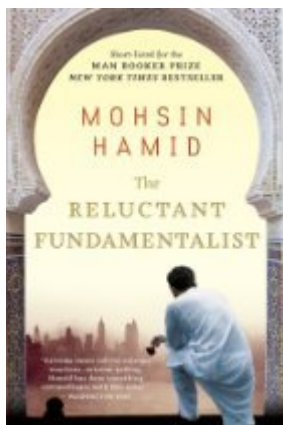


[20] [21]Raymond Ibrahim :: One of the most informative books I’ve read on Sunni Islam’s notions of international affairs—the whens, whys, whats, and hows, of warfare and peace—is

appropriately titled [22]War and Peace in the Law of Islam (reprint, The Lawbook Exchange, 2006), by the late Johns Hopkins professor, Majid Khadduri, himself a former Baghdadi jurist. What especially makes this book valuable is that the earliest edition was originally written in 1941—that is, some decades before the reign of political correctness infiltrated academia, stifling the sort of conclusions that Khadduri makes (e.g., that jihad is an eternal obligation). Indeed, though Khadduri was a well-respected scholar and never accused of having any "anti-Arab/Islam" agendas (he was, after all, an Arab and a Muslim), the straightforward assertions he makes in this book, if made today by another scholar, are liable to classify the latter as an "Islamophobe."

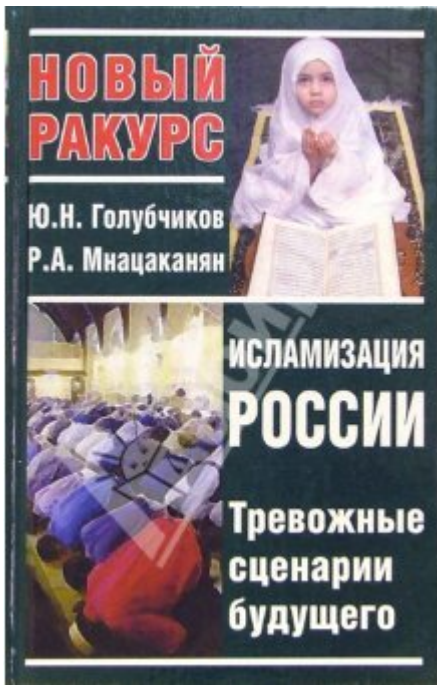


[23] [24]Josef Joffe :: Weighing in at about 3 pounds, and numbering almost 800 pages, Michael B. Oren’s [25]Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East 1776 to the Present (Norton, 2007) is not exactly beach-time reading. But the book should be on the shelf of anybody who takes a serious interest in the history of America’s involvement in the Arab/Muslim world. Even before the Constitution was written in 1787, the fledgling republic was already embroiled in conflict—when, in 1784, a Boston ship was seized by Moroccan pirates. In fact, that conflict was one reason for the constitutional convention in Philadelphia: how to create national institutions (like a navy) that would deal with the brigands of North Africa. Remember Ronald Reagan’s airstrike against Qadhafi in 1986, in retaliation against a terror attack against U.S. soldiers in Berlin? A haunting precedent is Tripoli’s declaration of war on the United States in 1801. So America’s entanglement in the Middle East is as old as the republic itself, and this is why Oren’s book makes for such important and instructive reading in these breathless, indeed, a-historical times. As a side-benefit, this book will dispense once and for all with the myth of isolationism. As Oren shows, the United States was embroiled in world politics from day one.



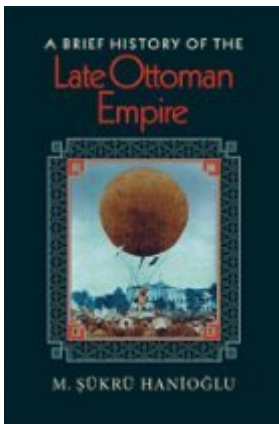
[26] [27]Martin Kramer :: It being summer, I finally found time to read

Mohsin Hamid's novella, [28] *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (Harcourt, 2007). What leads (or drives) young Muslim men to terrorism, and "why do they hate us"? Hamid has given us a thesis in the guise of a thriller that takes the reader on an odyssey from Princeton's campus to a high-powered valuation firm in midtown Manhattan to the alleys of Lahore. A young Pakistani comes to America, rises rapidly, finds a semblance of love, ignores contradictions—and then tumbles into the great divide. All of this he narrates to a mysterious American in an unforgettable voice, and anticipation of the climax will keep you hanging to the end. The thesis: America has its own unique way of inspiring self-loathing in others, even those it embraces—and it comes back to haunt us. (Think Sayyid Qutb and Edward Said.) There is a very different way to tell this story, but Hamid tells his version grippingly.



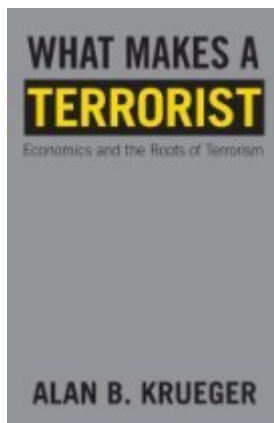
[29] [30]Walter Laqueur :: I have been reading Yu. N. Golubchikov and R.A. Mnatsakanian, [31] *Islamizatsiia Rossii: Trevozhnye stsenarii budushchego* (Islamization of Russia: Alarming Future Scenarios) (Veche, 2005). This book deals with problems widely ignored in the West (and also by the Russian leadership, overwhelmed and preoccupied by the good fortune of oil and gas royalties). The difficulties facing Russia differ in some ways from those confronting Western Europe, but in the longer run are even more formidable. Like some Russian experts, I believe it doubtful that Russia will be able to hold on for very long to the Northern Caucasus—to mention only one problem.





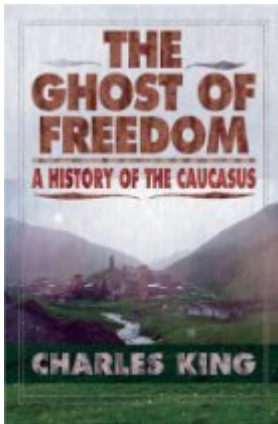
[32] [33] Bernard Lewis :: The Ottoman Empire was the longest-lived regional regime in the Middle East since antiquity; it was also the most recent, and left enduring traces. Şükrü Hanioğlu's [34] *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2008) is a major contribution to the better understanding of the region. His account is based on intimate knowledge of the Ottoman archives, as well as of many other sources, both internal and external. Concerned with trends more than events, this book illuminates the ideas and movements that shaped the course of history.

Two processes of change are of particular relevance. One is that of identity and loyalty, variously determined by faith, place, and blood; another is the theory and practice of government, evolving from authoritarian to democratic and/or dictatorial. Some of the words in later use, notably "constitution" and "revolution," acquire special resonance against the late Ottoman background. All this is of obvious relevance to the better understanding of the present-day Middle East.



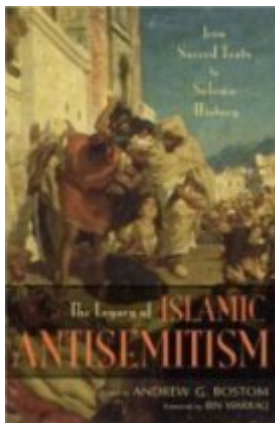
[35] [36] Walter Reich :: [37] *What Makes a Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terrorism*, by Alan B. Krueger (Princeton University Press, 2007) is a necessary and superb book. It demolishes the myth that poverty breeds terrorism, especially Islamist terrorism. To be sure, this myth was demolished many times before Krueger's book appeared. But probably because it's such a simple and widely-embraced explanation in the realm of ordinary crime—one that, moreover, suggests a simple solution (in this case, some kind of anti-poverty program in the Muslim world)—it was a myth that refused to die. World leaders such as Bill Clinton and Shimon Peres, as well as a panoply of other high government officials, theologians, journalists, intellectuals and Middle East specialists, all of whom should have known better, repeatedly resurrected this myth. Krueger's demolition of the myth is probably the most effective and sustained one to date. I'm sure, though, that, like so many characters in contemporary action movies and video games, "poverty breeds terrorism" will prove impervious to Krueger's on-target bullets and will rise again and yet again. The argument that the gang member in *West Side Story* sarcastically cites to explain his criminal behavior—that he became depraved because he'd been deprived—will, quite seriously

and foolishly, continue to be applied to the depravities of terrorism. As it happens, I discovered the book only when asked to review it; my full review is [38]here.



[39] [40]Michael Reynolds :: Although for much of the 20th century most people regarded the Caucasus as an exotic borderland of Russia, it has been an essential part of the Middle East from the dawn of history. Its peoples are bound to those of the Middle East by language, culture, religion and civilization. Today the Caucasus is again an inextricable part of the politics of the Middle East. It is also a fiendishly complicated region. It boasts a truly mind-boggling variety of ethnicities and linguistic groups (fascination with that diversity is not a modern preoccupation: astonished Arab invaders in the seventh century dubbed the Caucasus *jabal al-lusun*, "the mountain of languages"). It is the site of not only some of the oldest lands of Islam, but also the most ancient living Christian civilizations in the world, the Georgian and Armenian. In more recent centuries, Persian, Turkish, and Russian civilization have all indelibly stamped the Caucasus (and each in turn has been stamped by the Caucasus) as they jockeyed and struggled for dominance. The contemporary Caucasus remains in important ways unchanged: polyglot, culturally rich, and riven by often bitter internal and external rivalries.

However intimidating the complexity of the Caucasus may be, greenhorn and old hand alike will benefit from Charles King's [41]*The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus* (Oxford University Press, 2008). In a single volume, King manages to pull off the seemingly impossible task of presenting a portrait of the region as a whole, and one that is wonderfully written as it simultaneously informs, entertains, challenges, and stimulates.



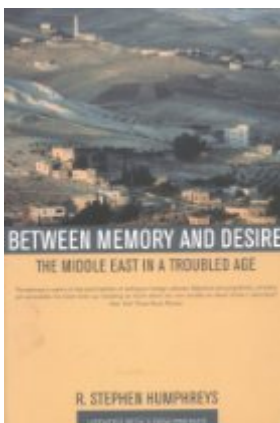
[42] [43]Philip Carl Salzman :: An academic colleague said to me that, before Israel, Muslims and Jews rubbed along well enough. Enmity toward Jews, he felt, stemmed from Jewish



(colonial) immigration to Palestine. Some specialists have recently made a case that Muslim anti-Semitism flowered under the ideological ministrations of the Nazis. [44] *The Legacy of Islamic Antisemitism: From Sacred Texts to Solemn History* by Andrew Bostom (Prometheus Books, 2008), a compendium largely of original texts from the Quran forward, makes a different case: The most extreme prejudicial animus against Jews is integral to Islamic thought and deed from Muhammad, and is honored by his many successors through the centuries with determination and energy. Introduced by Bostom's 174-page overview, this collection of documents, of Muslims speaking for themselves, and observers reporting historical events, is extensive and convincing, illuminating and distressing, and will break through the many pious obfuscations that often pass for Western commentary on Islam.

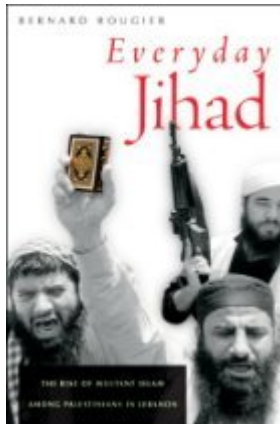


[45] [46] Robert Satloff :: Arab principals rarely write their memoirs, and such books are even rarer in English. Americans and Israelis live in a tell-all culture; theirs is a world largely without secrets anymore. By contrast, Arab leaders, ministers, courtiers, and hangers-on may speak in whispers but they rarely put their tales in print. The exceptions—like memoirs by Sadat and King Hussein—are mainly stylized versions of history written to burnish images, not to explain politics or policy. In this light, [47] *The Arab Center*, Marwan Muasher's memoir of his public service, is wonderfully refreshing—even beyond its often fascinating content and its courageous call for moderation in a region that knows too little of it. The "center" of the title refers to a political center, neither Islamist right nor Nasserist left, but it is a subtle reference to the fact that Muasher—Jordan's first ambassador to Israel, an ambassador to Washington, a foreign minister and a deputy prime minister—had a center-aisle seat throughout a turbulent period in Jordanian and wider Middle East politics. That inside look into a largely closed world is reason enough to commend this thoughtful book. (Yale University Press, 2008.)



[48] [49] Tamara Cofman Wittes :: Every year, my students, my cousins, and

random strangers ask me to recommend a single book that provides a good introduction to the contemporary Middle East. Very few of those asking are willing wade through something as edifying as Albert Hourani's *A History of the Arab Peoples*. Let me recommend, as an alternative for the general reader, a delightful memoir by the scholar R. Stephen Humphreys entitled [50]*Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in a Troubled Age* (2d ed., University of California Press, 2005). Personal, readable, and thoughtful, Humphreys's essays hit all the key issues (Islamism, demographics, oil curse, etc.) while weaving in history and personal narrative.



[51] [52]Michael Young :: I highly recommend Bernard Rougier's [53]*Everyday Jihad* (Harvard University Press, 2007) about the development of militant Islam in the Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp next to the Lebanese city of Sidon. Rougier's thesis is that trans-national militant Islam is now so dominant in the camp that "a considerable part of the population has freed itself from the national Palestinian framework and is no longer governed by a nationalist universe." The thesis is debatable, and I happen to disagree. But Rougier was one of the first to document the rise of Salafist groups in the camp—groups that have indeed come to play a central role in the politics of Ain al-Hilweh. My quibble is whether Palestinians have psychologically freed themselves from the preeminence of a nationalist universe—whether Peshawar can ever count for more than Jerusalem or Haifa.

Rougier's merit is to constantly come back to Lebanon and investigate on the ground. Indeed he did research for his book inside Ain al-Hilweh. He knows the Salafists well, understands the value of reportage, and speaks and reads Arabic fluently. *Everyday Jihad* is a fine example of a type of research on Lebanon sorely lacking, with so many scholars manacled to a desk, or a prepaid ideology. The country is much more interesting when the scholar is also a sociologist and a journalist. Rougier shows why.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

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46. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_satloff/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_satloff/)
47. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0300123000>
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49. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara\\_cofman\\_wittes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara_cofman_wittes/)
50. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0520246918/>
51. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0674025296>
52. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_young/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_young/)
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Assaf Moghadam (2008-07-22 16:53:57)

As far as summer readings go, my most enjoyable recent read was Benjamin Orbach's [1]*Live from Jordan: Letters Home from My Journey through the Middle East* (Amacom, 2007). Orbach spent more than a year in Amman and Cairo studying Arabic, and made excursions to Israel, Morocco, Oman, Syria, and Turkey while in the region. His emails home form the raw material for this elegantly written and often hilarious book. The book's scope is broad—the author details his day-to-day experiences, from finding an apartment in Amman to providing matchmaking services

to ordinary Jordanians. It also describes Orbach's personal encounter with anti-Americanism. America, he argues, needs the American policy critics in its struggle against the America haters, but this requires that the U.S. listen more carefully to its critics and do a better job explaining its policies to Middle Easterners. "Unofficial ambassadors" of the United States—travelers, archaeologists, journalists, or professors—are the "appeal of America incarnate" and play an important role in winning the battle for hearts and minds. Whether one agrees with Orbach's analyses or not, *Live from Jordan* will likely win the battle of hearts and minds of those seeking an entertaining summer read. [2]Assaf Moghadam is a member of MESH.

1. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0814474276/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/assaf\\_moghadam/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/assaf_moghadam/)

Tamara Cofman Wittes (2008-07-21 17:00:28)

Specialists in Middle East affairs might do well to go outside this realm in their summer reading. For those who have spent all too much energy immersed in the perennial debates in our field over the politics of scholarship, I will recommend an under-appreciated but very powerful argument about freedom of inquiry by my friend, Jonathan Rauch. [1]*Kindly Inquisitors: The New Attacks on Free Thought*(University of Chicago Press, 1995) was written in response to the culture wars and campus speech codes of the 1990s—but it is equally relevant to contemporary arguments about how Middle Eastern studies is taught on campus and debated by scholars. Jonathan's analysis also begs the question of the relationship between free politics, free economics, and free inquiry, and whether it is possible for wealthy, high-tech city-states like Dubai to build a "knowledge society" in the absence of broader social and political freedom. A short, crystal-clear read that will leave you with much to ponder. [2]Tamara Cofman Wittes is a member of MESH.

1. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0226705765/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara\\_cofman\\_wittes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara_cofman_wittes/)

## A Glassman half full? (2008-07-23 09:27)

From [1]Adam Garfinkle



The new Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, [2]James K. Glassman, delivered his maiden speech at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York on July 2. (It may be viewed at the end of this post; a transcript is [3]here.) As one might expect, it was mainly about how to win "the war of ideas" supposedly at the core of the War on Terror, the main mission (or so it would seem from the flow of rhetoric) of that office since September 11, 2001. The speech did not get much press attention for essentially three reasons. The first is that the Bush Administration is effectively over, so few credit the possibility that yet another Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs could accomplish anything significant in a mere six months. The second is that it's summer. The third is that the speech wasn't very good.

MESH Updater: James K. Glassman replies to this post in a comment [4]here.

Ah, but our indefatigable effendis at MESH noticed it all the same, and have asked me, as one of several MESH members who have evinced an interest over the years in public diplomacy, to comment. I can sum up my view fairly simply: Glassman represents a significant intellectual advance in that office over his several predecessors, but that's almost beside the point. Let me explain why.

The [5]Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs ("R" for short, for no obvious reason I can think of) is one of seven officials on that level in the State Department, there being five other undersecretaries and the Counselor. Beneath R are three "boxes": an [6]assistant secretary for education and cultural affairs (ECA); an [7]assistant secretary for public affairs (PA), and a [8]coordinator for international information programs (IIP). ECA's main business is handling the Fulbright Program and other cultural and educational exchange programs. PA handles press briefings and other domestic outreach functions. IIP produces and disseminates foreign language versions of official statements, reports and documents.

All three are necessary functions, and what ECA does is arguably important at a higher level. But when you think of the war of ideas in the struggle with international Islamist terrorism, ask yourself into which of those three boxes the task of doing the conceptual thinking to wage that war would logically fall? Now answer yourself, if you haven't already done so, "none of the above."

Of course, other parts of the State Department do monitor what is said about the United States in the Middle East and the wider Muslim world, and do speak back. Our embassies listen and report to their respective geographical bureaus in Washington, but since Muslims live in South Asia and Europe and elsewhere as well as the Middle East, no one place receives and analyzes this data together. INR (Intelligence and Research) also cares what is said and written, but its staff has a thousand things to do, none of them involving a response to Muslims in the Middle East or anywhere else. Alhurra and Radio Farda have a role in speaking back, of course, but, as components of the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB), they are not part of the State Department. "R" has a statutory vote on the IBB board of governors, but little to no influence over what they actually do largely because he has no real grip on their budgets.

What this means is that, conceptual thinking about public diplomacy (PD) aside, the State Department lacks even the functional equivalent of a gaffe squad. Something false and negative gets said or written about the United States in Damascus or Khartoum or Ramallah—like the CIA is infecting Muslim children with AIDS, for example—and it is no one's job in Washington to get inside the news cycle in that Muslim country and set the record straight. Embassies sometimes try to do this on the spot, but foreign service officers are for the most part trained to analyze and report, not to be proactive in in-country debates; only the Public Affairs officials in an embassy, often the most junior personnel in the mission, are supposed to do things like that as part of their jobs. If they don't or can't for one reason or another, only the Ambassador, the DCM or some other senior official can do it, and these are busy people who often, for good reason, do not wish to engage in verbal fisticuffs with local media. So, as things stand now, only if a reporter asks a question at a press conference about some outrageous statement is the Department likely to generate a halfway high-level, audible response to it.

Not only is there no effective gaffe squad (despite Karen Hughes' effort to create one), but until the middle of 2005 it was no one's job at the State Department even to monitor developments in political Islam as such, and to be a resource in that regard for the Secretary and the Department as a whole. I know this because I'm the one who in the spring of 2004 pointed this out to the Secretary and his Chief of Staff, and I am the one who was ordered—to my own personal shock and awe, since I was only a lowly speechwriter—to go hire someone to do precisely that. I did what I was told, an INR slot was created for the purpose, and about nine months later, right on schedule, Diplomatic Security managed to give birth to the necessary security clearances....

"How can this be, nearly seven years after 9/11?" you'll justifiably want to know. How can the State Department, and the U.S. Government, still have put in place no system to effectively organize and lead a war of ideas?



The answer has to do in part with the death and botched burial of the U.S. Information Agency in 1999. When Congress and the Clinton Administration decided together to abolish USIA, it elected to merge its functions into the State Department. Nice thought, but it never really happened. What USIA did during the Cold War—develop sophisticated propaganda without actually lying about anything—was never part of the foreign service culture, and few at State wanted or knew how to make it be a part. Besides, by 1999, eight years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, USIA itself was adrift, not sure what it was supposed to do other than take care of its Radios and the ECA exchange programs and finance a lot of high-tech upgrades for itself. It wasn't doing a lot of conceptual thinking about public diplomacy in a post-Soviet world, but then neither was anyone else.

Now, it was the merger of USIA (minus its Radios) into the State Department that created the Undersecretariat of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs over which James Glassman now presides. Some top USIA slots were redesignated "R", and ECA was joined to PA and IIP to make up the new Undersecretariat. (ECA was originally part of State, got transferred to USIA in 1978, and then came back to State when USIA was abolished in 1999.) Less-than-senior remaining USIA personnel were mostly bivouacked at lower levels of State's geographical bureaus. The actual core function of USIA, however was never really integrated into the State Department's mission, as the organization of the Undersecretariat shows.

Hence, new Undersecretaries can say anything they like about public diplomacy innovations, but even when they have strong personal support from the President, as Karen Hughes did, they lack the in-house ability to get much done. They are essentially one-man (or woman) shows, given the way their Undersecretariat is organized and staffed, and if they are not themselves clear and powerful thinkers, nothing (good) will happen. And that is precisely why after 9/11 the task of public diplomacy in the context of the war on terror migrated elsewhere: to the Defense Department doing "strategic communications," to various White House/NSC offices (some of which have done good work), to certain parts of the intelligence community (let's just leave it at that), and even to both the Counter-terrorism Office (S/CT) and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) inside the State Department itself.

Of course, no one was put in charge of all this, so the PD portfolio predictably became a sprawling mess. That's why when Mr. Glassman mentioned in his July 2 speech that "in April 2006 the President designated the Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy as the interagency lead in" conducting the "war of ideas," it should have taken the oxygen out of the CFR room in New York (but probably didn't).

The first question that should have jumped to everyone's tongue is why did it take four and half years after 9/11 for President Bush to put someone in charge of this supposedly critical function? And why, after four and half years, did he put in charge of it an office that, given its internal set-up, had no effective means of coordinating, let alone leading, anything of the kind?

The truth of the matter is that no one, not the President, the Vice President, the NSC Advisor or the Secretaries of State or Defense, ever really made public diplomacy and fighting the war of ideas a strategic priority. At State, the first R in the Bush Administration was Charlotte Beers. She was chosen by Secretary Powell, before 9/11, because he wanted to shake the place up, not least by introducing some business best-practices into an office that was, as they say in the Building, an "idea-free zone." That might have worked, too, had it not been for 9/11, after which Ms. Beers' "brand America" approach to political marketing could not possibly have been more counterproductive. What do the salafis rail about most effectively when they try to recruit new adepts? How soullessly materialist the West is, how all Americans care about is buying and selling and business and other sins of the flesh. "Brand America"?! Talk about pouring gasoline on a fire.

After Ms. Beers left in March 2003, leadership in R became a sometimes thing. Patricia Harrison, who had been Assistant Secretary for ECA, became acting Undersecretary until Margaret Tutwiler took the post in January 2004—only to leave just six months later for a job on the New York Stock Exchange. Pat Harrison became Acting Undersecretary again. Then the White House proposed to send over Karen Hughes to be R, but Ms. Hughes insisted on waiting nearly nine months before taking up the post (in March 2005) so that her son could first graduate from high school. She then left in December 2007. While all this coming and going was going on, of course, the United States was engaged in not just one, but arguably three wars: the GWOT, Iraq and Afghanistan. And as Mr. Glassman mentioned in his speech, it took six months for Congress to get around to voting on his nomination (for rather arcane reasons not worth going into here).

It is no wonder that with essentially no one home at the State Department for long stretches of time, and with R not organized to do conceptual thinking on public diplomacy, the function migrated elsewhere. But if anyone thinks James Glassman, however talented and experienced he is (and he is), can restructure his own Undersecretariat and achieve genuine interagency control over prosecuting the war of ideas in the next six months, please let me know who you are, because I have a bridge to sell you.

This is why what Glassman actually said in his July 2 speech is less than meets the eye, given the broader parameters of dysfunction in the public diplomacy portfolio. That's too bad, because Glassman is the first R since 9/11 who seems to understand that the problem is not about us, but about them. It's not a popularity contest in which poll results concerning how much Muslims like or hate us really matter (besides which the polls are mostly unreliable anyway). He understands that only Muslim voices can effectively debate with other Muslims about the role of violence in political life. He understands that we need to work mostly behind the scenes with allies both European and local. He understands that we need to engage the private sector, because the U.S. government is simply not set up to effectively employ the most powerful asset we have in the war of ideas: American society itself.

Fine, right; very nice and it's certainly about time. But his speech itself was hardly a model of effective public diplomacy, exhibiting not just one, but five cardinal sins of how not to make a serious policy speech.

First, it's narcissistic: Glassman begins by talking not about ideas or missions or his office or the policy of the President, but about himself. This is a turn-off. Second, the speech breaks frame by calling attention to the fact that it's a speech, not a from-the-heart statement of purpose. There's a huge difference between saying, "I'm here today to tell you that X..." and "X..." It's like the difference between a genuine

ritual and a mere ceremony. Third, Glassman buries his lead: He doesn't say anything interesting until he's nearly half finished, spending too much precious fresh-attention time on kitchen-sink stuff and too little time later on explaining what's significant about his new approach. Fourth, Glassman botches the tone: You don't emphasize three times how serious a task public diplomacy is and then use silly Coke/Pepsi metaphors to illustrate it—metaphors that also happen to hark back to Charlotte Beers' unapt commercial approach to the subject. There are better ways to describe a useful shift from caring about our own popularity to focusing on the U.S. role in quietly and carefully trying to influence intra-Muslim dynamics.

And fifth, Glassman makes some incautious statements. He says, for example, "Here is our desired end state: a world in which the use of violence to achieve political, religious, or social objectives is no longer considered acceptable." You don't need much imagination to see what Al Qaeda, Inc. can do with that one, as in (supply your own accent): "You Americans lecture Muslims about the use of violence, but you are the ones trying to jam your godless democracy, that denies the law of God himself, down the throats of Iraqis and Afghans on the points of bayonets! If you are so much against violence, then why are American tanks and bombs every day murdering Muslim women and children?" and so on and so forth. Again, there are better ways to make the point Glassman wants to make. Doing it the wrong way is known technically in the speechwriting trade as "stepping in it."

So what do we conclude from this? That the new R needs a better speechwriter? No: That, I think, is the least of the problem. What we ought to conclude is that the next administration needs not only to get the conceptual premises of public diplomacy right, but decide quickly how the U.S. government needs to be organized to implement its own thinking. Right now, the USG cannot put a good PD idea to work even were it to discover one—and arguably James Glassman has a few, thanks to his time spent at the IBB and his participation some years back in the Djerejian Commission on Public Diplomacy. If Glassman wants to make the most of the next six months, he'll direct his efforts to creating an operationally coherent office capable of carrying out the President's belated April 2006 directive. If McCain wins in November and the new Secretary of State keeps Glassman on as R, he'll be doing himself (and not only himself) the biggest favor imaginable.

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James K. Glassman at the Council on Foreign Relations, July 2. Presider: Michael Moran, Executive Editor, CFR.org. ([9]Click here if you do not see the embedded video clip.)

[10]Download

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)
2. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/105829.htm>
3. [http://www.cfr.org/publication/16698/public\\_diplomacy\\_in\\_the\\_twentyfirst\\_century\\_rush\\_transcript\\_federal\\_news\\_service.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/16698/public_diplomacy_in_the_twentyfirst_century_rush_transcript_federal_news_service.html)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/a\\_glassman\\_half\\_full/#comment-823](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/a_glassman_half_full/#comment-823)
5. <http://www.state.gov/r/>
6. <http://exchanges.state.gov/>
7. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/>
8. <http://www.state.gov/r/iip/>
9. [http://www.cfr.org/publication/16719/public\\_diplomacy\\_in\\_the\\_twentyfirst\\_century.html?breadcrumb=%2Feducators%2Fmultimedia](http://www.cfr.org/publication/16719/public_diplomacy_in_the_twentyfirst_century.html?breadcrumb=%2Feducators%2Fmultimedia)
10. <http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/media/2008/6-30-08-Glassman.flv>



Robert Satloff (2008-07-25 11:30:08)

The arcane but important debate over organizational structure aside, I believe my friends Adam Garfinkle ([1]here) and Jim Glassman ([2]here) are both wrong and right. Adam is wrong—and Jim is right—when Adam sells short the vital and potentially lasting contribution that Jim can make even if his tenure as “commander-in-chief in the battle of ideas” ends up being only six months long. That contribution is to change attitudes (and, by extension, metrics of success) about the mission of public diplomacy both here and abroad, from the highest levels of government to our diplomats in the field. Progress toward that goal would alone be a huge achievement. Jim is wrong—and Adam is right—when Adam critiques the Administration’s commitment to an effective, coherent strategy to wage the battle of ideas until recently. As a close observer of this sad story, I can say with regrettable certainty that for much of the last seven years, PD was essentially an effort to get foreigners to like America more, not an effort to defeat the ideology of our Islamist adversaries. (There were exceptions—Karen Hughes, despite lacking ideological moorings, did implement well and her creation of media response units was a plus.) A loyal team player, Jim cannot but defend the record of his administration, but there is no doubt that his appointment represents a seismic shift from his predecessors’. Yes, it has taken far too long for the Bush administration to take this issue seriously. But in a generational struggle, I’ll take “better late than never” than “not at all.” Jim’s task is to put into place priorities, structures, and a sense of mission so that the next Administration doesn’t have to fight an internal “battle of ideas” on the right direction for public diplomacy of the sort that bedeviled this one. [3]Robert Satloff is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/a\\_glassman\\_half\\_full/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/a_glassman_half_full/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/a\\_glassman\\_half\\_full/#comment-823](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/a_glassman_half_full/#comment-823)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_satloff/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_satloff/)

James K. Glassman (2008-07-25 04:58:46)

I agree with much of what Adam Garfinkle writes in his [1]post. The bipartisan history of “unilateral disarmament in the weapons of advocacy,” as we called it in the Djerejian Report in October 2003, is not a pretty one. Certainly, we can imagine better organizational structures for public diplomacy than the one that was manufactured in 1999 after what Mr. Garfinkle calls “the death and botched burial of the U.S. Information Agency.” But Mr. Garfinkle goes way too far in his condemnation of organization. With the changes we’ve made in the first few weeks after my swearing-in on June 10, we have a perfectly workable structure right now. First, Education and Cultural Affairs—the part of the Under Secretary’s realm that manages exchanges and spends the majority of State’s public diplomacy money—runs exceptionally well. So does International Information Programs, which handles speaker programs and publications and runs our websites, including America.gov. The third element is the war of ideas, for which the President designated the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy as the interagency lead. Mr. Garfinkle writes, however, that the Under Secretary has “no effective means of coordinating, let alone leading, anything of the kind.” He adds that “no one, not the President, the Vice President, the NSC Advisor or the Secretaries of State or Defense, ever really made public diplomacy and fighting the war of ideas a strategic priority.” In both of these claims—structure and priority—Mr. Garfinkle is dead wrong. The structure—for you organizational wonks out there—now looks like this, in its recently altered form: • A Policy Coordinating Committee, meeting monthly, is at the top of the pyramid. I chair the PCC, with Deputy National Security Advisor Mark Pfeifle as vice chair. The PCC includes participation at a high level from such agencies as the Department of Defense (whose representative is Eric Edelman, the Under Secretary for Policy), the Intelligence Community, Treasury, and Homeland Security. The National Counter-Terrorism Center provides strategic and analytical support to the PCC. • A sub-PCC—called the Global Strategic Engagement Center—manages the day-to-day operations. The GSEC is located at State and headed by a State official and is staffed with representatives of State, DoD, and the IC. • The PCC has two other appendages: an interagency communications group and a private-sector council, now in formation, that will include 10 senior leaders from five sectors: technical, business, academic, foundations, and marketing. As for priority: This administration, from the President on down, places a high priority on the war of ideas. The [2]National Strategy for Combating Terrorism of 2006 stated: “In the long run, winning the War on Terror means winning the battle of ideas.” In a [3]speech on July 15, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said: “Over the long term, we cannot kill or capture our way to victory. Non-military efforts—these tools of persuasion and inspiration—were indispensable to the outcome of the defining ideological struggle of the 20th century. They are just as indispensable in the 21st century—and perhaps even more so.” The National Security Advisor has been extremely supportive of our efforts, as, of course, has the Secretary of State. One of the advantages of having my confirmation drag on for six months is that I was able to spend a good deal of time with war-of-ideas thinkers and leaders in the private sector and the interagency. All of them—and I’ll single out Joint Staff in particular—have been tremendously supportive. They are looking to the Under Secretary for leadership, and if we

can't make this machine fly, then the fault lies not with the structure (either of State or the interagency) but with the pilot. [4]James K. Glassman is Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/a\\_glassman\\_half\\_full/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/a_glassman_half_full/)
2. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nsct/2006/>
3. <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1262>
4. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/105829.htm>

## No more exchanges like this one (2008-07-24 18:40)

From [1]Robert O. Freedman



The recent exchange of five Arab terrorists for the bodies of two Israeli soldiers abducted by Hezbollah at the start of the 2006 war was a major defeat for Israel, one that must not be repeated. While one can understand the anguish felt by the families of the captured Israeli soldiers, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, the manner in which the exchange was negotiated and then carried out could only be described as a debacle. Indeed, one wonders if the exchange was carried out by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in yet another attempt to curry public favor as he faces mounting public pressure to step down as prime minister.

The first mistake was not ascertaining, in advance, whether the two Israeli soldiers were alive or dead. Israel did have leverage with Hezbollah on this issue. Hezbollah leader Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah had staked his reputation on freeing the notorious Lebanese terrorist Samir Quntar, and Israel could have used this fact, at a minimum, to get Red Cross representatives to visit Goldwasser and Regev, to determine if they were alive. Indeed, it is a bit incongruous that terrorists like Quntar are allowed visits by the Red cross and even by Palestinians like the mother of another imprisoned terrorist, while captive Israelis are not allowed to have such visits, so that their families do not know whether they are alive or dead.

One way to deal with this imbalance—directly linked to the case of Gilad Shalit, the prisoner held by Hamas in Gaza—is to prohibit visits to Hamas legislators and terrorists imprisoned in Israel until Shalit is allowed regular visits. Similarly, Israel could end visits to the remaining Lebanese prisoners in Israeli hands, as punishment for the callous way Hezbollah treated Regev and Goldwasser. While some on the left might decry such policies as descending to the level of the terrorists, when one is dealing with cruel organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah, it is necessary to use strong tactics. Reciprocity remains the basic principle in international relations, and so long as Hamas and Hezbollah do not abide by the Geneva Convention in their dealings with Israeli prisoners, neither should Israel.

Israel's second mistake was the release of prisoners with "blood on their hands." All this does is encourage more kidnapping, and more terrorist attacks on Israel. A number of the prisoners released by Israel went on to carry out additional terrorist attacks against Israel, the most notorious being Abbas Alsaïd, who after his 1996 release helped plan the Passover attack in Netanya in 2002 which killed 30 Israelis. Indeed Quntar himself, after the prisoner exchange, vowed to attack Israel again

Israel's third mistake was to ignore the domestic political situation in Lebanon at the time of the prisoner exchange. While Hezbollah, as a result of the Arab-mediated political settlement between itself and

the Sunni government, had strengthened its political position in Lebanon, it had been strongly criticized by both Sunni and Christian Lebanese for turning its guns on them in the mini-civil war that erupted this past spring. By agreeing to the prisoner exchange when he did, Olmert enabled Nasrallah to portray himself as the hero of all the Lebanese, by getting the Lebanese prisoners back. Indeed, the Sunni-led government had no choice but to proclaim a national holiday on the day of the prisoner release to celebrate the "liberation of prisoners from the jails of the Israeli enemy."

Israel's fourth, and perhaps most serious mistake, was to weaken its deterrence posture vis-à-vis Hezbollah. Hezbollah, which has proclaimed itself as the guardian of Lebanese security, thereby repudiating both international and Lebanese calls for it to disarm, has threatened to use force to regain the disputed Shebaa Farms area, which is claimed by Lebanon, but which Israel captured from Syria in 1967. After the high price paid by Israel to regain the bodies of Regev and Goldwasser, Nasrallah may well be tempted to undertake another hostage-taking raid—or worse—in order to pressure Israel to turn over the territory to Lebanon, thus once again demonstrating that he is a true Lebanese nationalist hero. The only solution for Israel at this point is for Olmert to resign, and a new Israeli government to take power, one that would take a much tougher position on prisoner exchanges and one that would restore Israel's deterrence posture.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)

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## Regime change, Iranian-style (2008-07-28 08:34)

From [1]Jacqueline Newmyer and [2]Stephen Peter Rosen



Seymour Hersh has recently [3]alleged that the United States government is engaged in clandestine activities to destabilize Iran through appeals to ethnic and religious minorities. We hope that he is mistaken, not because we oppose regime change in Iran but because the history of Iran teaches that governments rise and fall according to a logic very different from the familiar narrative of ethnic separatism.

Immediately after World War One, Iran experienced the rapid rise and equally rapid collapse of two mini-republics, one involving the Azeri ethnic group around Tabriz and the other in Iran's Gilan province on the Caspian Sea. These mini-republics might be thought to reflect proto-national separatist movements, but that would be incorrect. They were directed by men who capitalized upon events—concessions to the British and unequal treaties—that mobilized broad anti-foreign sentiment in Iran and in their regions. Both mini-republics failed after a few months, when foreign support for them evaporated.

What these examples illustrate is the rapid rise and fall of governments in Iran. Reza Khan rose quickly to power in the 1920s as a foreign-trained military officer who was able to suppress internal rebellions, but he was exiled in World War Two. Prime Minister Mossadegh rejected the terms of oil contracts imposed by the British and mobilized broad sentiment in Iran in support of this effort, but he

was then easily deposed by the United States. Reza Khan's son was brought back to Iran and was installed as monarch, until he was displaced by the Khomeini revolution, when American support for the Shah was perceived in Iran to have weakened as a result of increased concerns with human rights. This historical record demonstrates the extraordinary fluidity of Iranian politics, in which mass sentiment, foreign support, and charismatic leadership can make regimes, but cannot sustain them.

What explains this fluidity? The Iranian sociologist Homa Katouzian has suggested that the absence of any independent property rights over land in Iran precluded the emergence of stable social structures independent of the state. Administrations exist, but not a stable governing system because Iran has never had an institutionalized legal system based on the support of groups with independent property rights. Such groups do not exist in Iran.

So particular administrations govern while they can capitalize on mass social sentiment—against foreign oppression, for example—but they have no grounds of support that transcends particular personalities or geopolitical circumstances. In Europe, a foundation of stable property based interests allowed for shared public action on behalf of working, middle, and upper classes. Iran has had no equivalent tradition of independent property rights that would nurture a system of laws to protect them, divorced from the identity of a particular ruler or rulings of an elite juridical class.

The characteristic political leader in Iran is thus the same as the characteristic hero of the Thousand and One Nights, the tales told to a Persian king, Shahryar, by his wife, Scheherazade. In those stories, a young, gifted man who comes from nowhere, with nothing, rises to wealth and power by chance, and is then cast down by betrayal. So, too, did the Shah, Khomeini, and even Ahmadinejad seemingly come from nowhere, and, by virtue of charisma or foreign support, gain power.

If this view of Iranian politics is correct, we should not expect class-based social revolution, religious opposition, or ethnic opposition to topple the existing regime. The reign of Ahmadinejad was originally propelled by a reputation for probity and a populist appeal that have been eroded now that they have not materialized into benefits for the people. While this makes his administration a failure, the shared civic interests and independent political institutions that might transform disaffection into coherent political action does not yet exist. Meanwhile, Ahmadinejad's nuclear endeavors and diplomatic offensives constitute a way for him to replenish his legitimacy.

Political change should only be expected, therefore, when some widely visible event causes social sentiment to coalesce into opposition to a regime that has come to be perceived as weak. The fact that the regime is corrupt means little—all governments are expected to steal and to be indifferent to the welfare of the people. But visibly outrageous behavior (for instance, flagrant affronts to religious principles) create a climate in which a new charismatic figure may emerge to rally an alienated populace. Leading indicators of this possibility would include social behavior that is universally considered deviant—for instance, reported sexual abuse by clerics and an increasing incidence of prostitution by married women whose husbands are aware of and condone the activity, according to Iranian academics.

However, social outrage is likely to flare and fade unless focused by a charismatic figure. Such a figure will not be associated with the current establishment but will have to have engaged in activities that demonstrate a commitment to the good of the nation and personal rectitude that have brought him to the attention of the Iranian population. Therefore, we should be looking for mayors of major cities (as Ahmadinejad once was), mid-level military commanders with histories of success (as was the case with Reza Khan), and clerics with reputations for piety. Most currently discussed potential rivals of Ahmadinejad do not fit these criteria because they are already tainted by scandal or association with the regime.

Does this mean that American military or covert action against the government of Iran will mobilize support for Ahmadinejad or indicate the weakness of the regime? That depends on the character of the action. Military strikes against Iranian nuclear installations will be perceived as foreign humiliation and may lead to internal opposition to the government, but in the name of stronger resistance to foreign domination. Actions that are not clearly tied to foreign governments and that lead to increasingly ineffective police and military control over society will contribute to the perception that the regime is weak. But, again, a dramatic event will be necessary to catapult a charismatic leader into power. This leader will almost certainly not be visibly pro-American. He is more likely to adopt highly nationalist rhetoric. That said, he will have opportunity and incentive to make a new start with the Iranian people, and improved economic and political relations with the West will be a part of what he has to offer Iran.

Illustration: Unfinished statue of Reza Shah, Saadabad Palace, Iran.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jacqueline\\_newmyer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jacqueline_newmyer/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)
3. [http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/07/07/080707fa\\_fact\\_hersh?currentPage=all](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/07/07/080707fa_fact_hersh?currentPage=all)

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Philip Carl Salzman (2008-07-28 17:30:35)

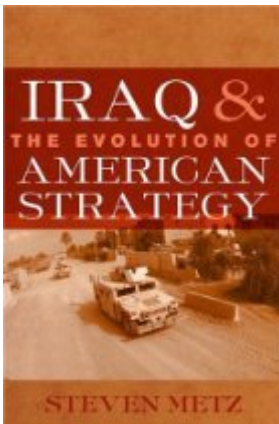
Ethnically and structurally, Iran's geography is a bit like a doughnut inside a larger doughnut. The hole is the central desert. The smaller doughnut is the inner ring of Persian cities and many villages (one figure is 60,000) occupied by Farsi-speaking, Shi'a Muslims. The larger doughnut is the outer ring, largely mountainous, of ethnic and tribal territories: Sunni Turkmen in the northeast; Sunni Baluch in the southeast; Turkic Qashqai and Arab tribesmen in the southwest; Lur-speaking tribesmen in the west; Kurds in the northwest; and Azeri Turks in the north-northwest. Every time a government falls or is very weak, the tribes and ethnic minorities rebel and try to separate. Each newly established government—Reza Shah, Mohammed Reza Shah, the Islamic Republic—had to send its armed forces and conquer the rebels (usually starting in the southwest and proceeding clockwise). The Persian urbanites and villagers had reason to fear the tribes, which were enthusiastic predatory raiders for goods, livestock, and slaves. And, let us not forget, the tribes have been political actors from time to time: the occupation of Shiraz by the Qashqa'i was part of the process that brought Mossadegh down. The inner ring of Farsi speakers was fragmented vertically: Political appointees and other absentee landlords squeezed the peasant majority, who commonly received 20 percent of the crop for their labor, and invested little in improvement of the factors of production. Like most pre-industrial states, Persia/Iran has been held together by military force. Only religion has been capable of unifying fairly broadly, but even this has proved ephemeral. As Charles Lindholm has argued, in the Islamic Middle East, there is no legitimate basis for rulership, other than religion; but then religion, once in government, becomes de-sacralized and corrupt, and loses legitimacy. This has already happened in Iran. Religion no longer carries political legitimacy. Many political actors who literally took on clerical garb have long since laid it aside. The populace, certainly the urban and tribal, has struggled to avoid religious restrictions and has begun to consciously re-construct non-religious identities. The Sunnis reemphasize the Sunni-Shi'a divide and tribesmen their tribal roots; the urbanites, certainly the young, draw on the internet and clandestine mass media to incorporate elements of modern and Western culture. Some have gone so far as to reject Islam, now refusing to greet with *Salaam aleikom*, but instead offer the pre-Islamic Persian terms for hello and goodbye: *darood* and *bedrood*. With all of this in mind, how does one advance the possibility of regime change? Into which fissures does one insert the lever? Would a new potential leadership be important? Undoubtedly; Persians put great weight on strong leaders. In addition to the chronically discontented tribes and ethnics, would the Farsi-speaking majority have to be attracted? Most likely. To which addresses should outsiders send funds? I only give those out under contract. [1]Philip Carl Salzman is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)

## 'Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy' (2008-07-29 08:51)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Steven Metz is chairman of the Regional Strategy and Planning Department and research professor of national security affairs at the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute. His forthcoming book is *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*.

From [1]Steven Metz



[2] Like most Americans, I thought little about Iraq before the summer of 1990. Having spent my entire adult life teaching and writing about national security I could not, of course, ignore it entirely. But I remained immersed in other regions, other issues, other problems. Iraq was peripheral, best left for Middle East experts (which I am not). Then for the second time in a decade, Iraq invaded a neighboring state, bullying its way to the attention of the world. As Operation Desert Storm unfolded, I was on the faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. Not only did CNN make the war unusually vivid—I remember working in my garage, listening to play-by-play combat coverage on the radio as if it were a sporting event—the fact that some of my former students and current friends were in harm’s way also made it personal. For a few months, at least, Iraq mattered greatly to me. But afterwards, it faded again. I returned to other projects.

As another major war between the United States and Iraq approached in the late winter of 2003, I joined a study team from the U.S. Army War College. Our mission was to enter Iraq as soon as possible after combat subsided and undertake an initial strategic assessment. For a career academic, being issued military gear, fitted for uniforms (to the extent that the word “fitted” applies to the way the Army issues clothing), trained on chemical protection equipment, and inoculated against anthrax and a slew of other nasty things was strange but exciting. Our team established a base in Kuwait then made five trips into Iraq. It was electrifying to see the country that had so dominated the headlines for the previous year, experience the immediate aftermath of a major war, and talk to military leaders and soldiers from both sides while their memories were fresh. The sight of exhausted U.S. soldiers, the jumble of feelings from relief to smoldering hatred on the part of Iraqis, nights spent in looted palaces, high-speed drives through liberated (or conquered) cities with no public order or security, and, in general, traversing a landscape littered with the detritus of war, much still smoking, was something few scholars experience.

My role in the study team was to analyze what was then called the “post-conflict” period. This was an afterthought to our project, added by a senior Army general after approving the study. Little did he or anyone else know that there would be more conflict in the “post-conflict” period than in the conventional war. As events in Iraq unfolded, the complexity of the project exploded beyond control. I worked frenetically just to keep abreast of breaking developments. My office filled with notes, articles, maps, briefing slides, reports, and transcripts. I could not finalize the report. Each draft was obsolete before I could distribute it.

Still, this was the right issue for me at the right time: I was one of a handful of scholars or analysts who studied insurgency and counterinsurgency during the previous decade. This served me well as the insurgency in Iraq grew. But the idea that that I would spend a few months on the Iraq project and then return to my normal research and management concerns collapsed under the onslaught of events. Iraq became my life. From the spring of 2003 until now I have worked on it nearly full time, collecting tens of thousands of pages of material. Clearly it was time to capture this in a comprehensive format.

Dozens of books and hundred of articles have been written about America's conflict with Iraq, the bulk since 2003. These cover a range of topics from policymaking to military tactics. But almost all share one feature: they concentrate on what the conflict has done to Iraq rather than what it has done to America. That realization inspired this book. The conflict with Iraq has changed us. A part of what we are, how we see the world, and how we define our role in the global security environment was born in this conflict. We must understand how and why. We must know whether Iraq has changed us for better or worse. We must use Iraq as a portal for introspection, use it to learn about the American approach to strategy.

In *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy* I use the long, simmering conflict to trace changes in American strategy. Rather than speculate on the future of America's involvement in Iraq, I end with conclusions about the process of selecting, interpreting and using paradigms to drive American strategy, including an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of this process and some ideas on how to make it more effective.

[3]Order from Publisher | [4]Amazon

1. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/people.cfm?authorID=22>
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51Q6NbYBGFL.jpg>
3. <http://www.potomacbooksinc.com/Books/BookDetail.aspx?productID=180137>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1597971960/>

## Categories of Islamism (2008-07-30 13:51)

From [1]Tamara Cofman Wittes



Much of today's backlash against democracy promotion in the Middle East can be traced to the Hamas victory in the Palestinian parliamentary elections of 2006, and its effect of reinforcing the "Algerian nightmare" complex among nervous Washington policy makers about the prospect for political takeovers of Arab countries by illiberal and anti-American Islamist movements.

While many would see Hamas and the Moroccan Justice and Development Party, for example, as



occupying two points on a spectrum, I reject this view and reject the notion that Hamas's victory has much to tell us about the prospects for Islamist behavior in (hypothetical) democratic elections elsewhere in the Arab world. In a [2]recent piece for the *Journal of Democracy*, I argue for the importance of seeing that there are differences in kind, not just degree, among Islamist movements in today's Middle East. I describe three distinct categories of Islamists, and focus on the last of the three as the only one from which a potentially democratic Islamist politics might emerge. In evaluating this final category, I argue that the democratic credibility or capacity of a given Islamist movement can only really be tested and assessed in a more open political environment, and that ultimately the quality of Islamist political discourse will hinge on the quality of the political system in which it resides.

Others, however, would argue that these distinctions are not meaningful, on either philosophical or pragmatic grounds. The philosophers might argue, [3]like my friends Hillel Fradkin and Hussein Haqqani, that the common ideological roots of today's Islamist parties present them all with a rather high bar to clear before they could act as "normal" political factions. This is because their founding ideology doesn't draw a basic distinction between the Muslim umma and the political state, and thus sets up all kinds of bars to basic principles of democratic politics. Pragmatists, for their part, might say that all Islamist political groups evident in the region today are really some form of hybrid, exhibiting elements of violence and of "normal politics," and aspects of religious movements alongside of political parties. Even those that don't engage in violence themselves, they note, either have violent pasts or condone/celebrate the violence of others.

Below I lay out the three categories I describe in the *Journal of Democracy*.

The first category—and the easiest to dismiss for the purposes of this discussion— comprises the relatively small but important group of radical, ideologically driven movements that we can call takfiri, for their readiness to label other Muslims heretics, apostates, and therefore justifiable targets of violence. Such groups include Al Qaeda, of course, along with its affiliates and allies in Algeria, Iraq, and elsewhere. These groups take no interest in formal politics save for the strict pan-Islamic state that they envision setting up once they have toppled their region's existing governments. They glorify violence as a religious duty and reject democracy as a violation of God's sovereignty. Such violently irreconcilable groups are irrelevant to the question of whether Islamist movements can be successfully integrated into a democratic Arab future. The takfiris will endanger that future, just as they endanger the present.

A second category includes what we might call "local" or "nationalist" militant Islamist movements, like Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Palestine, or the Shiite militias of Iraq. Two characteristics set this type of Islamist movement apart. First, they combine their Islamist ideology with a specific set of local political demands that are the focus of their activity and the core concern of their supporters—unlike the takfiris, they seek and benefit from the vocal support of a given local community. Second, they all exist in weak or failing states (or non-states, in the case of Hamas), where the central government has proved incapable of providing basic security for all its citizens or where the state itself is an arena of contention between competing groups in society. The lack of state capacity enables these movements to wield their weapons with a good deal of support from their local communities. Their armed activities serve not only to advance the ideological cause, but also to protect local constituents from depredation at the hands of the state or communal rivals.

Thinking of Hamas and Hezbollah primarily as Islamist groups rather than as nationalist militants obscures the search for solutions to the problems these groups pose for democratic politics. The fundamental challenge that these groups pose to Arab democratization is their use of violence, not their Islamist character or ideology (although the latter is used to justify the former). Such movements could not have emerged into this dual role of militant political party in a strong state like Egypt; indeed, whenever the



Muslim Brotherhood or its offshoots in Egypt developed violent capabilities, the government crushed them mercilessly. Only regimes with insufficient capacity to enforce their monopoly on violence and with weakened capacity in their political institutions are compelled to allow such compromised groups to participate in politics with their weapons in hand. Hamas is a perfect example. According to the formal rules of the Palestinian Authority (PA), Hamas was not qualified to participate in the parliamentary elections because it did not accept the signed agreements with Israel. But the PA could not enforce this rule.

That groups like this choose to run in elections is itself evidence of the extent to which electoral legitimacy is becoming a norm among Arab citizens. A role in formal politics helps the Islamist-nationalists to hedge their bets should they ever need to put away the gun. But they do not view political processes and institutions as authoritative, and have often shown themselves ready to threaten or even use force when it suits them—witness Hezbollah’s takeover of Beirut in May. As long as the region’s Lebanons remain too weak to control its Hezbollahs, there is little hope that full democracy or meaningful equality under law can blossom. States that can barely function or make their writs run throughout their own lands will never be robust candidates for democratic consolidation.

In the strong states that one more often finds in the Middle East, however, the forces of political Islam are a different breed from Hamas and Hezbollah. This third and largest category of Islamist movements—the category most relevant to discussions of democratic change in the Arab world—comprises groups that eschew violence (at least locally) and aspire to a political role in their respective countries, without voicing any revolutionary goals. Such groups may operate as legal parties, such as the Islamic Action Front in Jordan and the Party of Justice and Development in Morocco, or they may be excluded from formal political recognition but still engage in the political process, like Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood (MB) or Kuwait’s Islamist “societies.” They all want to transform society and government into something more “Islamic,” but aim to do so “from below”—that is, by persuading citizens to adopt Islamist ideas, demand Islamist policies from government, and behave as more closely observant Muslims.

There are, of course, a lot of questions to be raised and discussed about how to assess the democratic “credentials” or relevance of Islamist groups in this third category. But my point in this post is simply that Hamas and Hezbollah are not the same animal as the Egyptian MB, and we should not generalize from one to the other. The 2006 Palestinian elections indeed set back both peace and democracy for Palestinians and Israelis—but those elections have little to tell us about the prospects for Islamist politics elsewhere in the Middle East.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara\\_cofman\\_wittes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara_cofman_wittes/)
2. <http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/gratis/Wittes-19-3.pdf>
3. <http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/gratis/HaqqaniFradkin-19-3.pdf>

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Steven A. Cook (2008-07-30 16:50:20)

I haven’t had the opportunity to read Tamara Cofman Wittes’s new *Journal of Democracy* [1]piece, but based on her [2]description, there is no doubt that she has added much to the debate about the nature of Islamist movements. I can understand why, during the primaries, Mitt Romney would want to whip up votes among the GOP faithful by lumping all Islamists together, but it is altogether another thing for some of the U.S. Air Force officers with whom I spoke this morning to have a hard time distinguishing the difference between Turkey’s Justice and Development Party and the clerical regime in Iran. To the extent that Tamara’s article will be widely distributed, I hope that it clears up debilitating misconceptions about Islamist groups. That being said, I have some friendly critiques and questions about her [3]post. In her discussion of local/national groups, Tamara notes, “That groups like this choose to run in elections is itself evidence of the extent to which electoral legitimacy is becoming the norm among Arab citizens.” Interesting. If this norm has been established, then this is certainly an important development. This would

suggest that Arab societies and Islamist movements have embraced a core principle of democracy. Yet isn't it equally possible that Islamist participation is the result of strategic calculation? After all, Islamists may decide to participate in elections because they perceive electoral procedures as the most efficient means of accumulating political power as opposed to say, fomenting revolution or embracing democracy. Finally, I don't understand the analytic connection between the existence of a strong state, a non-violent Islamist movement, and the prospects for democratization. Tamara is arguing that the chances of "democratic Islamist politics" are best among strong states in the region that manifest non-violent Islamist groups. Let's stipulate that my friends Josh Stacher, Samer Shehata, and Marc Lynch are correct: The Muslim Brotherhood has evolved into an organization ready to play by the democratic rules of the game. So what? Given the extreme compulsion under which they live, it seems unlikely that the Brothers can have a dynamic effect on the overall authoritarian structure of the Egyptian state. [4]Steven A. Cook is a member of MESH.

1. <http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/gratis/Wittes-19-3.pdf>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/categories\\_of\\_islamism/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/categories_of_islamism/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/categories\\_of\\_islamism/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/categories_of_islamism/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven\\_a\\_cook/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven_a_cook/)

Michele Dunne (2008-07-30 15:12:43)

I agree with [1]Tamara Cofman Wittes that we should not generalize about groups such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood based on judgments about Hamas or Hezbollah. Of course the Brotherhood has close historical and current ties with Hamas and fully supports its Palestinian agenda, but it has been about a half century since the Egyptian Brotherhood used similarly militant methods at home. The problem in Egypt is that the government has blocked the emergence of virtually all new political groups and parties for decades now, stunting the possible growth of groups such as the Brotherhood in the direction of greater political pragmatism. Egypt could by now have something along the lines of Morocco's Party of Justice and Development, perhaps as an outgrowth of the Wasat movement of the 1990s. But so far the authorities and the ruling National Democratic Party believe it wiser to close off nearly all avenues for legitimate political competition. This was clear in the 2007 constitutional amendments, which outlawed not only any political party based on religion but any political activity with any religious "frame of reference"—*marja'iyah*, the exact word often used by political movements in other countries making the transition from Islamist to Muslim Democrat—as well as in the barring of Brotherhood candidates from recent elections for local councils and the upper house of parliament. The fear in Egypt at this point is not that the Brotherhood is too extreme or will become so, but rather that it is becoming too pragmatic and therefore too appealing to voters in a more open system. [2]Michele Dunne is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/categories\\_of\\_islamism/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/categories_of_islamism/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele\\_dunne/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele_dunne/)

Lee Smith (2008-08-01 11:16:26)

I appreciate Tamara Cofman Wittes's useful [1]typology distinguishing the three different types of Islamist groups, but I do not think I agree that a decisive factor with the category-two outfits—the 'local' or 'nationalist' militant Islamist movements—is that they "exist in weak or failing states." Lebanon, for instance, as Tamara notes, is a weak state, but that is not why Hezbollah is powerful, or it would be difficult to explain why no Islamist party representing the Middle East's Sunni majority holds power at least equal to that of the Party of God. Hezbollah, as a representative of Shia interests, might well be relevant to the Lebanese political process regardless of its regional affiliations, but it is as powerful as it is only because its militia is heavily armed by Iran and Syria. There must be many reasons why after 9/11 so many policymakers and analysts have chosen to overlook the relationships between Islamist groups and Arab states. But it strikes me that, beside their religious orientation, this is the one common thread running through the three different categories of Islamist organizations that Tamara identifies—transnational *takfiris*, nationalist militants in weak states, and local groups "that eschew violence... and aspire to a political role" in relatively strong states. For instance, in the first category, there is Al Qaeda in Iraq—allowed transit and provided with logistical assistance, at the very least, by the Syrian regime. In the second there is Hezbollah, whose relationship with Syria has already been noted, and Hamas, the chief of whose political wing is a neighbor of Bashar al-Asad. In the final group, there is Jordan's Islamic Action Front, which also has close ties to the Hashemite Kingdom's historical rival in Damascus. I don't mean to pick on the Asad family, for the fact is that all Arab regimes play the same game. From Nasser dumping relatively tame members of the Muslim Brotherhood on Saudi Arabia, to Riyadh's own Prince Nayef whose foreign and domestic policy sends troubled Salafist youth off to die and kill Shia and Americans in Iraq: the regimes

use Islamists of all stripes to create havoc abroad and destabilize rivals. Clearly Arab rulers have a huge stake in warning us against Islamists within their own borders vying for shares of power; but insofar as their actions speak louder than words, the regimes are showing us that Islamists of all stripes really are trouble, or else they wouldn't be so useful serving strategic interests—at the expense of someone else's regime. So, I am not sure why Americans should be left holding the bag, trying to create a democratic process out of thin air in order to temper those who the experts in Arab politics know are least susceptible to liberal remedy. [2] *Lee Smith is a visiting fellow at the Hudson Institute.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/categories\\_of\\_islamism/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/categories_of_islamism/)
2. [http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff\\_bio&eid=LeeSmith](http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff_bio&eid=LeeSmith)

## Goodbye to Ehud (2008-07-31 15:46)

From [1] Alan Dowty



As predicted, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert could not survive the steady drumbeat of scandal that has marked his recent career. It was the Lebanese debacle of 2006 that put his prime ministership into a permanent tailspin, but he survived the final report of the Winograd Commission and might well have remained aloft until the next scheduled elections—in 2010—but for the sleaze factor that brought him down to earth.

The disclosure that a U.S. businessman (Morris Talansky) was acting as Olmert's personal ATM machine was, as noted [2] here previously, the last straw. It set in motion the machinery for new primary elections in his Kadima Party, now set for September 17, which would certainly have ended in his political demise; had Olmert dared to contest the result, his support would have been microscopic. But then came yet another "last straw": charges that Olmert had been arranging his own family travel at someone else's expense (the "Rishon Tours" scandal). And, it should be recalled, this comes on top of three other, still-pending investigations: two involving personal favors granted by Olmert as minister of trade and industry, and one involving his purchase of a home at an artificial price.

So the prime minister finally decided to make a virtue out of necessity and call it a day. But he may yet drag out his tenure in office by several months. The newly-elected leader of Kadima will need to reconstitute the governing coalition, requiring the agreement of Labor, the Pensioners' Party, and Shas (the Sephardi ultra-orthodox party). Labor and the Pensioners will likely agree—neither is looking forward to new elections, given current polls—but Shas is a question mark. At the very least Shas will drive a very hard bargain to prolong the life of the coalition.

Likud and its leader Benjamin Netanyahu are of course calling loudly for new elections now, given their lead in the polls. Conventional wisdom says that Kadima is a spent force and will be reduced to minor party status in the next election, going the way of previous centrist parties that burst onto the political scene and then faded from view. Conventional wisdom may be right. Whether elections are held in early 2009 (if the new Kadima leader fails to form a government), or as scheduled in mid-2010, barring major shifts Netanyahu is likely to emerge as Israel's prime minister almost exactly a decade after his rather messy exit from that office.

Within Kadima, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni holds the advantage for now; her main challenger will be

former Chief of Staff and Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, with former Shin Bet director Avi Dichter and Interior Minister Meir Sheetrit in the mix. As usual, there is no shortage of candidates with strong security credentials.

Spokesmen on the right worry that Olmert, as a lame duck—and possibly a lame duck until early 2009—will use his time to conclude a final peace agreement with the Palestinians, in line with the goal of achieving such a settlement by year's end. The concern is misplaced, as the chances of achieving agreement—despite recent happy talk—remain very slim, and even if achieved on paper an agreement probably could not be implemented by either side: not by Israel, and certainly not by a Palestinian Authority that cannot even guarantee compliance by the population it still ostensibly controls.

On the other hand, a breakthrough in negotiations with Syria is something that a lame-duck prime minister might pursue with some hope of restoring his reputation and some prospect of success.

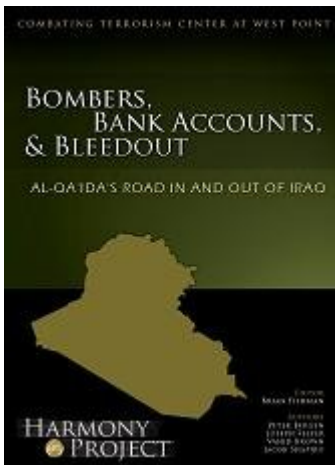
1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/last\\_straw/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/last_straw/)

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## 2.8 August

### Foreign fighters in Iraq (2008-08-01 16:47)

From [1]Assaf Moghadam



The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point just released a study on the foreign fighters streaming into Iraq. The new study, [2]Bombers, Bank Accounts, and Bleedout: al-Qa'ida's Road in and Out of Iraq, edited by my colleague Brian Fishman, expands on an [3]analysis of Al Qaeda in Iraq's personnel records conducted by the CTC in December 2007. Chapters are written by Brian Fishman and Joseph Felter, Peter Bergen, Jacob Shapiro, and Vahid Brown.

Bombers, Bank Accounts, and Bleedout not only expands on the analysis of the Sinjar Records conducted in the first report but also introduces a host of new data. It contains statistics on the exact number and nationality of foreign fighters held by the United States at Camp Bucca in Iraq; contracts signed by AQI's foreign suicide bombers; contracts signed by AQI fighters entering and leaving Iraq; accounting sheets signed by various fighters that indicate funding sources and expenditures; several narratives describing AQI's network in Syria, personnel problems, and ties to Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon; weapons reports, and other documents. These documents can be [4]downloaded from the CTC's website.

Some of the report's major findings are that foreign fighters were an important source of funds for Al Qaeda in Iraq, and that Saudi fighters contributed far more money than any other nationality. The report concludes that "bleedout" of fighters from Iraq is occurring, but in relatively small numbers. Nonetheless, these individual fighters will likely be well-trained and very dangerous. The primary threat from these fighters is to Arab states, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and possibly Somalia. A chapter devoted to smuggling finds that smuggling of all kinds takes place across the Syrian-Iraqi border, and is linked to rampant corruption in both countries.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/assaf\\_moghadam/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/assaf_moghadam/)
2. [http://www.ctc.usma.edu/harmony/pdf/Sinjar\\_2\\_July\\_23.pdf](http://www.ctc.usma.edu/harmony/pdf/Sinjar_2_July_23.pdf)
3. <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/harmony/pdf/CTCForeignFighter.19.Dec07.pdf>
4. <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/harmony/Sinjar2.asp>

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### Peter W. Rodman, 1943-2008 (2008-08-03 09:28)

From [1]Stephen Peter Rosen



[2] Peter Rodman, a member of MESH, passed away on Saturday. I met Peter in 1980 in Santa Monica. I was very junior, he had already worked at the highest levels in government, and was just back from a long trip. But he immediately joined into a serious conversation and worked to include me in it. This seriousness and decency would be visible to me for the next 25 years. In Washington, no matter how high he rose, or what difficulties he faced, he kept the human qualities that made him admirable. He will be sorely missed.

Remembrances are invited from colleagues.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)

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Fouad Ajami (2008-08-05 10:29:48)

When I think of [1]Peter Rodman, I don't think of any particular defining episode or anecdote. My thoughts are cumulative, my impressions are of the man in full. A genuine public servant in a world where people increasingly scramble for private gains. A self-effacing man in a culture given to celebrity and self-promotion. Seeing him in Washington or Baghdad, you saw the man as he is: modest, devoted, inquisitive. We need more people like him, but we don't have them. In and out of high government assignments, he never changed in demeanor and manners. Joseph Conrad memorably wrote of the truth that every man's death takes out of the universe. Peter takes with him a big, quiet truth, of a good and decent American life. [2]*Fouad Ajami is professor and director of Middle East studies at the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)
2. [http://apps.sais-jhu.edu/faculty\\_bios/faculty\\_bio1.php?ID=24](http://apps.sais-jhu.edu/faculty_bios/faculty_bio1.php?ID=24)

Miguel "Mike" Walsh (2008-08-05 10:48:27)

I commend both David Schenker and Michael Rubin for their insightful and warm-hearted remembrances of [1]Peter Rodman ([2]here and [3]here). They have expressed (better than I could) the experience of working side-by-side with Peter during one of the most trying times in recent national history. I served along with David and Michael under Peter as the Afghanistan-Pakistan Country Director in OSD Policy between 1999-2004. I recall Peter's calm and steadying influence in the hectic days immediately after the 9/11 attacks. In that period of loss and rage, his was a voice of moderation and reasoned judgement. He held us together and kept us focused on the true goals of national service: protection of the the American people and our way of life. In his lifetime, the scope of his contributions to the national security was enormous, spanning continents and eras. I was proud to have served with him—worked with him and for him—through my final days at OSD. Now, with his passing, I am grateful to have known him as a leader, a mentor, and a friend. He leaves a wonderful legacy. My thoughts and prayers are with his family, his friends, and his memory.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/peter\\_w\\_rodman\\_1943\\_2008/#comment-853](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/peter_w_rodman_1943_2008/#comment-853)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/peter\\_w\\_rodman\\_1943\\_2008/#comment-860](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/peter_w_rodman_1943_2008/#comment-860)

Ichiro Fujisaki (2008-08-05 21:15:41)

I have known [1]Peter Rodman since the mid-90s. We worked closely when he was Assistant Secretary of Defense. At the time, I was DG, North America of the Japanese Foreign Ministry. As usual, there were enough complicated issues, but he was always calm, thoughtful and very friendly. In short, he was a great counterpart. I came back only two months ago to Washington as ambassador and was looking forward to working with him. His passing away is a great loss for myself as well as to the friendship between our two countries. May he rest peacefully in heaven. [2]*Ichiro Fujisaki is ambassador of Japan to the United States.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)
2. <http://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/english/html/embassy/ambassador.htm>

Michael Makovsky (2008-08-05 16:21:31)

I too worked in the Pentagon with [1]Peter Rodman a few years ago and I found him a humble, wise foreign policy veteran with an extremely knowledgeable and inquisitive mind. I first met Peter in 2000 at a think tank talk, and he was kind enough to take an interest in me and my doctoral studies at Harvard. After he entered DOD as Assistant Secretary, he sought to help me get a position at the Pentagon. While I did not have extensive contact with him at DOD, the contact I did have always involved him asking very pointed relevant questions in a humble fashion. His death is shocking. May Peter rest in peace and his family be comforted. *Michael Makovsky is foreign policy director of the Bipartisan Policy Center, and a former special assistant in the Office of Secretary of Defense.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)

Lew Stern (2008-08-05 13:16:30)

I took [1]Peter Rodman to Hanoi, Vietnam, during the summer of 2005. It was a trip that he had longed to do, but the Vietnamese were not prepared in 2004 to agree to host the visit, largely because of reasons that were extraneous to the notion of an ASD-level trip itself. I recall Mr. Rodman's frustration, and his view of what he could accomplish. He remained convinced that dividends could be derived by such a visit, and by early 2005 the Vietnamese Defense Ministry had warmed to the idea. We accomplished the visit in the summer of 2005, during the hottest, most humid, most disagreeable time of the year. Mr. Rodman was unflappable. His shirt collar never showed the wear and tear of the scorching Hanoi sun, the overwhelming dust and grim, and other physical realities of Hanoi. His visit was a truly cerebral event. He managed to take normally reticent Vietnamese Foreign and Defense Ministry interlocutors and turn them into voluble partners yearning to exchange strategic viewpoints. He was a masterful speaker, and managed to produce coherent presentations in multiple back-to-back sessions with the Defense Ministry, senior Foreign Ministry representatives, officials from the National Defense College, and students and faculty representing the Foreign Ministry's Institute for International Relations. He spoke eloquently, in such quotable sentences, and brought order and coherence to wide-ranging discussions. He exerted great command over his audiences during this trip. He evoked powerful images and recollections of the last days of the Paris Peace negotiations in discussions with Vietnamese senior officials and young Foreign Affairs trainees. He had this way of clasping his hands in front of him, and leaning into a microphone that struck me as an act of intimacy with his audience. He took a posture in answering

queries from the audience that suggested real, deliberate schooling in both appearance and rhetoric; it struck me that he approached the microphone with the same enthusiasm, confidence and civility whether he was addressing elected officials on the Hill or taking a podium in a fairly fundamental Vietnamese Foreign Ministry teaching facility, run down by age, probably constructed by Soviet-trained builders in the 1960s. I look over my notes from the June 2005 visit and see that he later reported he was received with "surprising warmth" in Hanoi by senior Defense, Foreign Ministry, and Public Security officials, including then Defense Minister Pham Van Tra. He drew the conclusion, at the end of his trip, that our respective perceptions of regional security were "clearly converging," and the Vietnamese defense establishment was "eager to do more in the bilateral defense relationship. He noted that there were many "subtle indications" that the Vietnamese had China on their minds. In addition, a Deputy Foreign Minister told of the perception in the region that "America is back" in Asia—engaged and playing a positive role. Mr. Rodman was gratified that he could confirm this, and pleased that the Vietnamese saw the same personal symmetry in a career arc that led him to play a role in negotiating peace, normalizing relations with China, and nudging normalization of defense relations with Vietnam forward. Coincidentally, on August 4, 2008, the day I learned that Mr. Rodman has passed away, I was scheduled to meet with Dr. Hoang Anh Tuan, the Vietnamese Embassy's Political Counselor for Congressional Affairs. Dr. Tuan was the Director of the Foreign Ministry's Institute for International Relations in 2005, and was Mr. Rodman's host. He recalled the warmth, the frankness, and the true seminar-like quality of Mr. Rodman's interaction with the Institute's diplomats in training. Mr. Rodman gave renewed relevance to the phrase most fitting as recognition of the impression he made as ASD/ISA: He was a gentleman and a scholar. *Lewis Stern is Director for Southeast Asia, Office of the Secretary of Defense.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)

A former housemate (2008-08-05 15:49:11)

It's touching to read these very appropriate tributes to [1]Peter Rodman's gentle brilliance. Peter was a devoted and patriotic American and even though I was to the left of the left in the days we shared a group house in the mid-70s when he worked at the Ford White House, with and for Henry Kissinger, I liked him enormously. I hope it will not be out of place to tell you that he was a hilarious and somewhat bumbling member of our extended family. We shared household chores by rotating them through the group. When it was someone's "week" he/she was responsible for buying the food, and for cooking one meal for the entire house. Our cooking abilities varied, and Peter was noted for the intensity with which he approached his responsibilities. He was by no means the worst cook in the house, either. We were a motley group: two low-level government bureaucrats, one grad student, one public defender, one arty advertising type, and Peter. We always wondered why he would want to live with us, or perhaps more aptly, why he was allowed to. I don't think one of us would have passed even the lowest-level security clearance. I suspect Peter was able to reassure Kissinger, Shultz and the White House that we were all clueless and no threat to the civilized world, no matter how disreputable our political views. He was, of course, right—he knew a security threat when he saw one. He left for work early each morning, returning late in the evening, working Saturdays, but sleeping as late as possible on Sundays, listening to his beloved opera records for hours. He was remarkably discreet about his work; I don't remember his ever saying anything that could have been construed then or now as a security breach. His dry sense of humor went over our heads most of the time, and he was delighted when we'd get his intricate jokes. We all despised Nixon, but it didn't faze him in the least. He, and we, set that aside because he was such a wonderful, gentle human being and because one could not help but respect him and his convictions because of his deep sincerity. I lost touch with him over the years, and my left-wing politics moderated somewhat, but I remain a staunch Democrat. Nonetheless, I was pleased to see his return to government in the early Bush II years. It was comforting to know that he was in government: it gave me a confidence that my country's best interests were being looked after. He's died too young. My thoughts and prayers go to Veronique and his children during this very sad time. They deserved more time together.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)

Mara Karlin (2008-08-06 22:22:04)

[1]Peter Rodman was a brilliant and engaging fellow who served as a mentor to many in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). He could write memos like no other. In a building like the Pentagon, where one's writings are often limited in verbiage with sufficient "white space," Peter always found a penetrating and articulate way to convey his thoughts. As Levant Director in OSD, it was my great honor to bring Peter to Lebanon—a place he had been fascinated by—in 2006. Our trip, the first visit by a senior-level civilian defense official in many years, was intense. Yet I was awed that Peter was just as giddy with excitement as I was—unlike other senior officials, he indulged in the

incredibility of this experience. Even when he became sick, Peter enthusiastically emailed me about Levant issues. He would not be slowed down. He will be sorely missed. *Mara Karlin serves as Special Assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.* [2][Click here for a photo of Peter Rodman and Lebanese prime minister Fouad Siniora, Beirut, November 2006.](#) —MESH Admin

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)
2. <http://www.daylife.com/photo/0cHQ1pF25K8j1>

Alex Pascal (2008-08-07 12:00:49)

I didn't know [1]Peter Rodman very well, but I feel a certain kinship with him. We attended the same high school in Boston, The Roxbury Latin School, though he graduated some three and half decades before me. When I arrived in Washington in 2005 as a naive twenty-something with a passion for foreign policy, I immediately looked Peter up and emailed him, despite having only a vague idea of his eminent background and senior position in the Pentagon. I received a personal reply the following day and found myself sitting in his office the next week. After I expressed my interest in national security affairs, I know he went out of his way to find me an internship in the Pentagon. As a DOD intern working in the Middle East office, I had a few opportunities to interact directly with Peter. I remember a kind, pensive man; someone who listened and thought before he spoke in meetings. I remember him going out of his way to thank me, quite unnecessarily, for a briefing book I had prepared for one of his many trips. I remember getting memos and drafts of speeches and letters back down the "chain" with his incisive comments that made me smile, so impressed was I by his clarity, intelligence, and turn of phrase. Most of all, I remember "escorting" him to a meeting and literally running down the long halls of the Pentagon and up many flights of stairs to keep up with him—a man 35 years my senior. The meeting was with a group of students, like me, interested in U.S. foreign policy. He spent over two hours (ninety minutes more than allotted for the session) chatting with the students and dispensing his wealth of accumulated wisdom in anecdotal nuggets. From all that I hear and the little that I know of Peter Rodman, he was a wise and good man. I am saddened by his death, and feel grateful to have crossed his path, if only for a short while.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)

Judi Lempert Green (2008-08-05 22:12:00)

I went to summer camp with [1]Peter Rodman from 1958 through 1964, when we counselors sat one August night and listened, aghast, to Barry Goldwater's acceptance speech—with its note of welcome to "extremism in the defense of liberty." I'm fairly sure Peter voted for LBJ that fall. I know he admired fellow Bostonian JFK and was deeply affected by his death. Even as a young teenager Peter was known and admired for his intellect, his wit, and his all-around niceness. He worried at times about the latter, so it's good to read in these tributes that kindness was a trait that he retained 'til the end. We were a letter-writing generation, and his letters were eagerly anticipated for their cleverness, humor, and witty graphics. We were in touch periodically through our college years and while he worked on the Rockefeller campaign with Dr. Kissinger. Just last fall we exchanged greetings through a mutual camp friend—and I so much regret that feelings about our political differences led me to defer following up with more direct contact. Did I mention that at 17 he was a magnificent King in our camp performance of *The King and I*? I can still see him pacing the stage, while singing/speaking "'Tis a Puzzlement." He was at his most charismatic.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)

Bruce Jentleson (2008-08-04 09:04:46)

We all have experienced relationships in which political and policy differences preclude even cordial personal relations. Not with [1]Peter Rodman. I always found him open to honest exchange and friendship. We traveled together to the Middle East back during the 2000 presidential campaign on a bipartisan fact-finding delegation, and had the opportunity to talk and share experiences in ways that I still value. I last saw Peter in April at a conference at Tufts-Fletcher School on how to make the State Department Policy Planning Staff more effective. Peter was among a number of former S/P Directors participating. With him was his Dad. That struck me as just great. Condolences to his family. [2][Bruce Jentleson is a member of MESH.](#)

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bruce\\_jentleson/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bruce_jentleson/)



Tamara Cofman Wittes (2008-08-03 16:17:57)

I first saw [1]Peter Rodman in action in 1992, shortly after my arrival in Washington, at a foreign policy debate with Madeleine Albright during the Bush-Clinton campaign. Peter's approach that night was representative of his approach to Washington's often-divisive foreign policy conversation: he treated his opponent with calm civility and dry, gentle wit; he had a firm grip on the history of U.S. foreign policy and of enduring U.S. interests; he was wary of grandiose ambitions and of clever solutions to complicated problems; and he kept hammering away at the big strategic questions that he thought needed emphasis. In his brief time at Brookings, Peter quickly became an indispensable part of our policy discussions and administrative meetings alike. His humor was so dry you often didn't know whether he was pulling your leg—it would become clear only later, when he winked at you in the elevator as he repeated his remark. He and I spent some time debating the wisdom of democracy efforts in Egypt: Peter was very conscious of the strategic advantages of close U.S.-Egyptian relations, and of what might be at risk in case of political instability there. I had hopes of bringing him around to my view that liberal reform is crucial to stabilizing Egypt and sustaining U.S.-Arab strategic cooperation. He was also a frequent participant in Saban Center discussions of Israeli-Syrian negotiations and of strategic challenges from Iran. It's hard to believe Peter won't be back at his desk at Brookings; there are so many more conversations I wanted to have with him, and so much I would have learned. [2]*Tamara Cofman Wittes is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara\\_cofman\\_wittes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara_cofman_wittes/)

Barry Rubin (2008-08-04 02:13:45)

[1]Peter Rodman was a very kind person in a way that one cannot easily appreciate without having had contact with the many Washington types who flaunt their importance and only seek their own narrow personal interest. He did not change from being open and modest. He always showed the highest moral and intellectual character. No one could possibly have met him without liking and respecting him. How much better the world would be with more people like him. How bereft it is to be robbed of such a fine person. [2]*Barry Rubin is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry_rubin/)

Jacqueline Newmyer (2008-08-04 02:10:05)

[1]Peter Rodman set an example of public service that touched people in ways that he may not have recognized. This would have been the case if he had simply wielded his formidable knowledge and deployed his extremely sound diplomatic instincts. But in addition, he extended every encouragement to the open exchange of opinions and arguments, regardless of his interlocutors' rank or station. After encountering him at the Pentagon and being awed by his sagacity, I happened to be at a Congressional hearing with him in 2006. During a break after our testimony, he took the time to engage me on ideas even though VIPs and reporters were clamoring for his attention, and I was just a young, green student of defense strategy. I will never forget how grateful I was to hear from him or the way he combined a seriousness of purpose with a gentleness of spirit. As the other tributes to him attest, this was the sort of thing that he did all the time. [2]*Jacqueline Newmyer is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jacqueline\\_newmyer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jacqueline_newmyer/)

Ruth Wedgewood (2008-08-04 02:09:00)

My last glimpse of [1]Peter Rodman was in a sidewalk chat in front of Brookings, on a lovely spring afternoon in Washington, talking about our shared concern at the possible side effects of American policy on the newly coined state of Kosovo—worrying that the Administration's push for recognition was setting up a principle of secession that might haunt us in the future. I learned of his death the day after my return from a summer visit to Kosovo, where some of the problems of a partially recognized state have become apparent. As Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs throughout the war in Iraq and the struggle against Al Qaeda, Peter was a wise and challenging counsellor. He did not try to mask his annoyance when American policy wandered, as in our uncertainty about what to do with North Korea's push to develop nuclear weapons. He made plain the difficulties of formulating policy in a fitful inter-agency process, and certainly knew the challenges of engaging with the Congress and its 535 secretaries of state. In every briefing to the Defense Policy Board, he was utterly frank when he thought there were no good options against a foreign foe. He was always thoughtful, rather than emphatic, and provided the skeptical

voice that was so essential in a sensible policy process. His wife Veronique is in our thoughts, as she always was in his. [2]*Ruth Wedgewood is professor of international law and diplomacy at the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)
2. [http://apps.sais-jhu.edu/faculty\\_bios/faculty\\_bio1.php?ID=57](http://apps.sais-jhu.edu/faculty_bios/faculty_bio1.php?ID=57)

Michael Rubin (2008-08-03 14:37:54)

I met [1]Peter Rodman soon after beginning work at the Pentagon in September 2002. He was a true gentleman, humorous, brilliant, and kind. Too many senior Pentagon officials shield themselves with the trappings of office and confuse bluster and ego with leadership. Peter did not. Whereas some officials measured their worth by the numbers of meetings they could attend, Peter understood what leadership meant. He knew the name of every desk officer, and kept time in his schedule to read thoroughly all papers which passed his desk and talk to those who had questions or ideas. It was ironic—but known to all bottom-level worker-bees like myself—that Peter was the only official in the hierarchy who knew exactly what was going on. He did not bother with happy-to-glad edits, but rather asked incisive questions that propelled routine papers into three-dimensional policy that mattered. When he criticized, it was gentle and constructive. Peter was one of those Pentagon rarities who cared for people and showed it. I have little doubt that all who served under Peter will hold him up as the model of leadership to replicate. His devotion to his family was nothing short of amazing. Peter was brilliant. His breadth of knowledge was simply incredible; he was walking history and a natural teacher. As documents from his early years were declassified, it was real treat to revisit them with Peter. He had an analyst's mind and was not above self-criticism. It is incredibly fortunate, at this sad time, that Peter was able to finish his [2]book before his condition worsened. I feel myself incredibly privileged that I had five years to know Peter Rodman. His loss strikes deep. [3]*Michael Rubin is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0307269795/>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_rubin/)

Robert Satloff (2008-08-04 10:50:24)

While others knew [1]Peter Rodman in government, I had the pleasure of knowing him principally in the "think-tank" era of his career, first at the Nixon Center and then, more recently, at Brookings. All the accolades are true—he was unfailingly polite, resplendent in his well-cut suits and color-contrast shirts, and armed with a wit as dry and piercing as midday in the Sahara. Hosting me over lunch at the Cosmos Club, I recall him joking about bringing down the median age several decades—and he was already in his seventh. For as long as I knew him, Peter was a happy warrior in the battle of ideas over foreign policy in Washington. In this battle, Peter always came back to first principles—he had clarity of vision about the national interest, about the importance of standing with allies, about the need to stand up to the nefariousness of our adversaries. He was firmly in the "realist" camp but, on matters of the Middle East, he consistently stood apart from those realists who saw America's relations with Israel as an albatross and instead celebrated the alliance as a powerful asset in a region where America had few allies. Peter was, from the start, a friend of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, which I direct. Every four years (when he wasn't in government), Peter served as a member of our Presidential Study Groups, always injecting sound and sage advice into our deliberations. I recall that he traveled with a delegation from the Institute to Egypt and Israel in 1996. He was a joy to be with overseas as well as in Washington. Peter's name is on almost every bipartisan study we undertook at the Institute over the past 20 years. His contribution enriched our recommendations and his participation gave merit to our findings. Peter's passing is a great loss. On behalf of all my colleagues, I send our deepest condolences to Peter's family. [2]*Robert Satloff is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_satloff/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_satloff/)

Jaymie Durnan (2008-08-04 10:21:38)

I first met [1]Peter Rodman 20 years ago. It was quite by accident as I accidentally spilled my drink on him at some affair whose purpose slips my mind. What struck me at the time was that he was more apologetic than I was—a sign that he understood my embarrassment even more than I did. I next met Peter in February 2001. I was a member of the Defense Transition Team for Don Rumsfeld. Peter came in to interview for two jobs, one being the Assistant

Secretary of Defense ISA. I spent over two hours with him in the interview. What impressed me then was that, while I did not agree with everything he was saying, he could and did clearly articulate his reasoning for each of his statements. Moreover, as he explained to me, his thoughts were not merely created by a consensus of thinking, but from the collective judgments of many people of many different views—many views which were polar opposites of his personal views. For me, there was no doubt he should be a member of the Defense Team. During my time in the Pentagon I had numerous occasions to meet with Peter. Sometimes I went on my own to get his pulse on an issue and sometimes I went as an emissary for other officials. I was also with Peter a number of times when he briefed Secretary Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz and Under Secretary Feith. Again and again his argument was brilliant in its perfection. Peter never avoided talking truth to power. He did not always succeed, but he tried. I will miss him. My prayers are with Peter and his family. *Jaymie Durnan was Special Assistant to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)

Adam Garfinkle (2008-08-04 10:25:39)

I have known [1]Peter Rodman for so many years that I cannot remember when I met him. Peter and I were in email contact just last week (I asked him to write something for the next issue of *The American Interest*) and he was reluctant to do it because he wanted to first finish the book he was writing since leaving government. When we had lunched a few weeks earlier at the Cosmos Club he told me about his illness, but said he was feeling okay and getting better. When I saw his wife Veronique just about two weeks ago, I asked after Peter and she said everything seemed to be going well. So I am totally shocked by his death, and deeply saddened. We worked together most closely in 2000-01 on the Hart-Rudman Commission. I was the chief writer of the three reports and Peter was the study group director for the second, strategy phase of the project. His work was superb, as it had been in government before and after: thoughtful, shrewd and lucid. Peter was an excellent writer, an indefatigable worker, and possessed of a wit so dry it could cut glass. I can barely believe he's gone. [2]*Adam Garfinkle is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)

Aaron Friedberg (2008-08-04 11:19:11)

I first met [1]Peter Rodman about ten years ago, when he visited Princeton for a small dinner with students. I knew about his extraordinary career, of course, and expected someone whose ego matched his accomplishments. Like so many others, I was surprised and delighted to discover that Peter was the complete opposite of the stereotypical successful Washingtonian. He was modest to a fault, without pretension, learned, open-minded, honest and independent in his thinking, genuinely patriotic and, above all, unfailingly honorable and decent. He was a good man and I feel fortunate to have known him. Like so many others, I mourn the loss to his family and friends, and to our country. [2]*Aaron Friedberg is professor of politics and international affairs at Princeton University.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)

2. <http://www.princeton.edu/politics/people/bios/index.xml?netid=alf>

J. Scott Carpenter (2008-08-04 16:11:24)

I last enjoyed [1]Peter Rodman's company over lunch a few months back at his beloved Cosmos Club, a place where, he said, he always felt younger. (All he had to do was look at the other members, he'd quipped.) I did not know him as well as many here did but I knew him intensely. During the early days of the Iraq war and often afterwards we would frequently cross paths (and occasionally swords). Despite the fact that we didn't always agree on every point, he was always gracious and, importantly, he listened. He seldom steam-rolled people, hoping instead that logic and sound argumentation would carry the day. (They didn't always.) Peter was learned; his arguments were crisp and clear; and he had forgotten more than I will ever know about how the interagency process works (and doesn't). And yet Peter was never dismissive or arrogant—two temptations seldom avoided in Washington. I will miss his advice, his thoughtfulness and his sense of humor. I feel the ache of loss that comes from knowing I will not be able to get to know him better. My prayers and my family's are with Peter's. [2]*J. Scott Carpenter is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j\\_scott\\_carpenter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j_scott_carpenter/)

Hisayoshi Ina (2008-08-04 18:05:46)

I met [1]Peter Rodman in the spring of 1992. After finishing my term as Washington correspondent, I moved to the Foreign Policy Institute of Johns Hopkins (SAIS), where he was my neighbor on the 7th floor of the Rome Building. He was my colleague but actually my professor. He was smart, decent, and kind to brief a Japanese journalist about what was happening in the world from his viewpoint. The last occasion I met him was at Brookings in March 2008, when he talked about the book he was writing. I mourn the loss to his family and friends, and to U.S.-Japan relations. *Hisayoshi Ina is foreign policy columnist at the Nikkei newspapers based in Tokyo.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)

David Schenker (2008-08-04 02:12:31)

[1]Like Michael Rubin, I too had the privilege to work closely with [2]Peter Rodman at the Pentagon. Peter was a remarkable individual, with a unique combination of insight, experience, humility, and humor. It was a pleasure to work with him in so many ways. OSD was a real pressure cooker, yet through it all, Peter maintained composure and was consistently kind to his colleagues and underlings. (He really stood out in this regard.) Clearly, he was beloved by the OSD desk officers. But his Military Assistants (MAs)—typically two Navy Captains—loved him as well. In other front offices, the MAs kept large supplies of Maalox; a Colonel in another office even had a heart attack on duty. Not so in Peter’s office. Moreover, Peter was a great writer who always improved and sharpened policy memos. With Peter, there was always value-added. From what I could tell, he lacked ego in policy matters. He was totally focused on mission, and didn’t take credit for other people’s work. Peter tried to bring people up. He pushed to get people into the meetings they needed to be in—regardless of protocol. Peter was as tough as anyone in the Administration on the issues. Yet because of how he interacted with others, he didn’t seem to engender the level of hostility that other Pentagon officials did—either within or outside of the Administration. I could be wrong about this, but it seems to me that after Secretary Rumsfeld made his infamous 2003 comment about “old Europe,” Peter may have been one of the few Pentagon politicals still invited to French embassy receptions. So Peter was a kind, decent, and honorable guy. But he was also a great analyst. And his decades of government service also provided him a broad range of anecdotes and stories from which to draw. Peter was encyclopedic. He was also very funny. For example, I remember discussing with Peter the oft-voiced concern that if the international (Hariri) tribunal weakened or removed President Asad, that Syria—under a new president—might become even more militant. In his typically understated, sardonic tone, Peter cited U.S. Ambassador to the USSR (1941-1946) Averell Harriman, who famously said: “Stalin I can deal with. It’s the hardliners in the Kremlin who concern me.” I could go on for pages about all of Peter’s great qualities—and I only knew him for six years or so. And I’m sure that everyone who worked with or for him would come up with a similar accounting. To me, Peter was a mentor and a model of government service and scholarship. He was also by all accounts an extremely proud and dedicated family man. He’s going to be sorely missed. [3]*David Schenker is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/peter\\_w\\_rodman\\_1943\\_2008/#comment-853](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/peter_w_rodman_1943_2008/#comment-853)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)

3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david\\_schenker/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david_schenker/)

Edward Luttwak (2008-08-07 22:49:33)

Who will ever forget [1]Peter Rodman? Not I, for he was the only one who retained a fully intellectual disposition with an affinity for government office, and improbably combined both with unaffected human warmth. [2]*Edward Luttwak is a senior associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)

2. [http://www.csis.org/component/option,com\\_csis\\_experts/task,view/id,109/](http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_experts/task,view/id,109/)

MESH Admin (2008-08-08 14:07:21)

*MESH has received the following email:* Date: Fri, 8 Aug 2008 11:19:44 -0400 From: Gail Chalef (gchalef@brookings.edu) Subject: Peter Rodman Funeral Plans Thank you again for your calls and e-mails regarding Peter Rodman’s death. His wife, Veronique, and their two children are most appreciative of the expressions of sympathy and notes of appreciation that they have received from all of Peter’s friends and colleagues. For those who might be able to attend, Peter’s funeral will be on Monday, August 11 in Boston, Massachusetts at 1:30 pm. The location of the funeral is: Temple Israel 477 Longwood Avenue Boston, Mass. The burial will take place at the Sharon Memorial

Park on Dedham Street in Sharon, Mass. (about a half hour drive from the Temple). Directions to the cemetery will be provided at the funeral service. Following the burial, a reception will be held at the Harvard Club of Boston (374 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA). If you are unable to travel to Boston on Monday, a memorial service will be held in Washington in mid-September. We will provide details regarding the Washington service as soon as we have them.

Pat Harrison (2008-10-11 09:36:10)

As A/S for Education and Cultural Affairs and Acting U/S for Public Diplomacy under Secretary Powell, I had many meetings which included Peter Rodman. He used few words when it was obvious that copious verbal paragraphs were required, he applied wit and humor when others were still struggling with concepts, and he was kind in his listening and his actions. Years ago, in Brooklyn, I would hear my father describe someone (and it was a rare occasion) with the highest praise in just three words. They apply now: a real mensch. *Patricia Harrison is president and CEO of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.*

### Egypt embarrasses itself again (2008-08-04 16:37)

From [1]Michele Dunne



As if it were not enough that an Egyptian criminal court sentenced civil society activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim in absentia to two years in prison plus a fine for "harming the reputation of Egypt abroad," now the Egyptian media reports that the courts have agreed to hear another suit seeking to strip Saad of his nationality. There are so many things wrong with these decisions that it is difficult to know where to start.

Topping the list, of course, is the rich irony that it is these very decisions that harm Egypt's image far more than Saad has ever done. Then there is the fact that these are among the ridiculous third-party cases allowed by Egyptian law, in which the charges are brought not by an injured party or even by government prosecutors but by sleazy lawyers loosely affiliated with the ruling party. Such third-party cases often become truly ludicrous, for example when a third party sues—sometimes successfully—to force a divorce between two happily married Egyptians because one of them has done some unorthodox writing and so is considered an apostate who is not allowed to be married to a Muslim. In Saad's case, the court agreed that Saad hurt the interests of all Egyptians by calling for U.S. military assistance to the Egyptian government to be cut or conditioned unless the country makes progress toward democratization and greater respect for human rights. A strange idea, indeed, about who has Egyptians' best interests at heart.

There is a silver lining to the judgment against Saad: at least he was convicted of an explicitly political crime, unlike opposition politician Ayman Nour, languishing in prison for nearly three years now on trumped-up forgery charges. While neither Nour nor Ibrahim are causes célèbres in Egypt's essentially conservative and conformist society, each has enjoyed a mini-resurgence of support recently among young liberal Egyptians, who are finding new ways to express themselves, whether joining Facebook groups, posting comments on the website of al-Masry al-Youm, or singing patriotic songs on the beach at Alexandria. This is no revolution, but it is heartening to see younger Egyptians identifying the regime's dirty tricks for what they are.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele\\_dunne/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele_dunne/)

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Steven A. Cook (2008-08-07 11:57:03)

Michele Dunne and Tamara Cofman Wittes provide [1]excellent analyses of the ongoing Saad Eddin Ibrahim saga. Egypt has, as Michele suggests, once again embarrassed itself in the leadership's efforts to destroy a 69-year-old academic whose threat to the regime seems hard to imagine. Saad's in absentia conviction and the new effort to strip him of his citizenship confirm that Egypt is everything but the modernizing, reforming, new prioritizing, and democratizing country that its spokesmen, henchmen, and apologists have been claiming it has become for the better part of five years. Nobody serious ever believed these people anyway, but it is particularly galling after putting Saad in the dock once again. Sadly, Egypt's elite don't see things quite the same way, effortlessly explaining away Saad and Ayman Nour as corrupt opportunists looking to curry favor with the United States. When I was in Egypt in late May and early June, I was confronted with an Egyptian who average Americans perhaps know best, who told me that "Saad Eddin Ibrahim is an asshole because he wants to create tension with our Christian brothers. Everyone knows we love each other." I wasn't terribly surprised. The fact remains that Egypt is a strong state that persecutes its people with relative impunity. As Tamara points out, there is a growing cadre of techno-savvy opposition activists, but this hardly compares to the coercive apparatus of the Egyptian state. All the relevant Egyptian ministries devoted to internal and external security have built extensive infrastructure to monitor what is being said about Egypt and Egyptians on the web. I can't imagine that this is because Interior Minister Habib El Adly digs on [2]arabawy. All this data gathering has a purpose. It helps the Egyptian state repress, deflect, and undermine opposition in order to ensure that no coherent challenge to the state emerges. Thus far, President Mubarak and his associates have achieved their goal. With Egyptian society so thoroughly penetrated, the problems of collective action are only accentuated, leaving Egyptians to suffer at the hands of an increasingly repressive state. Under these circumstances, it seems that the best chance for Egypt to break out of its pathological pattern of authoritarian politics is through the assistance of external powers. Yet, Egypt presents a complicated policy puzzle. The significant shortcomings of Egypt's domestic political conditions aside, Egypt is a good ally of the United States. This raises the questions associated with democracy promotion that have become clichéd over the last two or three years: what happens when people hostile to the United States come to power? Is it better to pursue economic reform before political change? How does Washington protect its interests? I'm afraid that until someone has the answers to these questions and an enlightened administration is able to look beyond four- or eight-year time horizons, Washington will likely do very little other than issue lame protestations from the State Department about the plight of Saad and thousands of other victims of the Egyptian state who have had the temerity to question the sources of power, authority, and legitimacy in Egypt. [3]Steven A. Cook is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/egypt\\_embarrasses\\_itself\\_again/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/egypt_embarrasses_itself_again/)

2. <http://arabist.net/arabawy/>

3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven\\_a\\_cook/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven_a_cook/)

Tamara Cofman Wittes (2008-08-06 05:50:51)

Michele Dunne is [1]surely right to note that Saad Eddin Ibrahim's conviction, unlike the forgery conviction of opposition politician Ayman Nour in 2006, has a "silver lining," in that Saad was "convicted of an explicitly political crime." Indeed, the profligate prosecution of that category of crime called seditious libel is a hallmark of authoritarian regimes. (While seditious libel remains on the books in the UK and other places, it is rarely enforced.) In fact, with Saad's preposterous conviction on this latest charge, Egypt is becoming a world leader in using seditious libel prosecutions to shut down public discussion of government affairs, and control what locals (if not the rest of the world) learn about what the government says and does. The chilling impact of seditious libel laws is so glaringly obvious that Mubarak himself promised Egyptians during his 2005 re-election campaign that he would change the laws to remove prison sentences for libel—Egyptians are still [2]waiting for fulfillment of this (and other) promises. Seditious libel actions have been used in the years since 2005 to cut off discussion of government corruption, the health of the president, and other issues of fundamental and legitimate concern to Egyptian citizens. Seditious libel prosecution is by its nature a rearguard action, and a desperately ineffective one at that. In an era of globalized communications, only the most relentlessly repressive governments can truly control what their citizens learn about events taking place in their own country. In 2005, when protesters against the constitutional amendments were beaten in the streets of Cairo,

Egyptian state television dutifully ignored the story—but Al Jazeera reported it in detail. More recently in Egypt, ordinary people have used web videos, cell phone cameras, and even “twittering” (using a cell phone to update one’s blog on the go) to expose police abuses and unjust arrests. The information cycle is not beyond Egyptian government influence—government-run TV and newspapers still dominate, and legal intimidation does have an impact—but it is beyond Egyptian government control. Beyond control for now, anyway. Recent developments suggest that the Mubarak regime, perhaps in preparation for a leadership transition, is deploying new tools to shut down the narrow space available in current media for discussion of political issues. Independent Egyptian newspapers [3]reported last month that the National Democratic Party is considering a draft law that would set up a government committee to monitor and control radio, television, Internet traffic, perhaps even mobile-phone text messages. Egypt led the way in drafting the Arab League’s outrageous “[4]satellite charter” which, in the name of regulating a common resource, gives governments a blank check to shut down local transmitters of satellite channels that air inconvenient content. Egypt has already become the first state to enforce the law, [5]cutting off NileSat’s local distribution of al-Hewar, a London-based channel. Some observers have wondered whether Husni Mubarak will end his long and inglorious reign as a Gorbachev figure—preparing his country for a new era of openness—or as Pinochet, holding on ’til the bitter end, no matter what it may cost his countrymen. If this rumored media law emerges as a reality, the answer will be clear. The United States government championed Saad during his imprisonment in the early 2000’s, and has had much to say about the injustices inflicted on opposition politician Ayman Nour. But the Bush Administration has been far too subdued in its criticism of these more recent cases of persecution of the press. Nour deserves real justice, to be sure; and having taken America’s words to heart, he deserves American succor. But the rules governing what’s left of free expression in Egypt are also at stake right now, and the outcome of these legal battles will likely have much more impact on Egypt’s prospects for democracy than the fate of one man, however brave. Nour, if he has good fortune, will endure and may even run for president again. But if seditious libel and other persecutions of the press continue, no Egyptian may ever hear about his campaign. [6]*Tamara Cofman Wittes is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/egypt\\_embarrasses\\_itself\\_again/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/egypt_embarrasses_itself_again/)
2. <http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2006/07/11/egypt13712.htm>
3. <http://dailystaregypt.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=15008>
4. <http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=648>
5. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idUKL0381467620080403>
6. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara\\_cofman\\_wittes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara_cofman_wittes/)

## Peter Rodman on Islamism (2008-08-05 15:02)

From [1]Robert Satloff

The late [2]Peter Rodman said and wrote many wise things on a wide array of topics. One set of remarks that stands the test of time is the following presentation he delivered at a Washington Institute [3]conference in 1992. The triggering event was Algeria and the debate over whether the United States was right to accede to the Algerian military’s cancellation of the second round of parliamentary elections that almost surely would have brought Islamists to power. But, as was usual with Peter, the context was much broader—it was how the United States should approach the rise of radical Islamist politics across Muslim societies. Peter’s message—no less appropriate today, a time when the United States looks approvingly at political rules that enable Hamas, Hezbollah and the Muslim Brotherhood to gain ground, than when uttered more than fifteen years ago—is poignant, moving, and timeless: “Our response to Islamic fundamentalism is not only a question of foreign policy, but of our faith in ourselves.”



Remarks by Peter W. Rodman to the Soref Symposium on "Islam and the U.S.: Challenges for the Nineties," Washington, April 27, 1992.

There is no kind of issue as agonizing to a policymaker as this one. People in government are used to dealing with tactics—the last cable, the next meeting. This kind of problem forces them to think not only about strategy but about basic questions of political philosophy. Thus they naturally turn to scholars for guidance. But they also cannot escape the responsibility to ask crude questions like: Does Islamic politics pose a threat to us? If so, what can we do about it?

More than a dozen years after the Iranian revolution, it is now clear that Islamic fundamentalism has spread to the Sunni world as well as the Shi'i, and is a growing factor in regions from North Africa to the West Bank to Afghanistan and Central Asia. It is filling the vacuum left by the discrediting of other outlets for popular frustration, pan-Arabism, nationalism, and socialism. On its face, it looks to replace those "isms" as the main strategic challenge to moderate or pro-Western governments in the region.

Ironically, as the end of the Cold War seemingly marks the final victory of liberal democracy in a 200-year struggle in European political thought, the West now finds itself challenged by an atavistic force hostile to all Western political thought.

Experienced scholars remind us that militant Islam reflects deep-seated social grievances and causes. They caution us against looking for a new "enemy" now that Communism is defeated. They suggest it is a historical phase that will probably have to be endured. This is wise advice. Yet there is little comfort for the policymaker in the idea that this new source of anti-American radicalism will play itself out in twenty years or so. We do have a right to defend our interests. In doing so, there are some guidelines a policymaker ought to follow.

- First, it is true that we should not initiate hostility where there is none, and we should coexist with whoever is willing to coexist with us. The burden of making our relationships hostile, if hostile they are to become, should rest with the Islamic forces themselves.
- Second, however, we cannot avoid taking Islamic ideology seriously. Where a radical anti-Western philosophy is coupled with concretely hostile policies, we have a problem. It is patronizing and even insulting to dismiss as mere rhetorical exuberance a philosophy one of whose central tenets is rejection of the West as corrupt and evil. Much of the Islamic world is indeed bitter and resentful at Western cultural influence, driven by what Bernard Lewis calls "the politics of rage." Iran's military buildup and support for terrorism make it still a strategic threat.



- Third, we must recognize that a political movement can come to power through democratic means and not itself be democratic. Constitutional democracy means, at a minimum, political pluralism, limitations on government power, guarantees of individual and minority rights, the possibility of alternating parties in office. No Islamic leader subscribes to this. Islamic parties, rather, seek (out of moral conviction) to make institutional changes that would negate the possibility of their removal once in power, not only through political action but by reshaping educational and cultural life. Such movements do not deserve enormous deference from us for their political virtue. There is an abject quality to much Western discussion of this issue, which reflects a collapse of belief in our own democratic values.
- Fourth, the way to encourage moderates and weaken radicals is not to try to find three guys in the leadership entourage to bribe with TOW missiles, but to demonstrate by our firm resistance that radical policies are counterproductive. Hostile foreign policy moves must be resisted and penalized. That's the way to strengthen the hand of any moderates there may be.
- Fifth, Western fatalism as to the inevitability of the Islamic trend is a grave disservice to the millions of moderate, modern men and women in Muslim countries whose own reasons to fear fundamentalism are even greater than ours. Appeasement would sacrifice them as well as our own principles.
- Sixth, we should be wary of pushing friendly governments into risky experiments. It is not our job to accelerate the delegitimization of friendly governments that seem not to meet our standards, only to have them succeeded by something infinitely worse, as happened in Iran.

In sum, our response to Islamic fundamentalism is not only a question of foreign policy, but of our faith in ourselves. We should not be paralyzed by guilt as to our own presumed inadequacies or those of our friends as we face a movement whose most basic tenets reject the best of what the West has to offer. We may well have to coexist with it in a literal sense for a long period, but the notion of coexisting peacefully is more our concept than theirs. The rage against us is too great, as is the concrete threat of the nuclear, conventional and terrorist weapons it continues to marshal against us in the service of its rage.

Remembrances of Peter Rodman are posted [4]here.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_satloff/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_satloff/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter\\_rodman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/peter_rodman/)
3. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=199>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/peter\\_w\\_rodman\\_1943\\_2008/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/peter_w_rodman_1943_2008/)

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## China in the Middle East (2008-08-07 05:22)

From [1]Jon Alterman



As someone who normally focuses on the Middle East, why would I spend time thinking about China? The reason is simple: It is hard to imagine a future in the Middle East in which China does not play a more substantial role.

The Middle East emerged as a U.S. bailiwick in the early Cold War, and after the fall of the Soviet Union, no extra-regional state has thought to challenge U.S. preeminence. European nations have acquiesced to the U.S. lead, in part because they recognize that they cannot secure their interests in the ways that the United States does.

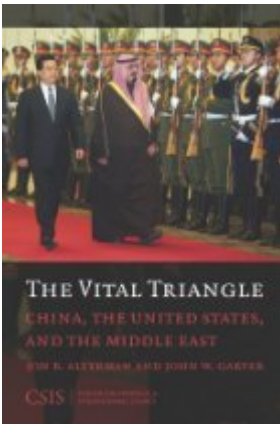
China, however, has felt less of a burden to comply with U.S. wishes, and the government often sees a range of reasons to depart from the U.S. script. Far more than the United States, China is dependent on Middle Eastern oil. More than 50 percent of China's imported oil comes from the Middle East, versus some 25 percent in the United States. Further, China's oil needs are growing, while U.S. oil consumption has flattened. China's strategic thinkers see the country's continued reliance on Middle Eastern oil to be a strategic liability, not only because the Middle East itself is an unstable region, but also because they have little faith in their own ability to secure the sea lanes needed to transport the oil in the event of tensions with the United States.

As China looks to U.S. management of the Middle East, the country's leaders grow concerned. The Iraq war and continued sparring with Iran have heightened tensions in the Gulf and helped drive up oil prices around the world. China is largely indifferent to issues of domestic governance among its trading partners, and it appreciates their indifference when it comes to internal conditions in China. China judges that whomever is in power in these countries will sell them oil, and they need not be concerned beyond that. After decades as an avowedly revolutionary power, China has become an intensely status quo power, and Chinese see the United States as tilting the world dangerously toward instability. The notion of spurring internal change in hostile countries such as Iran, or even in friendly countries such as Saudi Arabia, is anathema.

For all of its skepticism toward U.S. actions in the region, however, China is not indifferent to the U.S. lead. Indeed, the Sino-American relationship is the premier strategic question in China, and there is great sensitivity to the possibility of alienating the United States in a region that is clearly of strategic importance to both countries.

Up to now, China and its Asian neighbors have been the beneficiaries of U.S. efforts to secure the Gulf and its rich oil supplies. The United States has supplied the troops and the ships, and the Chinese have bought the oil. Some estimates price U.S. expenditures to secure Gulf oil at more than \$30 billion per year—and that was before the military campaign in Iraq. The United States has borne those costs as part of its efforts to build global security.

Critics charge that China has been content to be something less than a full partner on Gulf security, entering into deals for Iranian oil and gas in the face of U.S. efforts to isolate the Iranians. While China certainly thinks that efforts at isolation are unwise, it has often yielded to strong U.S. protests (prolonging negotiations with U.S. adversaries rather than walking away from the negotiating table). Such strong U.S. demands have also prompted China to trim its weapons sales to Iran. Similarly, China has gone along with U.N. Security Council efforts to try to persuade Iran to be more transparent about its nuclear program, although it has often been reluctant to impose additional sanctions and has counseled much more patience. This is not a hopeless case.



[2] Cooperation up to now has been incremental. Now, it is in the interests of both China and the United States that it become more systematic. The CSIS Middle East Program has just issued a book, *The Vital Triangle: China, the United States and the Middle East* (purchase [3]here; free download [4]here) that explores these questions more deeply. ([5]John W. Garver and I are co-authors.) The bottom line is this: The United States and China share a wide range of interests in the Middle East, and efforts by either the United States, China or Middle Eastern countries to freeze out any of the others will surely lead to all parties emerging as losers. Small steps toward burden-sharing—cooperation on naval measures in the Gulf, such as ship identification protocols and disaster response coordination—can help steer China’s deepening interest in the Middle East in a positive direction. More robust diplomatic coordination can go a long way as well. There is an opportunity here, and the alternative to success is not a happy one.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon\\_alterman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon_alterman/)
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51EXdkbV4QL.jpg>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/089206529X/>
4. <http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/080624-alterman-vitaltriangle.pdf>
5. <http://www.inta.gatech.edu/faculty-staff/listing.php?uID=20>

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### Can antisemitism be amusing? (2008-08-08 07:14)

From [1]Josef Joffe



Of course, antisemitism cannot be amusing. How could it be? This darkest of creeds has spawned million-fold death, not to speak of its less murderous forms

like discrimination, persecution and expulsion.

But here is a rare instance that might bring at least a bittersweet smile to your face. Then, further below, we'll get serious again.

Let's listen to Captain Sayyed Shahada, a member of the Egyptian Unique Mustache Association, who opined as follows on Egyptian TV on July 11, 2008 (the clip may be viewed at the end of this post):

I respect the mustache of this Hitler, because he humiliated the most despicable sect in the world. He subdued the people who subdued the whole world—him with his '11' mustache.... The generation of this Hitler... When I was little, my father, may he rest in peace, grew that kind of mustache, and so did all his classmates. They all had this '11' mustache. That was in the days of Hitler.

Funny, isn't it? Here are some salt-of-the-earth Egyptians who take pride in sporting "unique" mustaches and who have formed a club to promote this harmless pastime. Yet another little beacon of "civil society" which we cherish so much, isn't it?

But the problem in the Arab Middle East is a civil society that is by no means civil. Indeed, as this Egyptian example shows (add Jordan), there is an inverse correlation between governmental policy and societal attitudes. For the government, it has been peace with Israel for almost 30 years. Down below, it is deeply rooted and pervasive antisemitism.

Aren't we exaggerating a bit? No, and this is why these mustachioed Egyptians deliver such an interesting example. What could—normally—be farther away from a facial hair artist's mind than Jews? Who would worry about this "despicable sect" while clipping his bristles?

Well, Captain Shahada does, and if he does, who does not? Classical European antisemitism—blood libel, world domination and all—has migrated to the Arab Middle East. Interestingly, it got there way before the founding of Israel, let alone the taking of the West Bank. And so did the admiration of Adolf Hitler, as the good captain recalls.

And so this semi-funny little story reveals a truth that is much larger than Hitler's No. 11 mustache. Antisemitism, like any "anti-ism," is not about its object (the Jews), but about the obsession in the anti-ist's head. An obsession, your shrink will tell you, is the compulsive recurrence of images and ideas over which you have no control. The obsession consumes you, and it spreads relentlessly—all the way to mustaches, wax and clippers.

Think stubble and you think Hitler, Jews and world domination.

The Israelis have vacated Gaza, they might yet pull out of the West Bank, but how will they, qua Jews, ever manage to escape from the obsession-filled mind of Captain Shahada and millions of his kind?

It will be easier to re-divide Jerusalem than to remove this deepest of "root causes" from the collective psyche of Israel's neighborhood.

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If you do not see an embedded clip, [\[2\]click here](#).

[kml \_flashembed movie="http://www.youtube.com/v/CzEh4S86I8E" width="425" height="350" wmode="transparent" /]

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef\\_joffe/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef_joffe/)
2. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzEh4S86I8E>

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Walter Reich (2008-08-08 15:54:26)

I guess this little [1]absurdist clip would be funny if not for Captain Shahada's comment about the Jews being "the most despicable sect in the world," if not for the respect he has for Hitler for having "subdued the people who subdued the whole world," and if not the fact that what Hitler did to "subdue" those Jews was to orchestrate the systematic murder of six million of them by having them gassed, shot in pits or starved to death. When I first saw the clip on MEMRI a few days ago, my response was similar to the one Josef Joffe ultimately articulated so well. Can there be a more powerful confirmation of how *ordinary*, and therefore how basic and deep, antisemitism is in the Arab world? And how widespread? Joe is right that the stuff of jokes is the stuff of ordinary culture. And that is the scariest dimension of this clip. Jokes aren't funny in a society unless there's a general recognition of, and usually an agreement with, their premises. Captain Shahada's premises—that the Jews are "the most despicable sect in the world," that before Hitler they'd "subdued the whole world," and that Hitler is to be praised for having had the guts to kill them—are considered quite ordinary by more than a few people in the Arab world. If they weren't considered ordinary, they wouldn't provoke laughter. Which is, of course, not only scary but also sad. That Captain Shahada notes that his father wore a Hitler mustache during the Hitler era, as did his father's classmates, is an inconvenient reminder to those who would like to believe that Arabs had no bad feelings toward the Jews before the creation of Israel. And the fact that antisemitism is so pervasive in the Arab world makes the possibility of a lasting peace with Israel, and a lasting acceptance of the Jewish state, all the more challenging. Diplomatic geniuses who think that a durable Arab-Israeli peace will be achieved simply by signing agreements on borders and on the status of Jerusalem and refugees are, to some extent, whistling into the winds of history, religion, culture and deep prejudice. [2]Walter Reich is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/can\\_antisemitism\\_be\\_amusing/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/can_antisemitism_be_amusing/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_reich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_reich/)

## Suicide bombers (f.) (2008-08-11 03:45)

From [1]Michael Horowitz



Lindsey O'Rourke's recent [2]op-ed in the New York Times, "Behind the Woman Behind the Bomb," is an interesting attempt to describe some of the issues surrounding the use of female suicide bombers in Iraq and elsewhere. As she points out, many of the groups that have utilized suicide terrorism have employed female suicide bombers. As such, her attempt to study the issue

seriously is welcome and could significantly contribute to scholarship in this area.

Unfortunately, her piece contains a few misconceptions about suicide terrorism and the existing literature that deserve clarification. As someone also [3]interested in questions surrounding suicide terrorism, I offer these comments in the spirit of helping build our knowledge in that area.

First, she states that "we are told" female suicide bombers are driven by "despair, mental illness, religiously mandated subordination to men, frustration with sexual inequality and a host of other factors related specifically to their gender." At least in the literature on suicide terrorism, this does not seem to be the case. [4]Robert Pape's work on suicide terrorism, which she approvingly cites, does not come from this perspective. Neither does work by [5]Mia Bloom, [6]Bruce Hoffman, [7]Assaf Moghadam, [8]Ami Pedahzur, [9]Marc Sageman, and others. So, while I agree with her argument that "feminine" motivations do not seem to be driving female suicide bombers and female suicide bombers have similar motivations to men, most other scholars of suicide terrorism agree as well.

Second, it is unclear whether her goal is to de-emphasize the "female" element of female suicide bombers or to argue they do deserve independent consideration. As many argue, she states that "there is simply no one demographic profile for female attackers," something true for male attackers as well. If there is no demographic profile and the motivations of female suicide bombers are similar to male suicide bombers, why do they deserve study as a separate category? Her answer is that female suicide bombers are used more frequently for a specific type of missions—assassinations—because they have an easier time getting close to hard targets due to cultural and societal norms about treating and handling women. This is a very interesting and an important finding, if true, for it points out a shortcoming in security screening procedures around the globe. However, that means we should not necessarily study female suicide bombers as an independent category, but as part of the larger category of suicide bombings designed to assassinate leaders.

Third, her focus on occupation as the cause of suicide terrorism is misplaced. Whether the feeling of occupation is accurate or not in the eyes of the West, perceptions of occupation likely play a powerful role in influencing the propensity for groups to engage in violent resistance. However, occupation is less likely to impact the choice of a particular tactic within the decision to engage in violent resistance. While Pape has shown that many of the groups that adopt suicide terrorism perceive themselves as occupied, many other groups that perceive themselves as occupied have not chosen to adopt suicide terrorism.

In fact, it makes more sense to think about suicide terrorism as a special case of a military innovation, one strongly influenced by diffusion dynamics. The extensive direct and indirect linkages between groups that have adopted suicide terrorism suggest that the probability of suicide terrorism is not an entirely independent choice, but one influenced by the knowledge and skills that groups gain from direct and vicarious learning. Moreover, we have to study both those groups and people that adopt suicide tactics and those that do not in order to gain the full picture. As Scott Ashworth et al. recently [10]pointed out in the *American Political Science Review*, studying just the universe of suicide terror groups or female suicide attackers selects on the dependent variable, making it hard to draw causal inferences from whatever correlations might exist. Things that are similar within the universe of suicide terror groups or the universe of female attackers might also be true of non-adopters as well, meaning those similarities do not actually predict behavior.

A more fruitful way to study the issue is to compare the groups that have adopted suicide terrorism and group members that have become suicide bombers with those that have not. Comparing adopters like Hamas, Al Qaeda, and the Tamil Tigers with non-adopters like the Provisional IRA and ETA, the Basque terrorist group, reveals the critical importance of organizational dynamics in driving adoption or non-adoption. Since, as O'Rourke points out, demographic profiling of potential suicide attackers does not seem promising, it makes more sense to evaluate group characteristics and focus on what makes adoption more or less likely.

Regardless of potential issues with her academic analysis, however, her policy prescription to improve screening of women at "key security checkpoints" is sensible. While I disagree that "occupation" is a primary cause of suicide attacks—as described above, it influences the probability that a group will adopt terrorism, not the choice of suicide tactics—hopefully ideas like the "Daughters of Iraq" can be more than a stopgap in the effort to decrease the number of suicide attacks against American and Iraqi forces, as well as ordinary Iraqis. I applaud O'Rourke's attention to this important topic, and hope to see more analysis of this kind in the future.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_horowitz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_horowitz/)
2. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/02/opinion/02orourke.html>
3. <http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~esimpson/papers/diffusion.pdf>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0812973380/>
5. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0231133219/>
6. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0231126999/>
7. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0801890551/>
8. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0745633838/>
9. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0812240650/>
10. [http://www.princeton.edu/~sashwort/ACMR\\_final.pdf](http://www.princeton.edu/~sashwort/ACMR_final.pdf)

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Lindsey O'Rourke (2008-08-13 19:37:37)

Thank you very much for your excellent [1]comments on my *New York Times* [2]op-ed, "Behind the Woman Behind the Bomb," and the opportunity to respond to them. Michael Horowitz wrote:

First, she states that "we are told female suicide bombers are driven by despair, mental illness, religiously mandated subordination to men, frustration with sexual inequality and a host of other factors related specifically to their gender." At least in the literature on suicide terrorism, this does not seem to be the case. Robert Pape's work on suicide terrorism, which she approvingly cites, does not come from this perspective. Neither does work by Mia Bloom, Bruce Hoffman, Assaf Moghadam, Ami Pedahzur, Marc Sageman, and others.

As indicated in the opening paragraph of my op-ed, I focused discussion on the media's portrayal of female attackers and the 'popular misconceptions' that derived from it. In any case, the belief that women attackers are driven by uniquely feminine motivations is also common within the burgeoning academic literature on the topic. For instance, Mia Bloom has written, "When men conduct suicide missions, they are motivated by religious or nationalist fanaticism, whereas women appear more often motivated by very personal reasons." (*Dying to Kill*, p. 145.) Horowitz also wrote:

If there is no demographic profile and the motivations of female suicide bombers are similar to male suicide bombers, why do they deserve study as a separate category? Her answer is that female suicide bombers are used more frequently for a specific type of missions—assassinations—because they have an easier time getting close to hard targets due to cultural and societal norms about treating and handling women.

I do not believe that the greater propensity of female attackers to commit suicide assassination attacks is the only justification to study them as a category of analysis. Rather I wrote, "Investigating the dynamics governing female attackers not only helps to correct common misperceptions but also reveals important characteristics about suicide terrorism in general." Moreover, although my research to date has come to the opposite conclusion, I believe it is important to investigate the possibility that women and men are driven by fundamentally dissimilar individual motivations. Finally, differences in the adoption of female attackers by group help to illuminate interesting patterns regarding organizational composition, ideology, strategy, the malleability of discourse, recruitment techniques, tactical deployment and counter-terrorism measures. I discussed this briefly in the op-ed and will expand upon these points in future research. Horowitz again:

[H]er focus on occupation as the cause of suicide terrorism is misplaced.... As Scott Ashworth et al. recently pointed out in the *American Political Science Review*, studying just the universe of suicide terror groups or female suicide attackers selects on the dependent variable, making it hard to draw causal inferences from whatever correlations might exist. Things that are similar within the universe of suicide terror groups or the universe of female attackers might also be true of non-adopters as well, meaning those similarities do not actually predict behavior.

I applaud the effort to bring multiple methodological approaches to the study of suicide terrorism and acknowledge the great difficulties for determining causal influence when sampling on the dependent variable. Four brief points on this comment: • First, I did not argue that occupation alone was either a necessary or sufficient condition to bring about female suicide terrorism. • Second, my research focuses upon the substantial variations in decisions to employ women attackers amongst suicide terrorist groups, rather than the organizations' decisions to adopt suicide attacks in the first place. • Third, I strongly agree that it makes "sense to think about suicide terrorism as a special case of a military innovation, one strongly influenced by diffusion dynamics." In fact, one of the key points that I discussed was the learning process that religious organizations underwent regarding female attackers after learning of women's strategic desirability from secular groups. • Fourth, researchers must also bear in mind the difficulties of this alternative approach. Given the abundance of radical political organizations, hate groups, militant separatist movements, terrorist groups, ethnic conflicts and wars, where should scholars draw the line when deciding the appropriate universe of cases? By only selecting cases such as the Provisional IRA and ETA for comparison, researchers can smuggle in assumptions regarding the underlying political circumstances that inspire suicide terrorism. While this challenge may not be insurmountable, it too raises great hurdles for establishing causality. *Lindsey O'Rourke is a doctoral student in political science at the University of Chicago.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/suicide\\_bombers\\_f/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/suicide_bombers_f/)
2. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/02/opinion/02orourke.html>

Yoram Schweitzer (2008-08-14 10:04:35)

Lindsey O'Rourke's recent *New York Times* [1]op-ed was a worthy contribution to our discussion of female suicide bombers, and the conversation conducted in [2]this thread has built nicely upon O'Rourke's work. I offer the observations below (based on [3]my research) in the hopes of further texturing this debate. From the vantage point of summer 2008, it seems safe to state that we cannot attribute suicide terrorism to any one factor. Ethno-cultural nationalism; religious fanaticism; group dynamics and leadership style; occupation—all can play a part in an organization's decision to dispatch suicide bombers and in an individual's decision to carry out an attack. Thus, we see that while suicide attacks are used in struggles against occupying forces, they are also frequently used in inter-ethnic conflict, e.g. the struggle in Pakistan. Indeed, in Iraq, inter-ethnic and inter-sectarian suicide attacks have almost overshadowed those directed at the foreign occupation forces. In order to plumb the true depths of this increasingly widespread phenomenon, then, it must be explored through as many of the angles involved as possible. We are often moved to focus primarily on the personal considerations that induce humans to abrogate their survival instinct in such murderous fashion. It is perhaps best, though, to direct most of our attention towards the considerations that lead organizations to deploy suicide bombers. This, because suicide bombers are, mostly, pawns, who rarely have a voice in their organization's higher echelons, or in its decision-making process. Organizational factors also appear to be somewhat more predictive than the other factors involved in these decisions. Indirect diffusion unquestionably does impact upon an organization's decision to incorporate suicide terrorism into its arsenal. Indeed, we might imagine that, had suicide terrorism been widely in use during the 60's and 70's, this MO might have become more widespread. In many instances, however, strong ties to a group that aggressively espouses suicide terrorism can influence the decision to adopt this tactic to a much greater degree. To illustrate this point, consider that Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and the Afghani Taliban did not employ this tactic until AQ central persuaded them to do so. Female suicide bombers have even less control over their deployment than their male counterparts. Thus, when studying female suicide bombings, it is even more important to resist the impulse to center on the personal motivations driving these women, and to explore the organizational considerations that occasioned their deployment. Such calculations might include a need to overcome conditions that make it difficult or impossible to deploy male bombers. Resource allocation can also factor into these decisions: in the ultra-conservative patriarchal societies in which these dramas often play out, the idea of women receiving personal training and attention from men is borderline-taboo. Accordingly, it is difficult for women in these societies to acquire the training necessary to become combat-effective. Suicide bombings, then, which require only the easily-acquired abilities to mask one's intent and detonate one's payload, often become the only road open to women who've decided to contribute actively to the fighting. As such, it can seem more desirable to dispatch



women on these missions than men, who can, after all, be trained to carry out other functions. Organizations have also been known to deploy female bombers in order to heighten their media profile: despite the fact that women have participated in suicide terrorism throughout the modern era, the near universal perception of women as givers, rather than takers of life, still ensures that the use of female suicide bombers will shock audiences and thus, will garner media attention. None of this is to imply that it isn't worth our time to explore the motivations that drive individuals to execute suicide attacks. These studies can disclose critical information, such as the fact that, apart from the same factors that influence men to walk down this tragic path, women are often driven to execute suicide attacks by a set of considerations that apply uniquely to them. We've already addressed one way in which ultra-conservative, Islamist norms shunt women into suicide attacks. The fact that such societies customarily label as deviants those women who engage in behaviors that would go unremarked upon in men—such as remaining unmarried at a late age, failing to have children, having pre- or extra-marital sex—can also play a part in this decision: Rather than bear this cross, women may be driven to seek expiation through so-called martyrdom operations. Parenthetically, it bears repeating that I've encountered women who rationalized their attempted suicides in terms that were almost identical to those used by men. While conservative Islamic mores can make women willing, if not eager, to execute suicide attacks, they make it less likely that women will participate in suicide terrorism in the same numbers as their male counterparts. Fears that incorporating women into the ranks will destabilize the patriarchal status quo, wherein women are the bearers and rearers of Jihadists, rather than Jihadists themselves; fears that using women will telegraph the message that the organization's male warriors "aren't men enough for the job"; all seem to outweigh the new *fatwas* that license female entry into this arena. In this context, it is worth noting that the fact that women are so rarely deployed on these missions makes it somewhat difficult to determine whether they are indeed more successful suicide bombers than their male counterparts. Women only constitute, after all, roughly ten percent of suicide bombers. How, then, are we to compare their actions with those of their male counterparts? Victim count? Most successful male vs. most successful female? There are simply too many variables in this equation to allow us to resolve it satisfactorily. The idea that women are more suitable for assassination operations, while intriguing, would also seem to require further investigation. Finally, it is perhaps worth revisiting the idea that using female suicide bombers is a win-win proposition. While female suicide bombers are often publicly canonized in the Islamic world, in off-camera discussions with Palestinian families and dispatchers, as well as with failed female suicide bombers, significant reservations often arose over the idea of using women in this capacity. Their discomfort is a product both of the fact that such women inevitably come into close contact with males before being dispatched (perhaps even being touched by men whilst donning the suicide belt) and of the fact that they might end up in Israeli jails, unable to maintain requisite standards of modesty and at the mercy of Israeli men. This contact is often seen as a stain upon the woman's honor and by extension, upon the reputation of the family as a whole. It would seem then, that even though, as Mia Bloom astutely [4]discerns, female suicide bombers are indeed often very useful tools, those who employ women in such capacities will ultimately pay a severe price for doing so—a price that will likely be exacted by the clans of the dispatched women. [5]Yoram Schweitzer is director of the Terrorism Project at the Institute for National Security Studies, Israel.

1. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/02/opinion/02orourke.html>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/suicide\\_bombers\\_f/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/suicide_bombers_f/)
3. [http://www.labat.co.il/index\\_files/Page373.htm](http://www.labat.co.il/index_files/Page373.htm)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/suicide\\_bombers\\_f/#comment-913](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/suicide_bombers_f/#comment-913)
5. [http://www.inss.org.il/experts.php?cat=0&incat=&staff\\_id=21](http://www.inss.org.il/experts.php?cat=0&incat=&staff_id=21)

Mia Bloom (2008-08-11 12:28:33)

I have to agree with many of Michael Horowitz's [1]assertions. I read the *New York Times* [2]op-ed piece by Lindsey O'Rourke with great interest and felt that it emphasized foreign occupation at the expense of other competing and possibly complementary explanations. Asserting that there have been more secular attacks than religious attacks is only factually correct if we stop counting the events at the start of the Iraq war (as Robert Pape's *APSR* [3]article did). According to my own [4]research (for a forthcoming book, *Bombshell: Women and Terror*), the best predictors of women's involvement in terrorist organizations continue to be association and especially relation to a male insurgent. Women's motivation to carry out a suicide attack increases exponentially if the male has been killed. This crosscuts radical Islamic extremist groups in addition to the secular organizations. During my field work in Sri Lanka, most of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) women considered joining the organization as a family affair. Significantly, during my field research in Indonesia last year, I discovered that Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) uses its women to cement the linkages between different cells of the organization. This use of strategic marriage, akin to the European royal marriages of the 14th century that cemented ties between England and France or Spain and England, functions to keep the cell leaders within the group's orbit and control. So in contrast to the ways in which we assume women

and marriage moderate extremists (for example, when Yassir Arafat tried to marry off as many members of the Black September Organization after 1975 to de-mobilize them), women and marriage within the radical Islamic extremist organizations might have the reverse effect. Lindsey O'Rourke is likely correct that the women may alternate their claims of motivation over time. According to Yoram Schweitzer's [5] interviews with failed female suicide bombers at Hasharon prison in Israel, their initial interviews reveal emotional reasons for their act. After spending time with the other prisoners in the jail (who are organized by political affiliation), they tend to parrot classic political propaganda. Schweitzer asserts that the women are in fact more motivated by the personal than the political. This might explain the motives for some of the women, but not someone like Ahlam Tammimi who was clearly motivated by political and not personal reasons. The truth is likely a combination of motivations, which will include personal and political reasons—including occupation. If we consider suicide terrorism like any crime, we require both motive and opportunity to understand the event. Occupation may very well provide the opportunity (access to American or foreign troops) but the motive remains much more complex. O'Rourke, like Pape, focuses on foreign occupation when, in fact, this is likely a necessary though insufficient condition. We might consider what it is specifically about occupation that causes intense levels of humiliation, outrage, and violent mobilization. But without the emotional content, and the religious justification, we would not see the literal explosion of suicide terrorism across the Islamic world. Women, like men are motivated by a combination of reasons. The organizations now know that female operatives are more successful and less likely to be searched—and if women are invasively searched, this will only add to the population's anger and resentment. From the standpoint of the terrorist organizations, using women is a win-win strategy. Horowitz is correct in seeing suicide terrorism, especially by women, as a tactical adaptive innovation we will likely see much more of in the future. [6] *Mia Bloom is assistant professor in the School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Georgia, Athens.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/suicide\\_bombers\\_f/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/suicide_bombers_f/)
2. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/02/opinion/02orourke.html>
3. <http://www.danieldrezner.com/research/guest/Pape1.pdf>
4. <http://www.iiss.org/EasysiteWeb/getresource.axd?AssetID=2333&type=full&servicetype=attachment>
5. <http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/memoranda/memo84.pdf>
6. <http://www.uga.edu/intl/bloom.htm>

Andrew Exum (2008-08-12 10:24:03)

I want to thank my good friend Mike Horowitz for [1]weighing in with his considered thoughts on suicide bombing. On the one hand, "sacrificial warfare" is as timeless as war itself—and we ourselves tend to praise those who lay down their lives so that others might live. (How many medals of honor, for example, have been given to men who have thrown themselves on grenades in order to save the lives of their fellow soldiers?) But suicide bombing as an offensive tactic is a relatively new phenomenon and has been adopted unevenly. Why do some guerrilla and terror groups adopt suicide tactics while others do not? A few days ago, I was walking through the southern suburbs of Beirut and saw several large tributes to the late Imad Mugniyeh—most notorious in the United States for his role in the suicide attack that killed 241 U.S. servicemen in 1983. But how did suicide tactics then spread from Lebanon? And why has Hezbollah apparently ceased to employ suicide tactics? Like Mike, I believe both rationalist and cultural explanations hold explanatory promise—functionalist explanations alone only get us so far. We must also study the internal dynamics of the groups which adopt suicide as a tactic. Regardless, much more research is needed in this field. Some of the best work thus far has been done by Mike and Erin Simpson, though, and like many others, I'll continue to follow their research closely. [2] *Andrew Exum is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/suicide\\_bombers\\_f/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/suicide_bombers_f/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew\\_exum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew_exum/)

Farhana Ali (2008-08-14 15:45:01)

As someone with years of experience on this subject, I want to add a few points to those that have now been raised by my good friends [1]Mia Bloom and [2]Yoram Schweitzer, whose work I respect deeply. Many scholars correctly state that there are a host of motivations that could drive women—and men—to commit a suicide attack. Therefore, while I tend to emphasize the personal drivers of violence, I also emphasize that women have a relationship to men. This point is so often muted; that is, research on female terror is often portrayed as a gender-specific study when in fact, Muslim women often cannot enter male-dominated and male-directed terror organizations without their permission. Thus, women's entry into extremists organizations is in most cases possible because of a male family

member's participation in violence or the loss of a male family member due to violence. I have seen both scenarios in my own work and field research. Second, no one discounts that differences between men and women exist, though for years I have argued that women and men share similar grievances and may have similar motives for joining terrorist groups. In my own research, there is one distinction women highlight. In my own interviews of Iraqi women and Kashmiris in Srinagar, women tell me that in times of conflict, they suffer more than men. They are victims of violence and yet also encouraged to commit violent acts. An observer might call this outright abuse of women in war, although abuse certainly does not explain why all women join terror organizations. Here, Yoram Schweitzer's argument is reasonable, and also accepted by [3]Mohammad Hafez and others. The organizational factor is powerful, and in Iraq, where I have focused my current research, it is certainly true that insurgents actively recruit women to perpetrate suicide attacks. This is particularly visible in pro-insurgent websites that include statements by clerics, terrorist leaders and other insurgents calling on women to "serve" their men in times of war. This act of service, as Yoram notes, includes suicide missions. But it is the auxiliary role that women provide which is long-lasting and in my opinion, influential (i.e., support their sons and husbands financially and logistically). In times of need (when men are increasingly captured or killed), women act as messengers as well. As communication nodes, I have argued that women keep terrorists alive. Third, accepting that organizations manipulate women's emotions and vulnerabilities, we should accept that women do volunteer for these acts. I met a woman in Kashmir, who when she was 18 years old volunteered to commit a fedayeen attack against the Indian Army. She was then a member of Lashkar-e-Tayyba, now camouflaged as Jamaat-ud-Dawa. She told me last month that the operation was foiled, which really upset her. "I wanted to prove that I could further the cause so I asked to be part of another operation, but they said no. That's when I joined a political organization." Today, she is a non-violent protester, but after hearing her story, it is clear to me that when the opportunity arises, she will again volunteer. The point is that not all women are manipulated, as Mia Bloom rightly states when she gives the example of Palestinian women who self-select for operations. Finally, I do not know if it is worth comparing men to women in terror organizations. In almost every instance, it seems clear that women join terror organizations because they are "permitted" to join by the men who lead them. It is so rare to find women leading women, particularly in Islamic organizations where traditional, cultural, and religious norms prohibit close contact. There are ample examples to prove this point. However, I have seen that not all Islamic societies impose strict norms on their women. What male mujahideen and ex-militants have told me is that while they have a duty to protect their women, they also say women have a right to jihad. And I have met women who have never married because they have devoted their lives to the "cause." Each Islamic society practices Islam differently. [4]Farhana Ali is Associate International Policy Analyst at RAND.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/suicide\\_bombers\\_f/#comment-913](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/suicide_bombers_f/#comment-913)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/suicide\\_bombers\\_f/#comment-933](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/suicide_bombers_f/#comment-933)
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1601270046/>
4. [http://www.rand.org/media/experts/bios/ali\\_farhana.html](http://www.rand.org/media/experts/bios/ali_farhana.html)

## Debacle in the Caucasus (2008-08-12 13:29)

From [1]Malik Mufti



Georgia's attempt to gain control of South Ossetia by force on August 8 was ill-considered for several reasons. First, it led to a punishing Russian counter-attack that has crippled Georgia's military capability. Second, it reduced to virtually nil Georgia's chances of restoring its sovereignty over South Ossetia and the other breakaway region of Abkhazia for the foreseeable future—both because of the enhanced Russian presence in both territories, and because Tbilisi's resort to force confirmed the fears of the Ossetian and Abkhazian peoples about Georgian chauvinism. (During a similar offensive against Abkhazia in August 1992, Georgian officials threatened that the Abkhazian nation might be "left without descendants" and that "we can easily and completely destroy [their] genetic stock.") Third, it dealt a grievous blow to Georgia's chances of joining NATO—again probably for the foreseeable future—because neither the Europeans nor the Americans will want to risk involvement in armed conflict with Russia.

Nevertheless, because of the region's critical energy reserves and pipeline networks, because of the fact that the Caucasus has reverted to its 19th-century status as a front line between the Islamic and Orthodox worlds—a front line that will help define global politics in the coming century—and because of the need to contain Russia's increasingly aggressive neo-colonialist aspirations more generally, the United States cannot afford the temptation to disengage.

Effective American engagement, however, will require more than maintaining a robust political and security presence in Georgia so that its sovereignty is not further compromised. The central challenge in the Caucasus—on both sides of the Russian Federation's borders—is how to address the suppressed but deeply held and often conflicting nationalist aspirations of the multitudes of peoples living there. This will require reaffirming one traditional tenet of U.S. foreign policy, and reconsidering another. The principle that needs to be upheld is genuine political liberalization, so that minority groups feel less compelled to take up arms or turn to Russia for help. The principle that needs to be reconsidered is the commitment to the territorial integrity of existing states. Its mechanical application is simply unrealistic given prevailing conditions in the Near East, as already evidenced by the U.S. recognition of Kosovo's independence, and by the proliferation of similar entities throughout the region.

If Georgia can be induced to renounce aggressive chauvinism definitively in its dealings with other national groups, then the prospect of good-neighborly relations with the Ossetians, Abkhazians and others may materialize—perhaps even within some kind of confederal or commonwealth framework. At the very least, it will present the peoples of the Caucasus with an attractive alternative to what Russia has to offer. Such a challenge to the repressive political and territorial status quo would put Moscow on the defensive, with profound implications far beyond the Caucasus.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/malik\\_mufti/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/malik_mufti/)

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Monica Duffy Toft (2008-08-13 14:52:28)

In reading Malik Mufti's [1]post, I was somewhat taken aback by the implications of his statement that "because of the fact that the Caucasus has reverted to its 19th-century status as a front line between the Islamic and Orthodox worlds—a front line that will help define global politics in the coming century—and because of the need to contain Russia's increasingly aggressive neo-colonialist aspirations more generally, the United States cannot afford the temptation to disengage." Although the religious aspect of the clash is clearly not Mufti's main point—a point, by the way, with which I entirely agree—the notion that religion has anything to do with the recent turmoil in the Caucasus is simply wrong. What has been going on in Russia and Georgia is nothing more than ethnic nationalism and neo-imperialism. Both nations are largely Christian and the South Ossetians are Christians as well. The Abkhaz are a mix of religions (largely Muslim and Christian) and most do not practice their faith on a daily basis. There is no denying the fact that Georgia and Georgians are terribly chauvinistic and nationalistic in their relations with non-Georgian minorities. To be Georgian in Georgia indeed means to be ethnically Georgian and, to a large extent, Christian. Why I say to "a large extent" is that there are Muslim Georgians—the Ajars—but they are accepted as bona fide Georgians, in spite of their religious tradition. They have coexisted peacefully with their Christian brethren and seem likely to do so into the future. Although there was a move for greater independence among some Ajars in the 1990s, it was advanced in economic, not religious terms; which explains why the autonomy struggle there ended without bloodshed. If we consider the broader region, the claim that there is a clash of Islam with Orthodox Christianity is not only misleading but potentially dangerous. Although the Russian government would like the world to believe that Islamic jihadists are running wild in the Caucasus—and it has in large measure been successful to date—there is little actual evidence of this. Making such claims only misconstrues what is happening, which is nothing more or less than Woodrow Wilson's good old-fashioned principle of national self-determination running up against the UN Charter's codified principle of state sovereignty and inviolability of borders. Attributing these sporadic but consistent episodes of violence in the Caucasus over the last two decades to a clash of faiths misconstrues what is actually happening on the ground, and merely enhances Russia's broader agenda of successfully positioning itself as "defender of Western civilization"—and by doing so justifying any sort of brutality imaginable—instead of the more mundane, vulgar, but accurate "ethno-centric hegemon" it traditionally has been and wishes to become again. [2]Monica Duffy Toft is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/debacle\\_in\\_the\\_caucasus/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/debacle_in_the_caucasus/)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/monica\\_duffy\\_toft/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/monica_duffy_toft/)

Michael Reynolds (2008-08-13 17:57:31)

Malik Mufti raises a number of important points in [1]his post; I'd like to comment on some of them. Interested readers can find a fuller analysis of mine written at the beginning of the war at the website of the Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination (LISD) at Princeton University ([2]here). Some of my thoughts below follow from it. The title of Malik's post is most apt. What has transpired is indeed a "debacle." I would emphasize that this is a debacle for American foreign policy, not just for Georgia. Moscow exploited what it saw as an exquisite opportunity to deliver a striking rebuff to U.S. ambitions in Eurasia and avenge U.S. diplomacy's dismissal of Russian interests and concerns related to the Balkans and NATO expansion. For reasons that I touch on in the LISD piece linked above, the loss of Georgia in 1991 stung Russia's elites for both strategic and emotional reasons. The way that Georgia then became such a close partner of the United States—to the point that this tiny country, with incomplete democratic institutions and security challenges of its own, had become a candidate for NATO membership and had deployed the third-largest contingent to the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq—raised alarm bells in Moscow. Rankling Russian sensitivities was the unpolished comportment of the Georgian President, Mikheil Saakashvili. The Western media presented Saakashvili as the embodiment of the American-sponsored future of Eurasia: young and dynamic and innately liberal and democratic. Yet regional audiences could see that Saakashvili's youth and dynamism amounted to impetuosity and his idea of democracy could shade into demagoguery. Moscow understood very well both that Saakashvili could be provoked and that Washington—being overstretched and preoccupied with a range of problems more pressing than Georgia, such as a fragile Iraq, a worsening insurgency in Afghanistan, the prospect of a nuclear Iran, and a shrinking economy to name just a few—would be unwilling to support Georgia with anything more than lame rhetoric. Moscow then set about baiting Saakashvili and obtained the desired result: the saccharine hero of the Rose Revolution dropped his liberal-democratic pretenses and lashed out at the Ossetians with bombs and shells, seeking not dialogue but to impose his will by force of arms. With its "peacekeepers" now under fire, Moscow could, to its intense satisfaction, demonstrate to the region the hollowness of the American project in Eurasia by invading Georgia with impunity. The result is an extraordinary embarrassment for the United States. The American military has been reduced to ferrying

Georgian troops deployed in Iraq back to defend their homeland while American officials stand aside uttering bromides. Georgia had been one of the world's few fervently pro-American countries, and their naming of the road from Tbilisi's airport in honor of George W. Bush was more than pro-forma. The fact that Saakashvili's own stupidity and rashness triggered the Russian assault will do little, I expect, to ease feelings of betrayal and exploitation that are now building among the Georgians. More to the point, the Russian action puts others in the region on notice that cozying up to the United States is no guarantee of security. The fact that steady Russian provocations preceded Georgia's attack upon South Ossetia does nothing to absolve the architects of the Georgian and American foreign policies of the charge of gross malpractice of statesmanship. To the contrary, Moscow had been sending warnings for a long time, and yet still managed to catch Georgia and the United States off-guard. The Bush foreign policy team has bungled miserably. What remains now is for a future U.S. presidential administration to draw some lessons. Saakashvili's rash attack and Putin's calculated aggression complement each other to remind us that international relations remain suffused with violence and the threat of violence, even at the level of states. To John McCain: America can't fight everyone everywhere. It is imperative now to review America's commitments and draw up clear priorities as to what constitutes U.S. interests and what does not, and ensure that U.S. rhetoric is commensurate with U.S. capabilities. To Barack Obama: don't delude yourself into thinking that because you are not George W. Bush, the world will engage you in earnest dialogue. The forces of anti-Americanism are deeper than distaste for George Bush, and will seek to exploit America's vulnerabilities. Indeed, you can be certain that some will attempt to turn your desire for dialogue against you. That advice is, of course, basic textbook stuff, yet the words coming from the candidates in reaction to this war suggest they could use it. Malik is right to note Ossetian and Abkhazian fears of the Georgians. While it would be wrong to describe tensions between the Ossetians and Abkhaz and the Georgians as immutable "ancient hatreds," the fact is that the current conflicts have a history, and erupted not during the break-up of the Soviet Union but during the disintegration of the Russian Empire in 1917. That today's Russian Federation has, not entirely unlike Bolshevik Russia, exploited those tensions to weaken Georgia does not take away from the reality that the idea of Georgian rule was highly unpopular in Abkhazia and Ossetia. In contrast to the way Russia manipulated these ethnic cleavages, the United States let itself get sucked into them. Whereas Washington began supporting Georgia and marketing it as a regional beacon of freedom and democracy with the expectation that the emergence of a liberal democratic culture inside Georgia would eventually dissolve ethnic tensions, Tbilisi instead used American support to try to compel Ossetia to recognize its rule. Similar dynamics unfold around the world all the time. The United States backs "forces of democracy" in a given region, and those on the ground in that region perceive Washington's language as a smokescreen for conventional, even cynical, partisan intervention. Such an outcome is often unavoidable, but a real problem arises when Americans begin to interpret regional dynamics and conflicts through the prism of their own rhetoric. The American media made a great deal out of the Rose Revolution, portraying it along with Ukraine's Orange Revolution, Lebanon's Cedar Revolution, and the Kifayeh movement in Egypt as part of a youth-led global groundswell toward liberal democracy. Those movements have largely faded, but today Washington finds itself struggling against its own rhetoric when it refuses to engage with Hamas. Two final points. I would add nuance to Malik's statement that "the central challenge in the Caucasus... is how to address the suppressed but deeply held and often conflicting nationalist aspirations of the multitudes of peoples living there." While ethnic pride is universal throughout the people of the Caucasus, plenty of them recognize that in such an ethnically diverse region the nation-state model is a recipe for disaster and that their best interests are served by foregoing nationalist projects. Precisely for that reason (and some others) Russia is not quite as vulnerable in the North Caucasus as some think (though that region with its young and growing population will be troublesome for some time). Lastly, in the wake of this war, I am extremely skeptical of any possibility of rapprochement between the Georgians and the Abkhazians and Ossetians for the short to medium term, (unless it would be under Russia's aegis, which is still difficult to imagine). The Georgians see the Abkhaz and Ossetians as complicit in treachery, and that is among the offenses most difficult to forgive or forget. [3]Michael Reynolds is a member of MESH. MESH Pointer: See the later MESH thread, [4]Russia and the Middle East.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/debacle\\_in\\_the\\_caucasus/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/debacle_in_the_caucasus/)
2. [http://www.princeton.edu/~lisd/commentary\\_august2008.pdf](http://www.princeton.edu/~lisd/commentary_august2008.pdf)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_reynolds/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_reynolds/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/russia\\_and\\_the\\_middle\\_east/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/russia_and_the_middle_east/)

**'Inside Egypt' (2008-08-13 11:57)**

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. John R. Bradley has written for *The Economist*, *The Washington Quarterly*, *The Financial Times*, *The New Republic*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *Newsweek*, and *Salon*. His new book is *Inside Egypt: The Land of the Pharaohs on the Brink of a Revolution*.

From [1]John R. Bradley

[2] I've been semi-permanently based in Egypt for about a decade (apart from a two-and-a-half-year stint in Saudi Arabia from a few months before September 11, 2001, when I was the managing editor of the English-language daily *Arab News*). I speak the Egyptian Arabic dialect fluently, and consider Cairo my home. So after I left Saudi Arabia and published my book on that country, *Saudi Arabia Exposed: Inside a Kingdom in Crisis* (2005), I instinctively made my way back to Egypt.

I suggested to my publisher that I should write a book on contemporary Egyptian politics and society since—amazingly—there's no similar book out there, and apart from Saudi Arabia it's the Arab country I'm most familiar with. Egypt, moreover, is the most populous Arab country, the region's historic trendsetter, and a crucial U.S. ally. So it's important that Westerners and Washington-based Mideast policy makers understand the inner workings of this country better—especially as it appears to be entering a period of serious instability.

In *Inside Egypt*, I try to achieve two main goals:

1. To undermine the misconception that Egyptians are passive and apolitical, used as they are to being governed by a pharaoh and having their lives determined by the alluvial rhythms of the Nile. I offer a new reading of modern Egyptian history, which shows that about every three decades Egypt is rocked by revolutionary or near-revolutionary change. In 1919 Egyptians rose up against British rule, which led to partial sovereignty. In January 1952 half of Cairo was burned to the ground by angry mobs, and in July that year the Free Officers seized power. In 1977 bread riots nearly brought down the regime of Anwar Sadat, and four years later he was assassinated by Islamists. We are about three decades since that the last period of turmoil, and Egypt is now witnessing the biggest wave of industrial unrest and social instability since before the 1952 coup. The country, I argue, is ripe for another uprising.
2. To undermine the belief, growing in Western policy circles, that the Muslim Brotherhood has gained widespread popularity in Egypt, and therefore should be cultivated as an acceptable alternative to the Mubarak regime. The group apparently has about 500,000 members—out of a population of 78 million. There are probably a million or so more Egyptians who are vaguely sympathetic to their goals, or who would support them because they believe any group would be better than the tyrant who rules them at present. In other words, at most they have the support of about 2 percent of the population. As I show in *Inside Egypt*, there are obvious reasons why their fundamentalist interpretation of Islam doesn't resonate among ordinary Egyptians, one of which is that the kind of Islam practiced by the country's Muslims is an intriguing mishmash of Sunni, Shia, and Sufi traditions. For instance, there are at least six million men in Egypt—about a third of the adult male Muslim population—who are members of one Sufi order or other; and at least twice that number of men—and countless millions of women and children—participate in the festivals the Sufi orders organize called *moulids*. That these figures are likely to surprise outsiders is proof of how the coverage of Egypt in the Western media has tended to favor analyzing developments almost exclusively in relation to the Muslim Brotherhood,

to the detriment of other more moderate and mainstream Islamic trends. The Muslim Brotherhood condemns moulids as un-Islamic, and that is one of a number of reasons why they can count such a small number of members in their rank and file. Praying to holy men and women, even celebrating Prophet Muhammad's birthday, is akin to idolatry, according to these Sunni fundamentalists. Add to this the roughly 10 percent of the population that is Christian, and other large ethnic groups like Bedouin and Nubians for whom Islamism is anathema, along with secular Egyptians and moderate Sunnis and fiercely independent tribal Upper Egyptians, and it isn't difficult to understand why the Muslim Brotherhood has failed to garner mass support, and never will. Most Egyptians, I believe, live in horror at being ruled by a hard-line Sunni Islamist regime. The Muslim Brotherhood have been cultivated as a political opposition force by Mubarak himself precisely to play up the fear in Washington of an Islamist takeover if he is removed from power. Western policy makers who promote the Muslim Brotherhood are, however inadvertently, doing Mubarak's dirty work for him, and in the process they are doing a great disservice to the Egyptian people and display a terrible misunderstanding of the complexity of Egyptian society.

Last month, the Egyptian regime banned *Inside Egypt* from being imported and sold in the country, the first time a book about politics has been banned in Egypt during the 27 years of Husni Mubarak's regime. The news was picked up by dozens of blogs, the wire services, BBC World Service, BBC Arabic TV, The Bookseller, the vibrant Egyptian opposition press, and the pan-Arab media. Having thus catapulted the book into the international headlines, the Egyptian ministry of information then suddenly backtracked, issuing a lengthy statement claiming that *Inside Egypt* had not been banned but rather approved for distribution. That denial was carried on the front page of every Egyptian daily newspaper. The following day, the independent daily *Al-Masri al-Yawm* and the opposition weekly *Al-Dustur* carried full-page reviews of the book, the contents of which were summarized on both front pages. The Associated Press meanwhile issued an update confirming that the book had indeed been banned initially but then "released" by the censor's office.

I consider this u-turn a small victory for free expression in Egypt and the wider Arab world. The ban had resulted in *Inside Egypt* becoming the most discussed book on the country in living memory. Hopefully, the publicity surrounding the temporary ban will lead in the coming weeks and months to a more detailed discussion of the book's contents in the Western media.

[3]Order from Publisher | [4]Amazon

1. <http://www.johnrbradley.com/>
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/41jy0bGopIL.jpg>
3. <http://us.macmillan.com/insideegypt>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1403984778/>

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## The 2,000-year shakedown (2008-08-15 07:04)

From [1]Walter Reich



# השותפין פרק ראשון בנא בו

f דלמר צפרק בני העיר (מגילת דן) שני סולא איתגאו ביה . שזוא ביד הכ  
 אלא ללמוד תורה ולישא אשה ולא למוות [אם למרב] אם לרעב : משי שז  
 זשיטא היא ולא אילגודין למיטת : לכל אחד כפי ספלים התלפין בו : ש  
 f כדני ממוטת . וח'ית וזהו טעמא מדי יום כיום כדקתני לקמיה לשיכר :  
 בנ' הורה אור לתלמי  
 ! כל  
 פרוין יטבויס מצוה רבה היא אמר ליה רבא לעשות  
 לרבה בר מרי כנא הא מילתא דאמור רבנן טולס  
 דפרוין שבוים מצוה רבה היא א"ל דכתוב המדות  
 °והיה כי יאמרו אליך אנה נצא ואמרת אליהם להקטין  
 כה אמר ה' אשר למות ואשר לדרב °והיון ש  
 לדרב ואשר לרעב לרעב ואשר לישבי לישבו וקד דם  
 ואמר רבי יודנן כל המאורר בפסוק זה קשה את הט  
 מתכירו הרב קשה מצות א) אי בעית אימא מדת ד  
 קרא ואי בעית אימא סברא אי בעית אימא יחד לי  
 סברא האי קא מינוול ודאי לא קא מינוול התטח  
 ואבעיא קרא °ויקר בעיני ה' רבמחה לחסדין יתה  
 וזה דקפה סכרה

That Israel's leadership can't figure out what to do when faced with the challenge of ransoming kidnapped Jews is excusable. That much of that leadership seems to be ignorant of the fact that Jews have given two thousand years of thought to exactly that problem, however, isn't.

A few weeks ago, in exchange for the bodies of two Israeli soldiers taken captive by Hezbollah two years earlier, Israel released to that organization five prisoners, including one, Samir Quntar, who stands out for his brutality in the annals of terrorism against Israelis. Of all Arabs captured by Israel with "blood on their hands," this one was one of the most despised. Yet, in order to obtain the bodies of the Israelis taken captive by Hezbollah, Israel released Quntar and the four others.

Israel engaged in this prisoner release as part of its tradition of doing everything possible to get Israeli soldiers out of the hands of Israel's enemies—and in response to pressure, utterly understandable, from the families of the kidnapped soldiers and from many other Israelis. But Palestinian leaders immediately announced that Israel's willingness to give up prisoners in order to obtain even the bodies of kidnapped Israelis showed that kidnapping is a tactic that works, and that should be used again. For example, Abu Mujahid, a spokesman for the umbrella terror group Popular Resistance Committees, [2]said that the exchange "proves that kidnapping soldiers will continue to be the most efficient, favored and ideal way to release Palestinian prisoners, particularly those defined by the enemy as having blood on their hands." In a valuable post on this site, Robert O. Freedman, reflecting the views of many in Israel, sharply [3]questioned the wisdom of Quntar's release.

So the psychological insight that such exchanges could encourage more kidnappings did surface in Israel's debate. But it is hardly new. Indeed, it's an insight that has been discussed at length by Jews since Roman times. And it has been discussed not for theoretical reasons but because paying ransoms for kidnapped Jews has punctuated the experience of the Jews throughout that long period.

The problem of paying ransom for Jewish captives was raised in the Mishnah some 2,000 years ago, and was frequently discussed in the Rabbinic literature in the centuries that followed. In the Middle Ages, families and communities often paid enormous sums, sometimes impoverishing themselves, in order to ransom kidnapped Jews. This occurred throughout Europe but also in Turkey, Egypt and elsewhere. The Cairo Genizah—a collection of some 200,000 documents found in the 19th century in a Cairo synagogue that included materials from as far back as the 9th century CE—includes some ransom receipts.

One of the most famous cases emphasizing the danger of rewarding kidnapping [4]involved Rabbi Meir ben Baruch, known as the Maharam of Rothenburg, who lived in 13th-century Germany. The Maharam was

held captive by Emperor Rudolf of Germany, who demanded a large ransom from the Jewish community for his release. According to various sources, the Maharam forbade his fellow Jews from paying it, since he feared that such a payment would encourage further kidnappings. He spent seven years as a prisoner, and died in captivity.

The purpose of this brief excursion into Jewish law and history is to point out that this dilemma has been discussed extensively for at least twenty centuries by Jews throughout the world. The circumstances have been different: the old kidnappers sought money rather than the humiliation and ultimately the destruction of a Jewish state. And in Europe and elsewhere the Jews had no army, whereas in modern Israel they do. But the psychological dilemma—the problem that ransoming kidnapped prisoners is likely to encourage more kidnappings—is similar.

What's disheartening is that so many Israeli leaders, both civilian and military, seem ignorant of the long experience of the Jews in trying to cope with this dilemma. Now, following the Quntar exchange, the debate within Israeli society has become more focused than ever before. One hopes that Israeli leaders will take this debate seriously, and develop a policy that will help the country deal with the kidnappings that are surely yet to come. They could do worse than take Jewish history, and even traditional Jewish texts, as their point of departure.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_reich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_reich/)
2. <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/126865>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/no\\_more\\_exchanges\\_like\\_this\\_one/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/no_more_exchanges_like_this_one/)
4. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?letter=M&artid=362>

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## Russia and the Middle East (2008-08-17 11:58)

From [1]Walter Laqueur



Some have said that the Kremlin is unpredictable. I always found the Soviet (Russian) leadership more predictable than the White House.

According to Vladimir Putin, the breakdown of the Soviet Union was the greatest disaster of the 20th century. If so, one ought to undo (or reduce) the damage, and Moscow is now in a position to do so.

In his view, this does not necessarily mean physical occupation. The Central Asian governments need Russian political and economic help in facing many internal problems; they have every interest to keep close relations with the Kremlin. The same is true with regard to Azerbaijan and Armenia. The Baltic republics on the other hand are weak but indigestible; military occupation is ruled out, the game is not worth the candle. Ukraine and Moldova will be more careful not to antagonize Russia following the events in Georgia.

What of the "near abroad," the former East European satellites? They too will understand, with a little applied pressure such as military threats, that they belong to the Russian sphere of influence and that it was a mistake to join NATO, which won't be of any help to them. What of Western Europe? It would perhaps be too much to say that it does not exist, but it certainly does not amount to much. In the absence

of a common European foreign and defense policy and above all a common energy policy (which could make them less dependent on Russian oil and gas supplies), one need not bother about the E.U. Their dependence on Russian energy supplies will grow as the North Sea resources will be exhausted in the not-too-distant future.

What does Russian domination mean? Not the imposition of the Soviet model as in the Cold War. The present Soviet example (the petrostate) hardly lends itself for export. But the Kremlin will certainly insist on control of the foreign policy of the states in its sphere of influence, as well as (for instance) censorship and some other measures of control.

Ideally, the restoration of the Russian sphere of domination (or at least influence) should proceed gradually, even slowly. It was Stalin's mistake after World War Two that he proceeded hastily, which generated resistance, including the emergence of NATO.

But Russia is under time pressure for at least three reasons. First, there is the emotional factor. The temptation to show that Russia has returned to a position of strength is very great. Which Russian leader does not want to enter history as another Peter the Great—not to mention some more recent leaders? Second, Russia's strength rests almost entirely on its position as the world's leading oil and gas supplier. But this will not last forever. Nor will it be possible to prevent technological progress forever—alternative sources of energy will be found.

Above all, there is Russia's demographic weakness. Its population is constantly shrinking (and becoming de-Russified). The duration of military service had to be halved because there are not enough recruits. Every fourth recruit is at present of Muslim background; in a few years it will be every third. The density of population in Asian Russia is 2.5 per square kilometer—and declining. There is no possible way to stop or reverse this process, and depopulation means inevitably the loss of wide territories—not to the Americans.

In these circumstances there is a strong urge not to wait but to act now.

What will be the impact of these trends on the Middle East? Ideally, it would be wise to wait with any major action in the area until Russian domination in its closer neighborhood is established. But if opportunities for a Russian return to the Middle East arise, they should be used.

There are no illusions about finding allies in the region. As one of the last Tsars (Alexander III) said (and as Putin repeated after him), Russia has only two reliable allies: its army and artillery. Among the police and army ideologues there has been of late the idea to give up Panslav dreams, since the Slav brothers can be trusted even less than the rest, and to consider instead a strategic alliance with Turkic peoples. But these are largely fantasies.

The main aim will be to weaken America's position in the Middle East. In this respect, there are differences of opinion in the Kremlin. Some ex-generals have come on record to the effect that a war with America is inevitable in a perspective of 10-15 years. The influence of these radical military men should not be overrated. But it is certainly true that the belief that America is Russia's worst and most dangerous enemy is quite common (see for instance the recent [2]Russkaia Doktrina). The downfall of the Soviet empire is thought to be mainly if not entirely America's fault; Washington, it is believed, is trying to hurt Russia all the time in every possible way. This paranoiac attitude is deeply rooted (in contrast to China) and it will be an uphill struggle in the years to come to persuade the Russian leadership that this is not the case.

Moscow has threatened to supply greater help to Iran and Syria, which would certainly annoy America and

perhaps hurt it. But Russia does not want to do this at the price of creating political and military problems for itself in the years to come. Russian distrust does not stop at its southern borders.

The attack on South Ossetia provided Russia with an unique opportunity; it was motivated by a militant Georgian nationalism which failed to understand that small and weak countries, unlike big and powerful ones, are not in a position to keep separatist regions indefinitely under their control. Such opportunities will not frequently return, and other opportunities will have to be created by the Kremlin—probably by exploiting existing conflicts such as those in the Middle East. This could open the door to serious miscalculations.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_laqueur/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_laqueur/)
2. <http://www.lfpr.lt/uploads/File/2006-18/Potassenko.pdf>

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Mark N. Katz (2008-08-17 20:28:56)

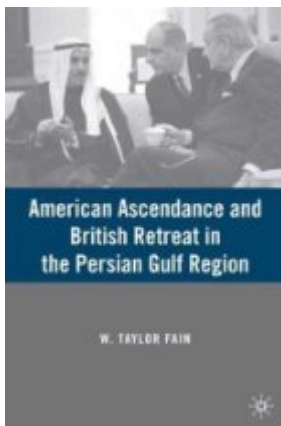
Recent events in Georgia show that Moscow is determined to restore its sphere of influence in countries that the Kremlin believes rightfully belong in it. Despite President Bush's statements that South Ossetia and Abkhazia are part of Georgia, Russia now has firm control over them. The relatively mild Western response to the crisis may well serve to stoke Putin's appetite for similar adventures elsewhere. Even more than they blame the United States, Russians blame the loss of their empire on Gorbachev and Yeltsin. These two men, they believe, willingly surrendered the empire for "promises" from the West that were never fulfilled. (They overlook the fact that the West never made the "promises" to Russia that Russians think it did.) If the collapse of the empire, then, was the foolish act of "weak" leaders, then its resurrection can also be accomplished through the determined act of a strong leader. Recent events in Georgia will only confirm Russian belief that this is possible. It would not be surprising if Moscow arranged for "patriotic forces" to invite Russian intervention in southern and eastern Ukraine, oil-rich Azerbaijan, the rest of Georgia, or elsewhere in the former Soviet Union outside the Baltic states (which are NATO members). Further, these efforts may well be successful—or at least appear to be so initially since America and the West are unlikely to go to war to protect any of these places. But will this lead to increased Russian influence in the Middle East? At first glance, the answer may appear to be "yes." Much of the Middle East is anti-American. Russia is anti-American. So it would appear that the Middle East would welcome the rise of Russian influence. This view, however, is mistaken. Radical Islamists who hate the United States also hate Russia. Al Qaeda has certainly not forgotten about the Chechens and other Muslims in Russia. Further, whatever differences those in the Middle East (both Muslim and non-Muslim) who fear radical Islamists have with the United States, they are well aware that Russia will neither be willing nor able to replace the U.S. as a protector. Further, forceful efforts by Russia to rebuild the USSR will only serve to rekindle age-old fears of Russia in Turkey and Iran over Russian expansionism. Nor has the Muslim world forgotten how the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan—or how it was forced to withdraw from there. It is one thing for Russia to take over South Ossetia and Abkhazia—the equivalent of a couple of counties—where ethnic hatreds have given them allies. But can Russia win a long, drawn-out conflict in the Middle East? Many, including some Russians, would point to Chechnya as a Russian military success story. But Russian success there is mainly due to Moscow having outsourced the war to the Kadyrov clan—former Islamist insurgents who became allies with Moscow in exchange for being allowed to do whatever they want in Chechnya except declare independence. If Moscow ever tried to replace the Kadyrovs, it is highly likely that a full-scale insurgency would quickly break out again in Chechnya. Moscow's action in Georgia may appear to be a victory in the short-run but prove to be a blunder in the long-run. For there are many Muslim nations in the North Caucasus and elsewhere in Russia that might also like to secede. Moscow may see a sharp difference between those seeking to secede from Georgia on the one hand and from Russia on the other. But it is not at all clear that the peoples of the region do. If South Ossetia and Abkhazia can become independent, then why not Chechnya, Ingushetia, Tatarstan, or other Muslim regions inside Russia? Putin's war in Georgia may presage a new wave of Russian expansionism. But it may also trigger a new wave of ethnic conflict in the Caucasus that threatens to unravel the Russian Federation. Instead of Russia expanding into the Middle East, parts of Russia may become part of the Middle East. [1]Mark N. Katz is a professor of government and politics at George Mason University. MESH Pointer: See the earlier MESH thread, [2]Debate in the Caucasus, and the later posts, [3]Putin's war and the Middle East and [4]Turkey's troubles in the Caucasus.

1. <http://www.marknkatz.com/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/debacle\\_in\\_the\\_caucasus/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/debacle_in_the_caucasus/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/putins\\_war\\_and\\_the\\_middle\\_east/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/putins_war_and_the_middle_east/)
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### 'American Ascendance and British Retreat' (2008-08-19 00:35)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. W. Taylor Fain is an assistant professor of history at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington. His new book is *American Ascendance and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region*.

From [1]W. Taylor Fain



[2] During the United States' first war against Saddam Hussein in 1991, I was a Department of State historian in Washington. The Office of the Historian was charged with providing historical background information on the Gulf crisis to Department policy makers, and one of the tasks I was given was to write a classified analysis and chronology of Iraq's historical claims to Kuwait and the United States' response to them. I had been a student of European security issues and arms control, and this was my introduction to Persian Gulf affairs. Baghdad's periodically asserted claims to its neighbor were new to me, and I was fascinated to learn how deeply Great Britain had been involved in Kuwait and in the Persian Gulf since the era of the Napoleonic Wars. I was convinced that Britain's imperial legacy in the Gulf played a role in shaping American policy in the area in ways that contemporary U.S. policy makers did not fully appreciate. This proved to be the germ of *American Ascendance and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region*.

Essentially, my research examines the origins of the United States' current embroilment in the Gulf, the Arabian Peninsula... and Iraq. What I have underscored is that it is impossible to understand America's current predicament in the region without understanding the process of Britain's imperial retreat from the area and the ways the United States attempted to come to grips with it. It was the inability of U.S. foreign policy makers to deal successfully with Britain's retreat from the region, their inability to establish viable surrogates for British power in the area, or, alternatively, to recast or re-imagine American interests in the Gulf after 1971 that led the United States, by the end of the 1970s, to assume the large-scale, direct political and military obligations it has in the Gulf.

Some historians have argued, unpersuasively in my opinion, that Britain's imperial moment in the Middle East ended with the 1956 Suez debacle. In fact, Britain continued to be a key actor in the region for another decade and a half. It clung like grim death to what the Foreign Office called the "hard kernel" of its Middle Eastern interests in the Persian Gulf and southern Arabia, until a combination of economic

crisis and political turmoil at home forced Harold Wilson's Labour government to relinquish its position in the Gulf region.

The Anglo-American relationship was particularly fraught in the Persian Gulf, and my research underscores the very different interests, priorities and perceptions of threat the United States and Britain defined for themselves in the Middle East. While the United States worked to integrate the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula into the larger architecture of its Cold War containment policy, Britain struggled to secure its more parochial economic and imperial interests in the region. The United States attempted to ensure the flow of reasonably priced Persian Gulf oil to the West in order to support the economies and governments of its European and Japanese allies during the Cold War. At the same time, officials in London attempted to safeguard the supply of Gulf oil produced by British companies and defend its military assets in the Gulf region and its colony in Aden. It worked to secure the lines of communication through the Gulf region to its allies and Commonwealth partners in Southeast Asia and Australia, and to defend the interests of its Gulf region client states.

It's clear that both U.S. and British officials appreciated the close relationship between their interests in the Persian Gulf and throughout the Arabian Peninsula but comprehended that they were not identical. The British government had only mixed success in winning American approval for its policies in the Gulf region. Successive American administrations believed that a British presence in the Gulf could help secure Western interests, but they were uneasy about the efficacy of Britain's military guarantee of Gulf security. They feared that heavy-handed British military action during a crisis could provoke a violent nationalist reaction against Western interests. This unease prevented American policy makers from giving Britain the unequivocal support it sought in the Gulf region. Frequently, British officials expressed their frustration and even anger over American reluctance to back their Gulf policies wholeheartedly.

So, the Anglo-American "special relationship" in the Persian Gulf region had very real limits. Sentiment alone wasn't enough to keep U.S. and British policies aligned in the Middle East or elsewhere during the Cold War. The alliance functioned fully only where the interests of both members coincided fully. In Europe, both Washington and London certainly agreed on the need to contain Soviet power and to oppose communism. But elsewhere, for example in the Gulf region, U.S. and British policies moved out of step.

When I began my research, I expected to tell a rather straightforward story of the "changing of the guard" or "passing of the torch" from Britain to the United States in the Persian Gulf. What I found was something altogether more complicated and more interesting. I found a story of successive British governments' determination not to cede Britain's position in the Gulf until the last possible moment, and of the United States' equal determination not to assume expensive new commitments.

What historians have left largely unaddressed is that while the United States and Britain pursued their interests in the Persian Gulf region, the peoples of the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula worked just as hard to determine their own destinies. Deeply entrenched conflicts and ambitions shaped the environment in which U.S. and British statesmen attempted to work. Iraqi designs on Kuwait, Yemeni claims to Aden, and political competition between Baghdad and Cairo—unrelated to the Cold War era concerns of Washington and London—complicated the efforts of the U.S. and British governments to fashion workable foreign policies in the region. Frequently the smaller nations of the Persian Gulf and Arabia attempted to co-opt the power and influence of the United States and Britain for their own ends.

I hope that my study leaves the reader with an appreciation that the record of U.S.-British diplomacy in the Persian Gulf region is a complex and often troubled one. It's marked by tension and littered with important failures as frequently as it is characterized by lasting successes. But it rewards close examination. It underscores the formidable difficulties even the closest allies confront in establishing

cooperative policies, and I hope it illuminates an important chapter in the history of Western diplomacy on the Cold War's periphery during the era of European imperial retreat.

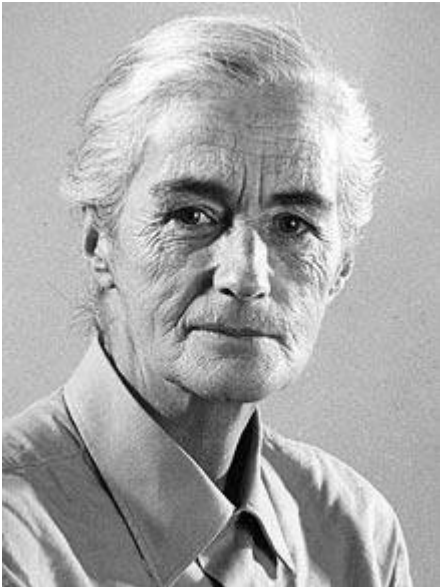
[3]Order from Publisher | [4]Amazon

1. <http://www.uncw.edu/hst/about/faculty-fain.html>
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/41SetC0ttJL.jpg>
3. <http://www.palgrave-usa.com/catalog/product.aspx?isbn=0230601510>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0230601510/>

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### Miss Lambton's advice (2008-08-20 09:49)

From [1]Martin Kramer



Ann (Nancy) K.S. Lambton, the distinguished British historian of medieval and modern Iran, died on July 19 at the age of 96. Her obituaries tell some of her remarkable story as a pioneering scholar and a formidable personality. They are also interesting for what they omit, regarding her role in the idea of removing Mohammad Mossadegh from power in Iran.

The Independent [2]obit says nothing. The Times [3]obit makes an all-too-brief allusion: "She was consulted by British officials on developments in Irano-British relations, especially during the crisis in 1951 when Iran's Prime Minister, Muhammad Mussadiq, caused a furore by nationalising British oil interests in Iran." Yet we are not told exactly what she proposed in these consultations. The Telegraph is [4]more explicit: "Lambton's insights into the strengths and weaknesses of Iran's then prime minister, Mohammed Mossadegh, proved a valuable aid to Britain's eventual success, in concert with America, in precipitating an end to Mossadegh's premiership and in ensuring a continued, though reduced, British share in Iran's oil production." Yet we are not told just how she imparted these "insights," or why they were "valuable." The Guardian [5]quotes a historian as saying her advice "marked the beginnings" of the 1953 coup, but does not explain what she advised or how she had such a profound effect. So what is the fuller story behind these allusions?

In 1951, Ann Lambton was a Reader in Persian at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. She had many connections in Whitehall, and her standing as an oracle on matters of

Persian politics was unassailable. She had completed her doctorate in 1939 after a year of field work in Iran, and then spent the war years as press attaché in the British Legation (later Embassy) in Tehran, under the most seasoned of old hands, Sir Reader Bullard. She also came from a prominent landed family with assorted estates (including, yes, a Lambton Castle)—an advantage of pedigree that largely made up for what still was, in those days, a gender deficiency. When Nancy Lambton spoke, people listened—and when it came to Mohammad Mossadegh, she had strong views.

The historian Wm. Roger Louis first went through the British archives on the Mossadegh affair just after they were opened in the early 1980s, and he has told the story three times, in two books and an article (most recently [6]here). "Here the historian treads on patchy ground," warns Louis. "The British archives have been carefully 'weeded' in order to protect identities and indeed to obscure the truth about British complicity." But he came across the minutes of conversations between Lambton and a Foreign Office official who described her as someone who knew Iran "better than anyone else in this country."

Lambton, the official reported in June 1951, "was of the decided opinion that it was impossible to do business" with Mossadegh, and that no concessions should be made to him. She urged "covert means" to undermine his position, consisting of support for Iranians who would speak out against him, and stirring opposition to him "from the bazaars upwards." The official added: "Miss Lambton feels that without a campaign on the above lines it is not possible to create the sort of climate in Tehran which is necessary to change the regime." He then relayed her practical recommendation: entrust the mission to Robert (Robin) Zaehner, a quixotic Oxford don and former intelligence agent, fully fluent in Persian, whom Lambton described as "the ideal man" for the job. On Lambton's recommendation, the Foreign Office dispatched Zaehner to Tehran, where he put together a network of disaffected opponents of Mossadegh's regime.

This effort came to naught, partly because the Truman Administration still thought the British should deal with Mossadegh. In November 1951, Lambton complained: "The Americans do not have the experience or the psychological insight to understand Persia." But she did not relent: "If only we keep steady, Dr. Mossadegh will fall. There may be a period of chaos, but ultimately a government with which we can deal will come back." Anthony Eden, Foreign Secretary, added this note: "I agree with Miss Lambton. She has a remarkable first hand knowledge of Persians & their mentality."

Yet Mossadegh hung on, and a year later he shut down the British diplomatic mission. According to Lambton's Foreign Office contact, she thought that the British policy of not making "unjustifiable concessions" to Mossadegh "would have been successful had it not been for American vacillations," and she insisted that "it is still useless to accept any settlement" with Mossadegh, "because he would immediately renege."

This was the prevailing British view, and persistence ultimately paid off. In November 1952, Dwight Eisenhower was elected U.S. president, and the new team in Washington took a very different (and dimmer) view of Mossadegh. Anthony Eden met with the president-elect to discuss "the Persia question," and the CIA's Kermit Roosevelt and Donald Wilbur set in motion the wheels of the August 1953 coup—an American-led, joint CIA-MI6 production.

"In that [first] minute [of June 1951]," writes historian Louis, "may thus be found the origins of the 'Zaehner mission' and the beginnings of the 1953 coup." Louis asserts that "the archives, for better or worse, link Professor Lambton with the planning to undermine Musaddiq." He notes that "Lambton herself, as if wary of future historians, rarely committed her thoughts on covert operations to writing. The quotations of her comments by various officials, however, are internally consistent and invariably reveal a hard-line attitude towards Musaddiq."



In the latest 2006 retelling of the tale by Louis, he has somewhat trimmed his estimate of Lambton's role. "I have the impression from the minutes," he writes in a footnote, "that the officials quoting [Lambton] sometimes wanted to invoke her authority to lend credibility to their own views." Louis also adds that Lambton's "views were entirely in line with those of other British authorities on Iran." In other words, she was urging them to think or do something they already thought or wanted to do anyway, but for which they needed an authoritative footnote.

But there can be no doubt that her advice bolstered the advocates of toughing it out and bringing Mossadegh down. The obits tend to downplay this story because the 1953 coup has come to be seen as some sort of original sin—as the root cause of the Islamic revolution that unfolded a full quarter-century later. But wherever one puts the 1953 coup in the great chain of causation, Lambton's assessments at the time should inspire awe. Years of experience in Iran, exact knowledge of Persian, and wide travels within the country, all had led her to conclude that Mossadegh could be pushed out, as against the view that he had to be accommodated. She was right. Given the propensity of Western experts on Iran to get so many things wrong over the years, Lambton's call is all the more remarkable.

The present incumbents in power in Iran are careful to shut out Western Orientalists, not because they fear the situation in Iran will be misrepresented but because it might be accurately represented, exposing the weaknesses of their regime. The historian Ervand Abrahamian, mentioning Lambton (and Zaehner), [7]writes that it should not be surprising that the coup "gave rise to conspiracy theories [among Iranians], including cloak and dagger stories of Orientalist professors moonlighting as spies, forgers, and even assassins. Reality—in this case—was stranger than fiction." The reality is that it isn't easy to hide one's vulnerabilities from an intimate stranger such as Lambton. The fear of Orientalist professors, both there and here, has never been that they might get things wrong, but that they are very likely to get them right.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)

2. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/professor-ann-lambton-persianist-unrivalled-in-the-breadth-of-her-scholarship-whose-association-with-soas-was-long-and-important.html>

3. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/obituaries/article4379464.ece>

4. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/2524891/Professor-AKS-Lambton.html>

5. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/aug/15/universityteaching>

6. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1845113470/>

7. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0520085035/>

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Philip Carl Salzman (2008-08-20 12:07:21)

As a new graduate student at the University of Chicago in 1963, I searched for a research field and topic. Having been inspired by Fredrik Barth's [1]*Nomads of South Persia*, and determining to carry out field research in one of the more arid parts of Iran, I became a student of Iran. In so doing, I inadvertently but inevitably became, indirectly, the student of Ann Lambton. Initiating language training at Chicago under the National Defense Language Fellowships, I immersed myself in Lambton's [2]*Persian Grammar* (1953) and [3]*Persian Vocabulary* (1954), which were regarded as the best learning tools available. No great student of language was I, but I was tickled to more or less master the Arabic alphabet in a day. (Many uninitiated see the Arabic alphabet as an insurmountable obstacle, when in fact it is the easiest step in acquiring Middle Eastern languages.) From then on, it was all downhill. Nonetheless, I muddled on with Persian, in Chicago and in Iran, and later while writing at McGill, particularly for [4]*Black Tents of Baluchistan*, often referring to Lambton's language books. I shall not attempt here an overview of Lambton's distinguished career, which has been reviewed in the obituaries in the British press, as well as offered in reflections by Lambton herself in 1988. Rather, I shall simply report on my academic dependence on her work and a couple of very tangential contacts

I had with her. Lambton's [5]*Landlord and Peasant in Persia* is a remarkable, detailed account of 459 pages, plus fold-out map. As Lambton states in the Preface, in her reports of contemporary Iran,

I have confined myself to describing those areas of which I have personal knowledge.... The material... was collected in Persia mainly between July 1948 and September 1949 [but also 1936-37 and 1939-45]. On all three occasions I travelled widely.

In short, Lambton conducted wide-ranging field research and collected much of her information from observation and face-to-face inquiry. The results found in *Landlord and Peasant* are broad in scope of both issues and geography, and deep in detail and regional variation. But it is a survey focused on a particular topic in a variety of locales, and not a comprehensive account of ways of life. As such, it is rich and invaluable, but inevitably limited and frustrating. It is a resource that many of us have used repeatedly. Certainly in *Black Tents of Baluchistan*, I drew on this work to provide comparative data for my Baluchi case. Neophyte though I was when Lambton's [6]*Persian Land Reform* appeared in 1969, I had the temerity and perhaps impudence to review it for the *Middle East Journal* (1969), and, worse, to write a "critical comment" on it in the *Muslim World* (1972). In the latter, I suggested that one of Lambton's themes, the championing of land reform by the agricultural minister and the reluctance of "those who held the reins of power" "in high places," was poorly developed and unconvincing. Her argument, implying that the Shah opposed real land reform, was vague and unsubstantiated, and alternative theories, such as a shifting of the ruler's power base, were not considered. My one other indirect contact with Lambton came as a result of a contract I had with a London publisher to republish General R. E. H. Dyer's [7]*Raiders of the Sarhad*, an account of his campaign during World War One against the Yarahmadzai of northern Iranian Baluchistan, the tribe that I studied in the 1960s and 1970s. Apparently, or so I was told, after the forthcoming reprint was publicized, Professor Lambton told the publisher it was not worth publishing, and it was subsequently cancelled by the publisher. Perhaps Lambton was correct, for *Raiders* is no great work of ethnography or scholarship. Yet it is a first-hand account—by an author later to become notorious as the instigator of the Amritsar massacre—of the wild and woolly free tribes of western Baluchistan before they came under the control of the Iranian state, and I drew on it in my historical chapters of *Black Tents of Baluchistan*. Anthropologists are the amateurs of the social sciences—the jacks of all trades and masters of none. We do psychology, politics, economics, ecology, medicine, and so on. Arguably the same could be said of our mastery of area studies: dicey language, dubious history, superficial literature. What we do manage to get, we get through the efforts and accomplishments of area specialists such as Ann K. S. Lambton, without whose instruction we would be even more hopeless than we usually are. For that, we owe a great debt. [8]*Philip Carl Salzman is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0881332070/>
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0521091241/>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0521091543/>
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## MESH on Facebook (2008-08-23 21:42)

From MESH Admin



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MESH now has a [1]Facebook Page. You're already here, but there are two circumstances in which you might want to visit the Facebook Page.

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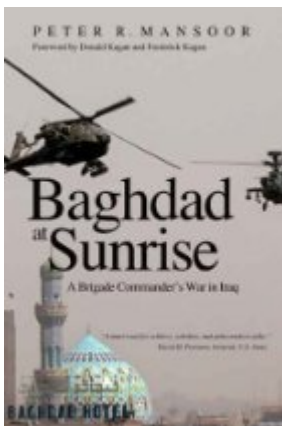
[2]Contact us with any questions or suggestions.

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2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/contact/>

### 'Baghdad at Sunrise' (2008-08-24 12:36)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Peter R. Mansoor is the General Raymond Mason Chair of Military History, Ohio State University, and a recently retired U.S. Army colonel. His new book is *Baghdad at Sunrise: A Brigade Commander's War in Iraq*.

From [1]Peter R. Mansoor



[2] When I deployed to Iraq in June 2003, I decided to keep a daily journal as a personal memoir for my family. This was, after all, my first experience in combat, and my experiences as the commander of the 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division (aka the "Ready First Combat Team") would be a defining moment in my life. For 13 months I wrote faithfully in my journal every day (or, more usually, late at night), no matter how tired I was. When I returned home in July 2004, I considered expanding the journal into a book-length manuscript, albeit still with the idea to present it as a personal memoir for my family. After some reflection, I decided that a more expansive treatment of my experiences in Iraq could fill a broader need by explaining what went right and wrong during the crucial first year after the fall of Baghdad in the spring of 2003.

Currently, the Iraq War genre is filled with books written by junior officers, noncommissioned officers, and soldiers recounting their experiences on the streets and in the deserts of Iraq. Although a few of these works are quite good, on the whole they lack context at the higher operational and strategic levels of the war. Books written by reporters fill some of this void, but these works are written by those on the outside of the military peering into headquarters to which they did not belong. Memoirs by very senior political

and military leaders are more or less self-exculpatory, and too often attempt to deflect blame for what went wrong. A significant void currently exists in the history of the war, one which I try to fill with *Baghdad at Sunrise*. By explaining the conflict from the perspective of a senior commander who served in Iraq, the book fills a critical gap in the public's understanding of the war.

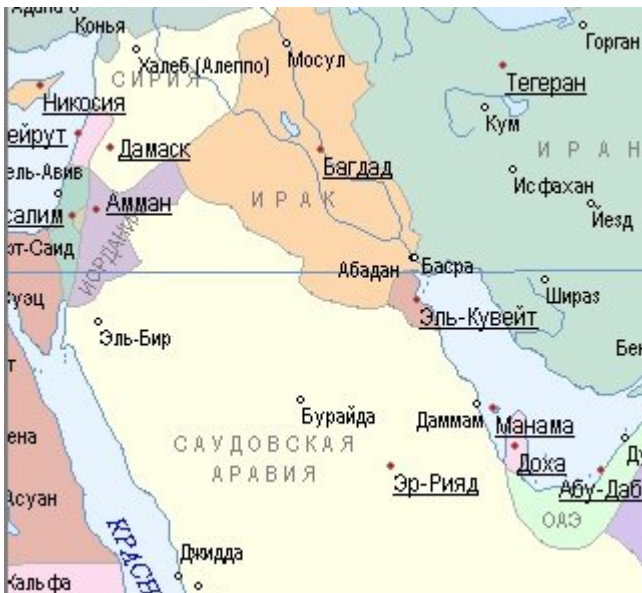
Beyond giving the public a better idea of what happened on the ground in Iraq in the war's first year, the broader goal of *Baghdad at Sunrise* is to provide lessons for the future as the United States and its allies continue the struggle in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. A lot has been written about our political and strategic failings, but the story of U.S. Army operations in Iraq has been told mainly through the eyes of people outside the institution. My hope is that the book is also a good read—a story not just worth telling, but a story well told.

[3]Order from Publisher | [4]Amazon

1. <http://mershoncenter.osu.edu/expertise/spotlight/Mansoor.htm>
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/41x%2BcWPg9BL.jpg>
3. <http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/reviews.asp?isbn=9780300140699>
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## Putin's war and the Middle East (2008-08-27 01:01)

From [1]Robert O. Freedman



At the time of the Russian invasion of Georgia, Russia was following a policy of encouraging the main anti-American forces in the Middle East—*Hamas*, *Hezbollah*, *Syria* and *Iran*—while at the same time trying to cultivate the major Sunni Arab states of the Middle East, especially *Egypt*, *Saudi Arabia*, *Jordan* and the *United Arab Emirates*, and drawing them away from their alignment with the *United States*. The invasion of *Georgia*, coming as it has in the midst of the Russian diplomatic offensive in the Middle East, is likely to have the most impact on Russia's relations with *Syria*, *Israel*, *Turkey* and *Iran*.

*Syria*. In an almost classic case of political opportunism, *Syrian President Bashar Asad* seized upon the Russian invasion of *Georgia*—and the fact that *Israel* (along with *Germany*, *France*, the *United States*

and Turkey) had provided military equipment and training to the Georgian military—to try to convince the Russians to sell Syria the weapons they have long wanted and that the Russians have so far proved unwilling to sell them, especially the short-range, solid fuel Iskander-E ground-to-ground missile that can reach virtually every target in Israel, and the SAM-300 anti-aircraft missile system which, if installed in Syria near Damascus, could control most of Israel's airspace. As Asad told the Russian newspaper *Kommersant* on the eve of his visit to Moscow when Georgian-Russian hostilities were still going on, "I think that in Russia and in the world, everyone is now aware of Israel's role and its military consultants in the Georgia crisis. And if before in Russia there were people who thought these (Israeli) forces can be friendly, now I think no one thinks that way." It is clear that Asad was referring to Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who on repeated occasions stated that he had denied the Iskander missiles to Syria because they could harm Israel.

In backing the Russian intervention in Georgia—one of the few countries in the world to do so—Asad was repeating the policy of his father Hafiz Asad whose Syrian regime was one of the few in the world to support the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. While Asad senior was richly rewarded with Soviet military equipment for his support of Soviet policy in Afghanistan, it remains to be seen what Bashar Asad will get. All Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov would say after the Asad visit was that Moscow would "consider" Syria's appeal for new weapons sales, and that in any case Russia would not sell any weapons that would affect the Middle East strategic balance. Since sale of both the Iskander-E and SAM-300 systems would definitely affect the regional military balance, Syria is unlikely to get these weapons—that is, if Lavrov is telling the truth or he is not overruled by his superiors. What may come out of the visit are the sale of short-range anti-aircraft missiles (perhaps to make it more difficult for Israel to conduct raids on suspected Syrian nuclear installations as it did in September 2007); the sale of additional anti-tank missiles, such as the ones Hezbollah used effectively against Israel in their 2006 war; and a more robust agreement between Russia and Syria for the Russian use of the Syrian port of Tartus for the expanding Russian Navy,

Israel. Russian-Israeli relations have had their ups and downs under Putin, but in recent years it is clear that relations have deteriorated. Russian support for Hamas, its turning a blind eye when Syria transferred anti-tank missiles to Hezbollah, and its military and diplomatic support for Iran at a time when the Iranian leadership has been calling for the destruction of Israel, have all soured relations. Yet, as a high-ranking Israeli diplomat who specializes in Russian-Israeli relations told me in 2007, "relations are not as bad as they could be." Indeed, Moscow has a bifurcated if not schizophrenic relationship with Israel. While on the one hand Russian regional policies vis-à-vis Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran and Syria, have clearly hurt Israel, on the level of bilateral Russian-Israeli relations, the ties between the two countries are developing surprisingly well.

Thus, on the eve of the Asad visit to Moscow, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had a telephone conversation about Israeli-Syrian relations and about the situation in Georgia. Trade between Russia and Israel has exceeded \$2.5 billion a year, much of it in the high tech sector which Putin needs to develop the Russian economy so that it is not dependent on dwindling energy exports. Cultural ties are thriving, and Moscow just established a cultural center in Tel Aviv. The two countries have signed a visa-waiver agreement to facilitate tourism. Negotiations are underway for the return to Russia of Czarist property in Jerusalem. Russia and Israel cooperate in the sale of weaponry to third countries, such as an AWACS aircraft to India (Russia supplies the airframe and Israel the avionics). And Israel's ruling Kadima Party has just signed an agreement with Putin's United Russia Party to establish party-to-party relations. While some in the Russian military such as Russia's Deputy Chief of Staff Anatoly Nogovitsyn publicly complained about Israeli aid to the Georgian military, Foreign Minister Lavrov went out of his way to praise Israel for stopping arms sales to Georgia.

What then explains Russia's bifurcated policy toward Israel, and how will the Russian invasion of Georgia affect it? It appears clear that Russia has three goals vis-à-vis Israel. First, it is the homeland of

more than a million Russian-speaking citizens of the former Soviet Union, and Russia sees Russian-speakers abroad as a source of its world influence. Hence the emphasis on cultural ties between Russia and Israel, in which Israelis of Russian origin play the dominant role. Second, Putin badly wants to develop the Russian economy, and high-tech trade with Israel is a part of his plan. Third, the Arab-Israeli conflict is a major issue in world politics, and Putin would very much like to play a role in its diplomacy, if not in finding a solution to the conflict. For this reason he has called for an international peace conference in Moscow in November and he would like Israel to attend, so as to build up the role of Russia as a world mediator. In this context, one should not discount the possibility that Putin has told the Israelis (and the message may be reinforced if Olmert makes a rumored trip to Moscow in September) that Russia will overlook Israeli arms sales to Georgia, and will not sell the feared Iskander-E or SAM-300 missiles to Syria, if Israel agrees to attend the November peace conference in Moscow.

Turkey. In the case of Turkey, the Russian invasion of Georgia should awaken past memories of Czarist and Soviet military pressure against both the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. The Ottoman Empire fought a dozen wars with Czarist Russia, losing the northern shore of the Black Sea, the Crimean Peninsula, and extensive territory in the Balkans. While relations improved after the collapse of both the Ottoman Empire and Czarist Russia, relations chilled again at the end of World War Two when the Soviet Union exerted pressure on Turkey to grant Moscow bases in the Turkish Straits—a demand that drove Turkey into the arms of the United States and NATO.

Relations improved between the USSR and Turkey in the 1980's as the two countries signed a natural gas agreement, and by the time of the Russian invasion of Georgia, Russia had become Turkey's number one trading partner, with trade exceeding \$25 billion per year and Turkey now dependent on Russia for more than 60 percent of its natural gas imports. On the other hand, Turkey had been a major ally of Georgia, and along with Germany, France, Israel and the United States, had cooperated militarily with Georgia. In addition, Turkey's hopes of being a major energy hub rest not only on plans to tranship Russian and Iranian natural gas, but also on the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and on the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum natural gas pipeline, both of which cross Georgian territory. In addition, the Turkish leadership can't be too happy over the precedent set by South Ossetian and Abkhaz independence, given the demands of Turkey's Kurdish minority for independence.

Torn by these conflicting pressures, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan sought to mediate the Russian-Georgian conflict by proposing a "Caucasus Cooperation and Stability Alliance," composed of Turkey, Russia, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, given the fact that Georgia and Russia are still actively hostile to each other, and Armenia and Azerbaijan remain near war over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh, the Turkish president's proposal seems little more than an attempt to prevent the Georgian-Russian relationship from deteriorating further, a development that would pose significant problems of choice for Turkey. Nonetheless, the Russian move into Georgia may, in the long run, prompt a rethinking of policy in Ankara, something that could reverse the deterioration of Turkish-American relations which was caused by the 2003 Iraq war.

Iran. In the short run at least, the Russian invasion of Georgia, with its accompanying diplomatic clash between the United States and Russia, may well work to the benefit of Iran. Any chance of Russia agreeing to further UN Security Council sanctions against Iran seems to have gone by the wayside, although given the very limited sanctions which the Russians had agreed to in the past, this is probably not too important a factor. In addition, Russia may now more willing to sell Iran the SAM-300 missile system. On the other hand, with sanctions no longer being considered, the chances of an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear installations are enhanced, particularly if an Israeli national unity government is formed following the Kadima primaries in mid-September.

In the longer term, however, the Iranians may share some of the concerns of Turkey. Iran, like Turkey, has suffered Russian invasions in the past, and the cautious Iranian response to the Russian invasion of Georgia may reflect that concern. In addition, Iran, like Turkey, has restive minorities, and the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia could set a negative precedent for Iran. Perhaps for this reason the Iranian Fars News Agency ran a story citing the Georgian ambassador to Tehran's praise of Iran for its position in the Russian-Georgian conflict.

In summation, the Russian invasion of Georgia was the culmination of an increasingly aggressive foreign policy on the part of Putin in the Middle East and elsewhere. While Syria quickly supported Moscow, most of the rest of the Middle East, including Russia's ally Iran, withheld support, calling only for a quick cease-fire. While there has been a good bit of speculation that the invasion will lead to an improvement of American-European relations in the face of the new Russian threat, the American position in the Middle East could also improve as a result of the heavy-handed Russian policy in Georgia, although that improvement may have to wait until a new American administration takes office in January 2009.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)

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## Turkey's troubles in the Caucasus (2008-08-30 10:43)

From [1]Michael Reynolds



The outbreak of the Russian-Georgian War earlier this month apparently caught Ankara as poorly prepared as it caught Washington. The Turkish Foreign Ministry's section dealing with the Caucasus reportedly was virtually unstaffed. The head of the section was in Mosul on temporary assignment, the section's number-two spot is empty and has been for the last six months. The number three was also away on temporary assignment in Nakhichevan and the other assigned section members were on vacation, thus forcing on-duty diplomats from other desks to scramble.

This may surprise. There are abundant reasons for one to expect that Turkey would have been following events in Georgia and the Caucasus with great diligence. The two countries share common borders and intertwined histories. Istanbul ruled large chunks of the Caucasus, including much of Georgia, for centuries, and today there remains inside Turkey a small but vibrant community of Abkhazians and related Caucasian peoples. Russia for most of the past three centuries has loomed over Turkey as its greatest rival and threat, yet at critical times, such as during the Turkish War of Independence (1919-22), it has been a key ally. Today Russia supplies somewhere around 70 percent of Turkey's natural gas and is Turkey's second-largest trading partner.

Georgia is a transit point for Caspian and Central Asian oil and gas and as such is critical to Turkey's



ambitions to become an energy hub and to diversify its own energy supplies. As a member of NATO, Turkey has been involved in training and supplying the Georgian military. Finally, given Turkey's own struggle with Kurdish separatists, other instances of ethno-separatism and border revision logically should command Ankara's keen attention. In short, both Russia and Georgia are of great strategic, economic, and historic importance to Turkey, and the principles of territorial integrity and self-determination over which the Russo-Georgian War was (nominally) fought are directly relevant to the most sensitive of Turkey's security concerns.

Turkey's lack of preparedness for the Russo-Georgian war is not coincidental, but instead reflects a long-standing legacy of Kemalism. The fundamental precept of the foreign policy course laid out by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, summed up in his famous phrase, "Peace at home, peace in the world," was that Turkey should bury its imperial past, avoid foreign entanglements, and focus on internal development. Thus the Turkish Republic deliberately isolated itself from its neighbors, especially those to its south and east. It cut cultural and other ties across the board, and preferred cordial but distant relations over close involvement and interaction. As a result, Turkey today has a strong cadre of diplomats, professors, analysts and others fluent in English and familiar with the United States and Western Europe, but it lacks the sort of expertise about its own neighborhood that one might assume it would naturally possess given its imperial history. Although challenges to this policy of isolation have emerged on occasion (briefly in the 1950s and perhaps during the early 1990s), a preference for cool detachment and inward focus has remained dominant in the Turkish bureaucracy.

There is much to be said for avoiding foreign entanglements, and the reasoning behind "Peace at home, peace abroad" was anything but frivolous. Yet self-imposed isolation carries its own costs. Those costs rose precipitately for Turkey following the end of the Cold War as its neighborhood underwent tremendous political and economic transformation. Ignoring the events taking place around it was no solution. At this time, Turkey's self-confidence began to grow, and more Turks began to advocate that their country play a more active role in its region. One positive development has been the emergence in Turkey of think tanks, both official and non-governmental, dedicated to foreign and domestic issues.

Old habits and institutional practices die hard, however, and playing an active role in such a complex region is no simple matter. As a way to break out of the old mindset and gain experience in regional affairs without great risk, Turkey has been trying to play the role of mediator in regional conflicts. The architect of this approach is Ahmet Davutoğlu, a former professor and close adviser to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who now holds the rank of ambassador. Thus Turkey has involved itself in negotiations between Syria and Israel. Similarly, Turkey's Foreign Minister Ali Babacan has at times tried to position himself as a broker between the West and Iran.

Erdoğan in the midst of the Russo-Georgian War tried to apply a slightly more advanced variant of this formula by flying to Moscow, Tbilisi, and Baku and proposing a "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform." The idea of the platform, which is sometimes also called a pact, is to bring together the three South Caucasian states of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan with Turkey and Russia, and enable them to mediate and solve their conflicts among themselves.

The idea sounds attractive, but it will not go far. Such pacts can work only if all members are willing to prioritize stability and good relations over their other interests. Yet if there is one thing we know, it is that there is no consensus for stability in the Caucasus. Russia just mounted a calculated and successful effort to overthrow the status quo in the Caucasus at the expense of another putative pact member, Georgia. Russia's war aims, moreover, extend beyond altering the balance of power in the Caucasus, to restoring its position as the dominant power in Eurasia and restructuring its relations with the United States and Europe. Abkhazia and South Ossetia are pawns in a game bigger than the Caucasus. The notion that what



Russia and Georgia need in order to come to a mutually satisfactory agreement is a nearby neutral venue for their diplomats to meet verges on the surreal. Perhaps for this reason, the Russian press chose to give short shrift to Erdoğan's call for a stability pact, and instead interpret his visit as signifying support for Russia in South Ossetia. It was not the finest moment in Turkish diplomacy.

Azerbaijan is another state in the Caucasus that has for some time been voicing an intense dissatisfaction with the status quo. In recent months, Baku has been dropping subtle threats that it might seek to revise it by going to war. In particular, Azerbaijan is dissatisfied with the outcome of the war it fought with Armenian forces over Nagorno-Karabakh (to use the most widespread English rendering of the region's name), a predominantly Armenian enclave (technically it held the title of "autonomous oblast" in the Soviet Union) inside the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Karabakh War started in 1988, i.e. when the Soviet Union was still in existence, and ended with a ceasefire some six years later in 1994. During the war not only did Karabakh break free of Baku's control, but Armenian forces managed to seize roughly fifteen percent of the Republic of Azerbaijan's territory and expelled the Azeri inhabitants thereof, some 800,000 people.

Since that time, Baku has not been able to achieve any redress through diplomatic measures. But thanks to foreign investment in its oil industry it has accumulated some wealth, and has used that wealth to engage in a military build-up. Whether or not Azerbaijan's military is capable of defeating and driving out Armenian forces and restoring the occupied territories and Karabakh to Baku is by no means clear, but building frustration among Azeris might tempt them to test their luck.

Turkey and Armenia are the two states in the Caucasus that have the greatest interest in preserving and building upon the status quo. The Armenians, i.e. the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) and the Republic of Armenia, won the Karabakh War and wish to keep their gains. They would like Azerbaijan and the wider world to acknowledge the de facto independent NKR as sovereign Armenian territory (either as part of the Armenian Republic proper or as a separate republic).

Armenia in addition would like to see Turkey lift the blockade it imposed in 1993 in response to the Armenians' seizure of Azerbaijani territory. That blockade has stunted land-locked Armenia's economic development, leaving it dependent upon Georgia and Iran for surface routes to the outside world. The disruption caused by Russia's invasion to the operations of Georgia's ports, rail lines, and roads (ironically, Turkish goods are among the biggest commodities imported along those roads into Armenia) has hit Armenia's economy especially hard. and underscored Armenia's isolation and fundamental vulnerability. Indeed, even before this most recent war, it was clear that Armenia's lack of relations with Turkey had left it excessively dependent upon Russia—an unhealthy situation for any state pretending to sovereign status. (Indeed, with Armenia already virtually in its back pocket, one might imagine that Russia may seek to woo Azerbaijan to its side by compelling Armenian concessions on Karabakh.)

For its part, Turkey since the end of the Cold War has benefited in numerous ways from the retreat of Russian power and had reason to be generally satisfied with the state of affairs in the Caucasus prior to this war. The big exception is the state of its relations with Armenia. Although Turkey was one of the very first states to recognize Armenia's independence in 1991, it never followed up to establish relations. Several difficult issues divide the two states. One bone of contention between them is Turkey's insistence that Armenia definitively renounce any claims on the territory of the Turkish Republic. Another is Armenia's insistence that Turkey recognize the massacres and deportations from Anatolia of Ottoman Armenians during and after World War One as a genocide. A third is Turkey's demand that Armenia withdraw from the territory of Azerbaijan that it occupies.

A fourth issue is, of course, the blockade. Although the imposition of the blockade was greatly appreciated by Azerbaijan, which sees itself as the victim of Armenian aggression, it has harmed Turkey's

image worldwide by reinforcing the stereotype of the "Terrible Turk" as a bully. This is something the Turks, never mind the Azeris, find particularly irksome given that it is the Armenians now who are occupying territory seized in war. Turkish support for Azerbaijan has impaired Turkish efforts to counter the lobbying by Armenian diaspora groups of legislative bodies worldwide to classify the mass deaths of Ottoman Armenians in 1915 as genocide. Opening the border with Armenia, some Turkish officials believe, would enable Turkey to thwart these efforts more effectively.

Economics provides another incentive for Turkey to open its borders. Turkey's east is isolated, distant from markets, and remains underdeveloped. Opening the border with Armenia would provide a boost to the local economy by enabling cross-border trade. It would also make available better routing options for oil and gas pipelines from the Caspian and export corridors to the Caspian and beyond, and thereby provide a boon to Turkey's national economy as well.

In a gesture intended perhaps to break the stalemate in Turkish-Armenian relations, the Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian invited his Turkish counterpart Abdullah Gül to come to Yerevan on September 6 to watch the national soccer teams of the two nations play a World Cup qualifying match. Gül, some Turks hope, will seize the moment to initiate a major shift in the region's diplomacy. Gül has not yet committed. Were Gül to do so, it would mark a significant change not just in Turkish-Armenian relations, but even more so in Turkish diplomacy, which has a tradition of working slowly and with exceeding caution, and of letting opportunities slip by.

Indeed, with Russian forces now inside Georgia, both Turkey and Armenia (as well as Azerbaijan) probably already have missed an opportunity to overcome their differences and to chart a path toward more secure and prosperous futures for their societies. The Russian state, whether in its Tsarist, Soviet, and contemporary forms has demonstrated substantial skill in manipulating ethnic and other cleavages on its borderlands to weaken its competitors. It is worth remembering that Russia was involved in the emergence of all of the conflicts mentioned above (Turkish-Armenian, Azeri-Armenian, Ossetian-Georgian, and Abkhazian-Georgian) among others. That is not to say that Russia invented these conflicts. Hardly. At times Russia has expended considerable efforts to contain and resolve them. But Russia is not an outsider to them and possesses an intimate familiarity with them—a familiarity that it can, has, and will deploy to its advantage.

Strength is a relative thing. Sapping the cohesion and power of one's potential rivals is often as effective, and occasionally even more useful, a method for overcoming them than is building up one's own strength. There are more fissures for Russia to exploit in the Caucasus. The Turkish-Armenian-Azerbaijani fissure is an easy one to exploit. For reasons of history, memory, and culture, all of these societies remain deeply conflicted regarding relations with each other. Pushing the buttons to poison the atmosphere and disrupt any move toward reconciliation is not difficult.

Russia exerts tremendous influence over Armenia, and considerable influence over Azerbaijan. Turkey, too, is vulnerable to Russian pressure. Already Turkish businessmen are fretting over the way increased scrutiny by Russian customs of their goods is harming Turkish exports and are wondering if such scrutiny is intended as a message to Turkey to refrain from close cooperation with the United States against Russia.

Keeping Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan at loggerheads serves Russia by neutralizing the power and options of its Caucasian neighbors, keeping them dependent, and blocking the development of the Caucasus as an alternative corridor for energy and trade. It also serves varied domestic interests in each of those states. But it does nothing for those societies aside from depriving them of options for future development.

It is not clear that Russia's defeat of Georgia will restore it to the position of hegemon in the Caucasus, but it will increase Moscow's ability to play the role of regional spoiler. Although many Turks and Armenians retain doubts about the propriety of closer relations between their countries, important constituencies inside the governments and societies of the two nations recognize the multiple benefits better ties would bring. Their difficulty is convincing others that improved relations are, in fact, conceivable. Thus were Gül and Sarkisian to meet this September and announce together that they intend that their states should, together with Azerbaijan, overcome their differences, their words would have a real impact.

As the larger, more senior, more established, and more powerful state, Turkey is the better candidate to take the lead in the drive toward reconciliation. But it is not likely to happen. With Russia inside Georgia, and the Caucasus reverting again to a theater of Great Power confrontation, time is running out. Boldness is required. Yet whereas Moscow drew from its imperial collapse the lesson that fortune favors the bold, Ankara took from the Ottoman experience the lesson that extreme discretion is the better part of valor.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_reynolds/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_reynolds/)

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Malik Mufti (2008-09-08 11:49:44)

Michael Reynolds [1] touches on a very important point when he ascribes Turkey's ineffectual response to the crisis in the Caucasus to a deep-rooted tradition of wary isolationism. In my own research on Turkish strategic culture, I have investigated how mechanical adherence to a security paradigm centered on upholding the status quo has paralyzed Turkish policy at a time of upheaval and flux—not just in the Caucasus, but in the Balkans and the Middle East as well. However I also identified a counter-paradigm in Turkish strategic culture—manifested in the policies of Adnan Menderes and Fatin Rüştü Zorlu in the 1950s, and of Turgut Özal between 1983 and 1993—that is much more ready to exhibit the "boldness" Mike calls for. There is reason to believe that Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Gül incline toward this bolder counter-paradigm. During the early 1990s both men echoed Özal's evocation of Turkey's Ottoman past—and of its expansive, cosmopolitan, imperial worldview—to call for a comprehensive revision of security policy. Erdoğan, for example, was quoted as saying in 1993: "Turkey has the power to sustain an imperial vision. In fact, if Turkey wants to take its place as a prominent member of the global community in the 2000's (and it should), then it is obliged to adopt an imperial vision." ([2] Here, p. 430.) When I interviewed Gül in November 2000, he elaborated as follows:

There are two conceptions in Turkey. The first is an inward-looking conception that considers Turkey exclusively within its borders ... that has severed all links to its history. "Peace at Home, Peace in the World"... that might have been appropriate at a certain juncture... but not to current realpolitik conditions.... The second conception argues that there are certain realities. Turkey governed this region for so many centuries. It has great potential.... History, geography, current events, all oblige us not to ignore [what is happening with] the Turks in Russia, the Circassians, Bulgarians, even in China. I am among those who subscribe to this second conception.

Since coming to power after winning the 2002 national elections, Erdoğan and Gül have remained embroiled in the country's intense domestic debates, particularly on secularism and the Kurdish question. They have therefore not yet been given a chance to reveal if they still intend to embark on a genuinely new course in foreign affairs. In the meantime, with Turkey's regional policy remaining on the conventional auto-pilot Mike so rightly decries, the lost opportunities and embarrassing setbacks continue to pile up. [3] *Malik Mufti is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/turkeys\\_troubles\\_in\\_the\\_caucasus/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/turkeys_troubles_in_the_caucasus/)

2. <http://books.google.com/books?id=nUYfHQAACAAJ>

3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/malik\\_mufti/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/malik_mufti/)

## 2.9 September

### Growing U.S.-Israel gap on Iran (2008-09-05 00:02)

From [1]Robert O. Freedman



In recent months, a growing gap has become evident between the United States and Israel on policy toward Iran. While the Bush Administration seems increasingly reluctant to use force to stop the rapidly expanding Iranian nuclear program, the vast majority of Israelis, who see the Iranian nuclear program as a mortal threat, are increasingly willing to attack Iran's nuclear installations, especially the centrifuge plant at Natanz, the heavy-water reactor under construction at Arak, and the nuclear reactor under construction—with the help of Russia—at Bushehr.

Two factors have intensified Israeli concern. The first is that despite occasional Iranian denials, Iran appears to be receiving the long-range SAM-300 anti-missile system from Russia, with installation of the missiles around Iran's nuclear sites expected to be completed between March and September, 2009. Once these missiles are installed and operational, an attack by the Israeli air force against the Iranian nuclear installations will be much more difficult. Second, the recent deterioration of Russian-American relations which resulted from the Russian invasion of Georgia makes it even less likely than before that the UN Security Council will vote serious economic sanctions against Iran.

Despite a series of warnings from the United States and the European Union, and three very limited UN Security Council sanctions resolutions, Iran has moved ahead rapidly with its nuclear program, while at the same time developing intermediate range missiles that have the range to strike Israel. Iranian officials have announced that Iran has already installed 4,000 centrifuges at Natanz (3,000 are deemed sufficient to build a nuclear weapon), and is in the process of installing 3,000 more, with the eventual goal of more than 50,000 centrifuges.

At the same time, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the leading Iranian proponent of its nuclear program, continues to call for Israel's destruction. What worries the Israelis is that Ahmadinejad claims a mystical connection to the last Shia Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, and appears to believe that a cataclysmic event, such as a nuclear war with Israel, might bring about his return to earth. While Ahmadinejad does not hold the top post in Iran—that position is held by the Supreme Religious Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei—the fact that Khamenei has just endorsed Ahmadinejad for reelection is yet another concern for Israel. Despite some grumbling in Iran about the difficult economic situation (high unemployment and 26.1 percent inflation), the Khamenei endorsement most likely means that Ahmadinejad will win the next Iranian presidential elections, which are scheduled for the spring of 2009. With that victory, any hope that Iran might moderate its policies toward Israel, and make concessions about its nuclear program, will evaporate.

Meanwhile, as Israeli apprehension grows, the United States appears not only unwilling to use force itself against Iran, but is also trying to put the brakes on any Israeli attack on Iran. U.S. Secretary of Defense

Robert Gates has repeatedly stated that diplomacy, not military action, should be the preferred means of dealing with Iran—apparently overlooking the fact that diplomatic activity has been a total failure up until now. In June, two leading U.S. officials, Mike McConnell, the U.S. National Intelligence Director, and Admiral Mike Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, visited Israel, reportedly telling the Israelis that Iran was not yet able to build a nuclear weapon and, in any case, an Israeli attack would “damage US national interests.” They repeated some of the main arguments against an Israeli attack:

1. It would only retard for a short time, and not eliminate, the Iranian nuclear program, because many of the installations are hidden.
2. It would rally public support around the unpopular Ahmadinejad regime.
3. It would have “unpredictable consequences.”
4. It would undermine U.S. policy in Iraq and Afghanistan and threaten US bases in the Persian Gulf.

The first three of these arguments are weak, if not specious. The Mossad has been working for more than two decades in Iran, and if anyone knows where Iran’s secret installations are, it is Israel. Consequently, an Israeli strike, most likely carried out by Israel’s air force and cruise-missile-firing submarines, is likely to deal a long-lasting blow to Iran’s nuclear installations—one lasting far longer than the two months to two years reportedly cited by the United States.

Second, with Ahmadinejad now backed by Khamenei for reelection, public opinion in Iran doesn’t really matter because Khamenei has the power to fix an election in favor of Ahmadinejad.

The third argument, of “unpredictable consequences,” is equally problematic. What is usually meant by this is that Iran will close the Straits of Hormuz, causing oil prices to skyrocket. What is forgotten here is that if a confrontation between Iran and the United States is inevitable—as I believe it is—then the time to confront Iran is before it obtains nuclear weapons, not afterwards, when its capability of wreaking havoc with oil prices will be far greater. A non-nuclear Iran will be able to close the Straits of Hormuz for only a limited period—days or weeks at the most—while a nuclear Iran could close them indefinitely.

The final argument, that an Israeli attack could harm U.S. interests in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf, carries more weight. There is no question but that Iran has influence in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and that its missiles have the range to hit U.S. bases. Iranian aid to Shia forces in Iraq could complicate the improving military situation there and delay the transfer of U.S. troops from Iraq to Afghanistan. Iran could also complicate the intensifying conflict between NATO and the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Yet if Iran plays these cards—it is already smuggling weapons and instructors into Iraq—the United States would have the opportunity to attack the bases of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard from which Iranian military aid flows into Iraq; and if Iran fires missiles at U.S. bases in the Persian Gulf, the United States, even if it doesn’t intercept all the Iranian missiles, could strike a major blow at Iranian military bases throughout Iran, something that would reduce Iran’s military capability and its ability to threaten U.S. allies in the Persian Gulf. Such a response, far from rallying the Iranian population around the Islamic regime, may bring about its demise.

In sum, the dispute over attacking Iran’s nuclear installations has caused a growing gap between the United States and Israel. Whether it will cause a major crisis between Israel and its most important ally is a very open question.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)

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Chuck Freilich (2008-09-08 14:52:14)

I could not agree more with [1]Robert O. Freedman that the time to confront Iran is before it obtains nuclear weapons, not after, but the question remains what type of confrontation will be required and especially whether it will include military action. While diplomacy has certainly not succeeded in dissuading the Iranians from continuing with their program to date—indeed, they have defiantly accelerated it—I still believe that Iran may be dissuadable, given sufficient international pressure. Iran does not wish to be an international pariah, an eventuality which fits neither its self-image as a great historical power, nor its more mundane needs as an aspiring political and economic power. Iran does care about its citizenry, and is neither a North Korea nor Saddam's Iraq. Until now, however, it has not been called upon to pay much of a price and has thus not had sufficient reason to forgo the nuclear program, instead eating its (yellow) cake and having it too. Russia, as Freedman correctly points out, has no intention of playing ball in the Security Council, but this has nothing to do with the recent events in Georgia and has been its long-standing policy. The only way to change that might be for the United States to engage it as a legitimate partner and address its concerns and interests, rather than trying to force it to swallow totally outdated and gratuitous acts—such as NATO expansion right on its borders and an anti-missile system that might be rendered unnecessary to begin with, were the United States to bring Russia on board the anti-Iran campaign. Notwithstanding my remarks above, it is quite possible that Iran's strategic interests in having nukes are such that no combination of positive or negative inducements can dissuade it from its nuclear program. The answer, however, to the extent that one exists, lies in extra-UN pressures, beginning with greatly heightened Western sanctions, followed by a U.S. naval blockade and—only if this fails—possible direct military action. The timeline to an Iranian nuclear capability is certainly growing shorter, and while graduated, the process will have to be relatively short: in a worst-case scenario, something on the order of a year; in a rosier one, a few years. So far the Iranian program has proven lengthier than the worst-case scenario proponents had feared, but at some point, most likely during the next administration's first term, it will happen. We have to be ready. The next administration should also pursue a dialogue with Iran, not because it will succeed—it will probably not—but because the serious measures that will be required will only be feasible when U.S. domestic and international opinion is convinced that all other measures have been truly exhausted. I do not believe, as Freedman implies (possibly unintentionally), that anyone in a position of responsibility in Israel is agog at the thought of military action. Yes, Israelis probably approach it with a greater sense of resignation and willingness to contemplate the possibility, but no one in Israel is cavalier about this or deludes themselves that it will be another Osirak. It will not. As the old expression goes, nothing concentrates one's thinking like having a loaded gun at one's head, and this is precisely how Israel perceives an Iranian nuclear capability. That said, I believe there is a military option—one that involves fewer costs than many assume—as I explained in an [2]earlier post. [3]*Chuck Freilich is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/09/growing\\_us\\_israel\\_gap\\_on\\_iran/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/09/growing_us_israel_gap_on_iran/)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/what\\_will\\_iran\\_do\\_if\\_hit/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/what_will_iran_do_if_hit/)

3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck\\_freilich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck_freilich/)

**East: Near, Middle, Far (2008-09-07 00:01)**

From MESH Admin



This wire service [1]article from the New York Times of April 27, 1952 is evidence of how the National Geographic Society once unsuccessfully tried to define the Near, Middle, and Far Easts "in terms of logical geographical divisions." It is amusing now to read the rationale for the Society's insistence on centering the Middle East in... India. (Read the article for details.)

The motive was a desire to save the term Near East from oblivion. Middle East, which the British had embraced after the First World War, had pushed Near East aside in discussions of contemporary politics. In 1946, the term Middle East struck a deep root in America, with the founding of the Middle East Institute in Washington. The new institute began to publish the Middle East Journal the following year. Likewise, the New York Times regularly referred to the region as the Middle East. This caused some consternation in official circles, since Near East remained the preferred term of the U.S. State Department. (Even today, the region comes under the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.) The article does indeed suggest that the National Geographic Society was following the State Department's lead.

Needless to say, the "logical" division proposed by the Society, which would have pushed the Middle East thousands of miles eastwards, failed to reverse the tide of popular usage. In August 1958, the State Department finally gave up, as announced by the New York Times in an [2]article headlined "'Near East' is Mideast, Washington Explains." The National Geographic Society took a bit longer. Its January 1959 [3]map of the region skirted any admission of defeat, by employing this evasive title: "Lands of the Eastern Mediterranean (Called the Near East or the Middle East)." But ultimately the Society too gave up the fight. (Follow the evolution of its maps of the region [4]here.)

And so we are not called NESH.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F40B17F83B5E107A93C5AB178FD85F468585F9>
2. <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F70E10FC3D59127A93C6A81783D85F4C8585F9>
3. <http://www.ngmapcollection.com/product.aspx?cid=1539&pid=15565>

4. <http://www.ngmapcollection.com/store.aspx?cid=1539>

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Martin Kramer (2008-09-30 11:36:00)

The National Geographic Society's [1]attempt to salvage *Near East* in April 1952 was probably a direct rejoinder to an official British determination [2]affirmed in the House of Commons by the British Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs [3]Ernest Davies ten months earlier, in July 1951. Davies:

The term "Near East," which was connected with the Ottoman Empire, is outmoded in this country and "Middle East" has now superseded it for official purposes. The countries included in the term "Middle East" are Egypt, Turkey, Iraq, Persia, Syria, the Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Saudi Arabia, the Trucial Sheikdoms, Kuwait, Bahrein, Qatar, Muscat, the Aden Protectorate and the Yemen.

(To which a needling member replied: "Can the hon. Gentleman say that there is nothing eastern that is any nearer than the Middle East now?") This has become the canonical definition of the Middle East, as attested by the products of mainstream cartography in America and Europe.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/09/east\\_near\\_middle\\_far/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/09/east_near_middle_far/)
2. <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1951/jul/25/middle-east-definition#S5CV0491P0-01464>
3. [http://www.aim25.ac.uk/cgi-bin/search2?coll\\_id=2832&inst\\_id=1](http://www.aim25.ac.uk/cgi-bin/search2?coll_id=2832&inst_id=1)

Martin Kramer (2008-09-07 22:28:46)

[1]This leaves me feeling somewhat anachronistic, since I have my undergraduate and doctoral degrees in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton. It's even more the case since my diplomas are in Latin, and attest that my degrees are in the study of *Asia Citerior*, which is Asia Minor—apparently the closest thing in Latin to the Near or Middle East. [2]Roman Asia Minor was defined as that part of Asia lying to the west of the Euphrates River. Of course, my studies in Princeton's Near Eastern Studies department covered a lot more than that, including, for example, courses on Egypt and Iran. So I'm afraid my diplomas shortchange me, declaring me an expert on only part of the area I studied. *Caveat emptor.* [3]*Martin Kramer is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/09/east\\_near\\_middle\\_far/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/09/east_near_middle_far/)
2. [http://www.rare-maps.com/MAPS\\_PIC/AA2-1898-ASIA.JPG](http://www.rare-maps.com/MAPS_PIC/AA2-1898-ASIA.JPG)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)

Malik Mufti (2008-09-09 15:48:32)

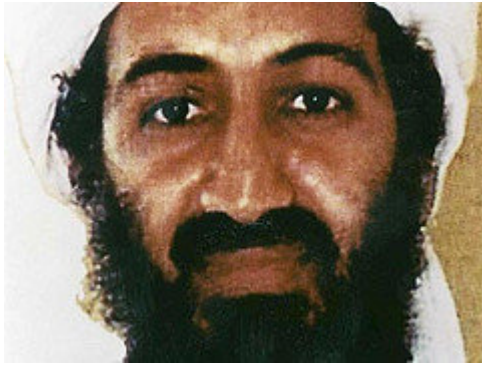
In the late 1980s, I took a graduate course entitled "From the Near East Question to the Middle East Problem." As the Cold War order began to collapse, the professor joked that perhaps he should add "and Back to the Near East Question Again" to the course title. The distinction to my mind rests on the territories—in the Balkans, Caucasus, and Central Asia—that went out of play geopolitically after World War One. That left the narrower area called the Middle East, centered around the Arab-Israeli and Arab-Iranian fault lines, as an arena of active international politics. With the reactivation of the Balkans, Caucasus, and Central Asia, however, it seems to me reasonable to refer once again to the Near East as a distinct and coherent—only broader—geopolitical subsystem. [1]*Malik Mufti is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/malik\\_mufti/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/malik_mufti/)

## Osama Bin Laden: man of love? (2008-09-10 17:56)

From [1]Raymond Ibrahim





In many ways, Michael Scheuer is the paradigmatic case of an otherwise knowledgeable and experienced Western adult who takes Al Qaeda's word at face value. According to his book, [2]Imperial Hubris, his credentials and thus authority to speak about Al Qaeda and its goals are impressive: "For the past seventeen years, my career has focused exclusively on terrorism, Islamic insurgencies, militant Islam... I have earned my keep and am able to speak with some authority and confidence about Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda, [and] the dangers they pose and symbolize for the United States..."

The remainder of his book makes several fine points, articulating well—arguably even better than bin Laden—the grievances that Al Qaeda and the Muslim world have vis-à-vis specific U.S. policies. However, the book's fundamental thesis is bin Laden's own: Al Qaeda's terrorism is simply a reaction to U.S. foreign policy. Writes Scheuer emphatically: "Bin Laden has been precise in telling America the reasons he is waging war on us. None of the reasons have anything to do with our freedom, liberty, and democracy, but everything to do with U.S. policies and actions in the Muslim world."

He then proceeds to quote and accept, rather naively, several of bin Laden's messages to the West, such as: "Therefore, I am telling you [Americans], with Allah as my witness, whether America escalates or de-escalates the conflict, we will reply to it in kind..." Bin Laden, of course, often begins every message directed at the West by saying "reciprocal treatment is part of justice"—i.e., "leave us alone, we leave you alone."

Scheuer takes it one step further by concluding that Al Qaeda's war revolves around "love":

Bin Laden and most militant Islamists, therefore, can be said to be motivated by their love for Allah and their hatred for a few, specific, U.S. policies and actions they believe are damaging—and threatening to destroy—the things they love. Theirs is a war against a specific target, and for specific, limited purposes. While they will use whatever weapon comes to hand—including weapons of mass destruction—their goal is not to wipe out our secular democracy, but to deter us by military means from attacking the things they love. Bin Laden et al are not eternal warriors.

Thereafter, bin Laden is likened to heroes like Robin Hood or (of all people) Saint Francis of Assisi—a friar known for his benevolence towards animals. Surprisingly, Scheuer overlooks the theological underpinnings—offensive jihad, enforcement of "dhimmitude," and enmity for non-Muslims—that dominate Al Qaeda's worldview (and which are delineated over and over in [3]The Al Qaeda Reader). These hostile doctrines, innate to Al-Qaeda's worldview, clearly demonstrate that, contrary to Scheuer's assessment, Al Qaeda and their kind do—indeed must—hate the United States for more than a "few, specific policies," and that their war transcends "specific, limited purposes," and thus that they are "eternal warriors."

Here is bin Laden himself explaining the "true" nature of the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, such as Americans, AKA, "infidels":

As to the relationship between Muslims and infidels, this is summarized by the Most High's Word: "We renounce you. Enmity and hate shall forever reign between us—till you believe in Allah alone" [Qur'an 60:4]. So there is an enmity, evidenced by fierce hostility from the heart. And this fierce hostility—that is, battle—ceases only if the infidel submits to the authority of Islam, or if his blood is forbidden from being shed [i.e., a dhimmi], or if Muslims are at that point in time weak and incapable [in which case, bin Laden later clarifies, they should dissemble (taqiyya) before the infidels by, say, insisting the conflict is about "foreign policy," nothing more]. But if the hate at any time extinguishes from the heart, this is great apostasy!... Such, then, is the basis and foundation of the relationship between the infidel and the Muslim. Battle, animosity, and hatred—directed from the Muslim to the infidel—is the foundation of our religion.

Note that, contrary to Scheuer's assurances, at no time does bin Laden indicate that U.S. foreign policy is behind such animus; it is entirely a theological argument—transcending time, space, and circumstance. In his attack against "moderate" Muslims, bin Laden rhetorically asks and answers the pivotal question:

Does Islam, or does it not, force people by the power of the sword to submit to its authority corporeally if not spiritually? Yes. There are only three choices in Islam: either willing submission; or payment of the jizya [tribute], through physical though not spiritual submission to the authority of Islam; or the sword—for it is not right to let him [an infidel] live.

How do these quotes accord with Scheuer's statement that "None of the reasons [for Al Qaeda's antipathy] have anything to do with our freedom, liberty, and democracy"? (My emphases.)

Nor is this worldview "peculiar" to bin Laden. Here's his "second," Ayman Zawahiri:

Jihad in the path of Allah is greater than any individual or organization. It is a struggle between Truth and Falsehood, until Allah Almighty inherits the earth and those who live in it. Mullah Muhammad Omar and Sheikh Osama bin Laden—may Allah protect them from all evil—are merely two soldiers of Islam in the journey of Jihad, while the struggle between Truth and Falsehood transcends time.

That Al Qaeda's messages to the West are being understood uncritically and taken at face value by the public is one thing; that a former CIA veteran whose expertise revolves around Islam buys into this calculated sophistry is quite another. Since, as Muhammad said, "war is deceit," Scheuer and other analysts of like mind would do well to consider that perhaps when Al Qaeda sends a communiqué to the West, it is not necessarily sincere but meant solely to elicit a particular response; such as, that Al Qaeda's war is predicated on a "few, specific, U.S. policies and actions." This is tailor-made to accord with the West's preconceived notions of "justice," "equality," "poverty causes violence," and especially "guilt," and is intended to demoralize Americans from, for instance, supporting "the war on terror" which obviously directly affects Al Qaeda.

Here's Osama, one more time, relying on an anecdote from Muslim history indicating what all non-Muslims can expect—even after they make concessions to Islam:

When the king of the Copts of Egypt tried improving relations with the Prophet by dignifying his messenger and sending him back on a beast of burden laden with clothing, and a slave-girl, did such niceties prevent the Companions from raiding the Coptic realms, forcefully placing them under Islamic rule?

The answer is no. As both Islamic theology commands and history attests, “concessions” or “niceties” are never enough: submission to Islam is the price for peace. Mr. Scheuer can be certain, then, that no matter how many political concessions the United States makes to the Islamic world, so-called “Salafists” like bin Laden—that is, Muslims who follow the letter of the law (sharia)—will continue the jihad “till all chaos ceases and religion is all for Allah” (Qur’an 8:38). Instead of thinking of them as Robin Hoods and Francis of Assisis, or simply idealistic, wayward children, it’s best to start seeing them as they see themselves: mujahidin—warriors of Allah out to make Islam supreme, as there have been for some 1,400 years.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [file:///blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_ibrahim/%E2%80%9C](file:///blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_ibrahim/%E2%80%9C)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1597971596/>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/076792262X/>

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Raymond Ibrahim (2008-09-16 11:38:35)

It is not my custom to engage in back-and-forth feuds and diatribes, but I bear no ill will towards Mr. Scheuer and believe [1]his response to be sincere. So I write again. For the record, our main quarrel revolves around the nature of men like bin Laden: are they motivated simply by grievances against U.S. foreign policy, or is it something more, something more abstract—something, dare I say it, more existential, that motivates them? In my original article, I quoted a number of statements made by Al Qaeda that unequivocally demonstrate the latter point—that, all grievances aside, certain theological doctrines held by Al Qaeda oblige it to see the United States as an enemy for nothing less than its religious freedom. This is a point Osama bin Laden and Ayman Zawahiri—not to mention the thousands of nameless jihadists—have made on numerous occasions. Conversely, Mr. Scheuer seems to think their animus is wholly predicated on U.S. foreign policy—a point I have never discounted. If so, why do I rarely spend time discussing Islamists’ grievances against the West, and instead focus on their theological arguments? Is it because, as Mr. Scheuer argues, I am a “neo-con” (whatever that is) and am trying to cover up or at least minimize their complaints in order to further some sort of political agenda? Not at all; I am an apolitical man—despite Aristotle’s contentions. Still, if I do not dwell on their grievances, I have also never discounted them as false—except on those occasions when Al Qaeda fumes against the United States because of its failure to sign the Kyoto Protocol (I explicitly stated this in my book, page 284). The ultimate, reason, however, that disinclines me from factoring the Islamists’ grievances is the fact that, as they plainly declare over and over—when addressing Muslims, that is—political grievances or not, we, the infidels, are de facto enemies. It’s a matter of priority, then: being hated for temporal grievances is secondary to being hated for existential realities. When the latter issues are addressed, then, and only then, will I consider the veracity of the former. At any rate, in his response to me, Mr. Scheuer continues to ignore Al Qaeda’s straightforward, hate-infidels-for-being-infidels quotes (which, incidentally, are what the debate is all about). Instead, he writes:

In this highly selective collection, Mr. Ibrahim picks and chooses from the enormous corpus of writings, statements, and interviews by bin Laden and al-Zawahiri to produce a slim volume which he claims will once and for all prove that Al Qaeda and its allies are bent on imposing a worldwide Caliphate to be governed by what the Necons are pleased to call Islamo-fascism.

To be sure, I never once claimed that my book is a comprehensive compendium of Al Qaeda’s statements (see page 5). However, to state that *The Al Qaeda Reader* is “highly selective” and that I willfully selected “certain” documents and statements in order to “deliberately mislead an American public that is already lied to about the nature and goals of Al Qaedaism” is demonstrably false. If this were true, would I have included the material that makes up half the book—the “Propaganda” section, which is basically dedicated to making the sort of anti-American policy arguments Mr. Scheuer has been making, sometimes even more skillfully? Obviously, if I wanted to make Muslims appear as wild jihadists with no grievances, I would have totally excluded such communiqués from my book. In the interest of objectivity, however, and to make the book as holistic as possible, I did include these arguments. More importantly, by including both sets of writings—theological treatises written for Muslim eyes only, and propagandistic speeches for infidel ears, either way, both their words, not my conjectures—the careful reader will see stark contradictions; namely, that no matter what political concessions the West makes to Islam, nothing short of the former’s submission to the latter can ever lead to peace. (See [2]here for more on this issue.) The only way my book could fairly be accused of being selective, biased, or whatever, is if there exist Al Qaeda writings out there that clearly repudiate the Islamic

concepts (that they otherwise support) of offensive jihad, the doctrine of loyalty and enmity, the need for a caliphate and sharia, etc. In other words, nothing short of Al Qaeda writings, directed to Muslims and insisting that the conflict has absolutely nothing to do with Islamic directives to place the world under Islamic authority, can ever demonstrate that my book is "selective." Does Mr. Scheuer know of such documents? Odd, too, that immediately after making his above statement—that I insist "that al-Qaeda and its allies are bent on imposing a worldwide Caliphate"—Mr. Scheuer immediately goes on to agree by saying "the Caliphate is certainly a goal of bin Laden and other Islamists." If the Islamists are indeed motivated by the creation of a caliphate, and one of the caliphate's primary functions is to wage jihads against the non-Islamic world, and Mr. Scheuer himself affirms this, what exactly is the logic of making political concessions—even if they are warranted? If you know for a fact that your weaker neighbor has complaints against you, but at the same time, hates you because you do not follow his religion, and, the day he grows sufficiently strong enough, he will undoubtedly attack you because of this theological point, why would you make any concessions to him now, when he is weak—especially considering that these concessions will only empower him that much quicker? These are the questions Mr. Scheuer needs respond to. His response so far seems to be that, though Islamists are feverishly seeking to resurrect the caliphate, they also "know that it is as unlikely to appear in their or their grandsons' lifetimes." Indeed, this is apparently Mr. Scheuer's response to all the above, which he even makes clear in his book *Imperial Hubris*. After acknowledging the concept of offensive jihad to subjugate the world, he wrote, "At this point in history, we need worry little about the threat of an offensive and expansionist jihad meant to conquer new lands for Islam and convert new peoples to the faith" (page 7). This is where we differ. I do not claim to know when Islamists will be capable of creating a caliphate and wage offensive/expansionist jihads. But I do not think we should passively wait around, or worse, make the sorts of political concessions Mr. Scheuer advocates—abandon support for Israel and other "friends" of America (even if they are autocratic), make land concessions, grant mullahs nuclear power, etc.—all things which would obviously only speed up the creation of a caliphate. In fact, Mr. Scheuer seems to acknowledge that the U.S. will always be, at least theoretically, an enemy for nothing short of its religious freedom. There we agree. However, he doesn't seem to think this warrants any attention, since, "at this point in history, we need worry little about the threat of an offensive and expansionist jihad." If ever any statement was deserving of the epithet "hubris," surely this is it. [3] *Raymond Ibrahim is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/09/osama\\_bin\\_laden\\_man\\_of\\_love/#comment-1042](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/09/osama_bin_laden_man_of_love/#comment-1042)
2. <http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=OTkxYTI0NGNkNGUxZjg2ZDkxNmQ2MjVhYjM1N2NmNzE=>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/ramond\\_ibrahim/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/ramond_ibrahim/)

Nibras Kazimi (2008-09-15 14:23:48)

While the Caliphate is certainly a goal of bin Laden and other Islamists—because God has said the world will eventually be all Islamic—the Islamists know that it is as unlikely to appear in their or their grandsons' lifetimes as Christians know that a uniform world of turning-of-the-cheek or loving-thy-neighbor is at best light years over the horizon.

[1]This statement, made by Mr. Scheuer, is incorrect. Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi and his successors attempted to establish the caliphate in Iraq, and even went to the lengths of appointing a candidate caliph. The wealth of literature emanating from the jihadists in Iraq should not be de-prioritized over the pronouncements of Bin Laden/Zawahiri. The jihad in Iraq has stolen the limelight from the Afghan front for many years now, and its fading star nowadays is directly tied to battlefield and ideological losses being suffered by the jihadists. I welcome Mr. Scheuer to review my paper, "The Caliphate Attempted" ([2]here) to judge for himself if I, a self-styled neocon, can pass his standards for "solid analysis and intellectual honesty." [3] *Nibras Kazimi is a visiting scholar at the Hudson Institute.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/09/osama\\_bin\\_laden\\_man\\_of\\_love/#comment-1042](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/09/osama_bin_laden_man_of_love/#comment-1042)
2. [http://www.futureofmuslimworld.com/research/pubID.85/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.futureofmuslimworld.com/research/pubID.85/pub_detail.asp)
3. [http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff\\_bio&eid=Kazimi](http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff_bio&eid=Kazimi)

Michael Scheuer (2008-09-15 13:28:06)

Being [1]criticized and patronized by Raymond Ibrahim is high praise indeed. Mr. Ibrahim's [2] *Al Qaeda Reader* is an excellent example of what passes for solid analysis and intellectual honesty among Neo-conservatives. These men and women are quite willing to see America fight an enemy that does not exist—that is, one they hates Americans

and their liberty, not what their leaders do—until it is defeated by an Al Qaeda-led Islamist movement which is held together only by the Muslim world’s nearly universal perception that U.S. foreign policy is an attack on Islam and its followers. In this highly selective collection, Mr. Ibrahim picks and chooses from the enormous corpus of writings, statements, and interviews by bin Laden and al-Zawahiri to produce a slim volume which he claims will once and for all prove that Al Qaeda and its allies are bent on imposing a worldwide Caliphate to be governed by what the Necons are pleased to call Islamo-fascism. While the Caliphate is certainly a goal of bin Laden and other Islamists—because God has said the world will eventually be all Islamic—the Islamists know that it is as unlikely to appear in their or their grandsons’ lifetimes as Christians know that a uniform world of turning-of-the-cheek or loving-thy-neighbor is at best light years over the horizon. And though it must be agreed by all that the world is rife with Islamo-fascists, they all happen to be on the side of the United States, governing and terrorizing the Muslim populations of such states as Egypt, Algeria, Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and other Muslim states. The problems with Mr. Ibrahim’s work are twofold. First, the book deliberately misleads an America public that is already lied to about the nature and goals of Al Qaedaism by the leaders of both parties. The small selection of writings included in *The Al Qaeda Reader* compounds the damage done by those lies. The volume’s contents are intended to reinforce the absurd, self-defeating idea that the United States and the West are confronted by 1.4 billion Muslim automatons eager to enforce fascist rule not only on Christians, Jews, and others, but also to lock it firmly on themselves. Second, Mr. Ibrahim is obviously a very talented linguist, researcher, and political scientist. The endnotes to *The Al Qaeda Reader* offer readers an important, concise, and insightful discussion of many Islamic issues and points of doctrine. It is, in my opinion, a shame that Mr. Ibrahim has used his obvious talents to be the cat’s paw of his former professor, Victor Davis Hanson, a scholar who was once a well-respected historian, but is now the Necons’ fantasist-in-chief in charge of misleading his fellow citizens. [3]Michael Scheuer is a 22-year veteran of the CIA and adjunct professor of security studies at Georgetown University.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/09/osama\\_bin\\_laden\\_man\\_of\\_love/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/09/osama_bin_laden_man_of_love/)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/076792262X>
3. <http://explore.georgetown.edu/people/mfs47/>

## Five years of 'Arab Reform Bulletin' (2008-09-10 18:29)

From [1]Michele Dunne



Reform in the Arab world is not the flavor of the month in Washington that it was in 2003, but there is still a tremendous amount of activity in the region related to political, economic, and educational reform as well as human and civil rights. Today the Arab Reform Bulletin celebrates its fifth anniversary as an online journal by relaunching in a new and much more usable, readable, and searchable version. We are bilingual in English and Arabic, as ever, and have a new comment feature to foster conversations among experts and readers in the United States, Arab world, and Europe on change inside Arab countries and how it affects U.S. interests, European interests, and intra-Arab politics.

This month we feature a broad-brush view of the [2]political situation in Iraq by Phebe Marr, a discussion of new [3]security courts in Saudi Arabia by Chris Boucek, an article on [4]repentant jihadists in Egypt by Hussam Tammam, a look ahead at the [5]Algerian presidential election by Mustafa Saidj, and a questioning of [6]rentier state theory by Riad al Khouri. Have a look at the [7]new ARB and let me know what you think.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele\\_dunne/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele_dunne/)
2. <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/arb/?fa=show&article=21944>
3. <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/arb/?fa=show&article=21947>
4. <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/arb/?fa=show&article=21945>
5. <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/arb/?fa=show&article=21949>
6. <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/arb/?fa=show&article=21948>
7. <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/arb/>

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### 'After Bush' symposium at Harvard (2008-09-14 16:38)

From [1]Stephen Peter Rosen and [2]Martin Kramer



Middle East Strategy at Harvard (MESH) has led a virtual existence since its inception last December. But on Tuesday, September 23, it becomes tangible at Harvard, where MESH will sponsor an afternoon symposium under the title "After Bush: America's Agenda in the Middle East." This is an opportunity for the Harvard community to sample current thinking from leading foreign policy think tanks, as represented by a selection of active MESH members.

The symposium will begin at 4:00 pm, and will divide into two panels:

- U.S. Interests: Problems of Definition

[3]Steven A. Cook, Council on Foreign Relations

[4] Hillel Fradkin, Hudson Institute

[5] Adam Garfinkle, The American Interest

[6] Martin Kramer, Olin Institute, Harvard University

- Does the Freedom Agenda Have a Future?

[7]J. Scott Carpenter, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

[8] Michele Dunne, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

[9] Joshua Muravchik, American Enterprise Institute

[10] Tamara Cofman Wittes, Saban Center, Brookings Institution

Venue: Tsai Auditorium (S010), CGIS South, 1730 Cambridge Street ([11]map). (Enter the building and go down the stairs.) Open to the public. Symposium ends at 6:45 pm.

If you are at Harvard and want a reminder about this event, join MESH's new Harvard-network [12]Facebook Group.

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There are a limited number of places available to Harvard faculty and graduate students in a MESH-sponsored working session on security studies and the disciplines (with some reference to the Middle East). This session immediately precedes the public symposium described above, and will run from 2:00 pm to 3:45 pm.

Presenters include:

- [13] Malik Mufti, Tufts University
- [14] Stephen Peter Rosen, Harvard University
- [15] Philip Carl Salzman, McGill University

If you wish to attend, write to this [16]email address.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven\\_a\\_cook/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven_a_cook/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/hillel\\_fradkin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/hillel_fradkin/)
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11. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/09/cgismap.jpg>
12. <http://www.new.facebook.com/group.php?gid=33131352640>
13. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/malik\\_mufti/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/malik_mufti/)
14. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)
15. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)
16. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2007/10/email.JPG>

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### The first 100 days (1) (2008-09-15 00:35)



At this very moment, the foreign policy teams of Presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama are planning their Middle East strategy. At this stage, it isn't presumptuous to do so—to the contrary, it would be negligent not to. Papers are being refined, on Iraq, Iran, terrorism, Israel-Palestinians, Israel-Syria, energy, and more.

With that in mind, MESH devotes this week to a roundtable of its members on the theme "The First 100 Days." MESH members have been asked these questions: What priorities should the next administration set for immediate attention in the Middle East? What should it put (or leave) on the back burner? Is there anything a new president should do or say right out of the gate? And if a president asked you to peer into your crystal ball and predict the next Middle East crisis likely to sideswipe him, what would your prediction be?

MESH members' answers will appear in installments throughout the week. (Read the whole series [1]here.) We begin with responses from Daniel Byman, Mark T. Clark, and Hillel Fradkin.





[2]Daniel Byman :: The change in administration will offer no relief on the challenges of Iran's nuclear program, counter-insurgency and state-building in Iraq, and the need to revive Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and keep the Syria-Israel talks moving. Several possible threats also loom and may force themselves upon a new administration's agenda. In addition, the new administration should undertake several new initiatives to address issues neglected by the Bush administration.

One area of neglect is the challenge of Iraq's refugees. The over two million Iraqi refugees could destabilize several neighboring states and play a role in sustaining or increasing conflict in Iraq itself. Given the mismanagement of the occupation, the United States also has a moral responsibility to assist those devastated by the civil strife. Vastly increasing the number of refugees the United States itself accepts is one step, but so too is aiding allies like Jordan that are bearing much of the weight of the refugee problem.

A vital area—and perhaps the most important medium-term issue—is the need for a new and comprehensive Pakistan policy. Pakistan is the nerve center for Al Qaeda and the insurgency in Afghanistan. In addition, with a new but weak democratic government in place, Pakistan's relationship with the United States has fundamentally changed. In addition, the Bush administration often neglected policy toward Pakistan (as opposed to counterterrorism operations related to Pakistan) despite its obvious importance to U.S. national security. A new administration should initiate a comprehensive review of Pakistan policy and ensure that it is implemented across the bureaucracies.

It is easy to say that a new crisis is likely to emerge from the Middle East, but those who offer specific predictions about the region usually look back at their prognostications with embarrassment. However, a number of new crises could easily arise from the Middle East region and be the first high-profile foreign policy test of a new administration. They include:

1. A major terrorist attack on a U.S. facility overseas or even the U.S. homeland based out of tribal parts of Pakistan. The Bush administration reportedly has authorized U.S. forces to strike directly into Pakistan without Islamabad's permission, but a major terrorist attack would put considerable pressure on the U.S.-Pakistan relationship and the new government there.
2. A sustained Israeli operation in Gaza. Should rocket attacks from Gaza resume to the point where they threaten Israeli cities outside the Sderot area, or should a rocket strike in that area kill a large number of Israelis, political pressure to respond militarily will be immense. Because Israeli leaders want to avoid a repeat of the Lebanon War in 2006 and worry that Hamas is using its control over Gaza to build up a Hezbollah-like military, they will face pressure to reoccupy parts of Gaza—a move that many U.S. allies around the world, and all U.S. Arab allies, would loudly criticize.
3. The Awakening Councils rebel. Iraq has made progress in part because the United States has successfully partnered with a wide range of local Sunni tribal and militia groups—many of which oppose the Shi'a-dominated government of Nuri al-Maliki. As the Maliki government tries to consolidate power, it is seeking to disarm these groups. This effort may succeed, but it is also possible that some militias will not go gently and Baghdad will not be able to coerce them or, in so doing, fuels the sectarian fires that appear to be diminishing. The United States may find itself caught between its warring partners.



[3]Mark T. Clark:: Biggest issue. The Iranian nuclear program will remain the single most important item on the new president's agenda. The window of opportunity to halt the Iranian quest



for a nuclear bomb is closing rapidly. Within that window, the possibility that Israel may preempt the nascent Iranian program increases daily. Robert O. Freedman [4] has shown the growing disparity between the U.S. and Israeli perspectives on the need to strike key nodes of Iran's nuclear infrastructure, and I can find no reason to disagree with him. Chuck Freilich [5] may be correct that Iran may still be dissuadable diplomatically, but the time necessary for diplomacy to work may be rapidly drawing to a close. Depending on what the next president says at inauguration, the Israelis may feel compelled to act, with or without U.S. help.

**Biggest problem.** The single biggest problem for the United States will be its strategic inflexibility in the Middle East. Although U.S. "surge" forces in Iraq will be reduced soon, the need to spend time and attention on Afghanistan will continue to constrain U.S. military power. While a mini-surge in Afghanistan may help slow down neo-Taliban advances, it cannot solve some of the more intractable problems of governance in that country, which I discussed [6] here. We may need to remain in Afghanistan for some time to come.

**Biggest unknown variable.** The biggest unknown variable will be the actions—or inaction—of Hezbollah in Lebanon against Israel. Also, I cannot discount an Iranian-supported alliance between Hezbollah and Hamas starting a two-front war to deter—or counter—a planned or executed Israeli strike on the Iranian nuclear program.

**Biggest back burner issue.** The "Israeli-Palestinian" dispute should remain on the backburner, at least until the Palestinians form a more coherent and peaceable government.

**Biggest geopolitical surprise.** Russia's traditional interest in the Middle East may be on the rise. After invading parts of Georgia, Russia may be more confident about its relative power, despite international opposition. Although only Syria supported the Russian action, Russia's willingness to sell missile and air defense programs to Iran and its opposition to stronger sanctions may indicate a willingness to increase its footprint in the Middle East while circumscribing U.S. options. I wouldn't be surprised to see Russia and Iran announce some kind of entente cordiale, all in the name of "peace" and as a means to gain more leverage over other states in the region.

**First speech.** The next president should address the Iranian nuclear program and the need for greater U.S. strategic flexibility in the region. What he says, and how he says it, will set the tone for the next four years.

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[7] Hillel Fradkin :: Under almost any plausible scenario, the new administration's first 100 days will be dominated by issues of the Greater Middle East. The two most obvious and somewhat related ones are the war in Iraq and the challenge, threat and question of Iran. But the issue of the war in Afghanistan and relations with Pakistan is coming more and more to the fore. This points to one striking and relatively new general feature of our engagement in the Middle East: the center of gravity of our concerns has shifted markedly eastward. The main thing which tends to push our concerns in the opposite direction is the aggressive efforts of Iran through proxies in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. As this has happened in a somewhat ad hoc way, it is unclear whether American strategy has been rethought to take this shift fully into account. This might be one of the first steps that a new administration might have to take.

As for Iraq, our primary concern will be the continued improvement in the security situation and progress on the political front—including the question of local and regional elections and their impact on

the developing Iraqi political dynamic. This is not only important for our efforts in Iraq but in the way we are perceived in the region generally as a future actor. Prior to the recent success—and partially as a result of American domestic politics—our resolve to stay engaged had come into question, encouraging foes and discouraging allies. This was destined to add to the difficulties of any new administration. This dynamic has now been partially interrupted by the decision that was taken to remain committed to Iraq and the success which that has produced. But it will be important for either a McCain or Obama administration to affirm this recent success and declare American resolve to build upon it. This will be especially true of an Obama administration, which will otherwise buy itself several months of trouble as nations in the region test the limits of his and our resolve. Obama's recent statements seem to indicate a growing appreciation of this fact.

As urgent as our Iraqi concerns will be, our concerns with Iran may well be even more urgent. This is because the main existing approaches—the diplomatic initiative launched in 2003 and led by the EU 3 and the sanctions initiative at the UN—are now clearly at a dead end. At the same time—and despite the misleading NIE of November 2007—Iran has continued the vigorous pursuit of nuclear-weapon and related capacities such as advanced missile technology.

The new administration will have to address two questions: Should it entertain very much more forceful measures—including military action—to prevent Iran from achieving a nuclear weapon? If not, and if it is therefore necessary to accept the eventuality of an Iranian nuclear capacity, what will be the consequences for American interests in the region and how must it restructure its policies to address them? Given the dramatic change in the strategic situation that a nuclear Iran would effect, a reconsideration of our strategy and tactics will have to be especially wide-ranging. It may be advisable and even necessary for a new administration to announce a wholesale review of our policy towards Iran.

There are two particularly troubling possible developments which might present the new administration with its first “crises” in the region. The first would be a major initiative by Iran to stir up trouble through proxies—either on the Iraqi front or with regard to Lebanon and Israel. The other would concern Pakistan and could entail either a serious deterioration in Pakistani-U.S. relations or Pakistani civil disorder or both. It is likely in any event that the question of Pakistan will demand immediate attention.

The issue least likely to demand such attention is the Israeli-Palestinian question. This is at least partially a reflection of the shift in the center of gravity from the Persian Gulf eastward, as noted above.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/first\\_100\\_days.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/first_100_days.pdf)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel\\_byman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel_byman/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_t\\_clark/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_t_clark/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/09/growing\\_us\\_israel\\_gap\\_on\\_iran/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/09/growing_us_israel_gap_on_iran/)
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6. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/summer\\_reading\\_2008/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/summer_reading_2008/)
7. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/hillel\\_fradkin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/hillel_fradkin/)

## The first 100 days (2) (2008-09-16 01:13)



The MESH roundtable on the theme of “The First 100 Days” continues. MESH members have been asked these questions: What priorities should the next administration set for immediate attention in the Middle East? What should it put (or leave) on the back burner? Is there anything a new president should do or say right out of the gate? And if a president asked you to peer into your crystal ball and predict the next Middle East crisis likely to sideswipe him, what would your prediction be?

MESH members’ answers are appearing in installments throughout the week. (Read the whole series [1]here.) Today’s responses come from Robert O. Freedman, Chuck Freilich, and Adam Garfinkle.



[2]Robert O. Freedman :: When the new administration takes office on January 20, it will face four Middle Eastern challenges: (1) preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons; (2) restoring U.S. credibility in the Arab-Israeli conflict; (3) actively engaging Syria in the Syrian-Israeli peace process; and (4) diminishing U.S. dependence on energy imports from the volatile Middle East, as well as from other uncertain suppliers such as Nigeria and Venezuela.

1. Iran. A nuclear-armed Iran would pose a danger not only to the United States but to American allies in the Persian Gulf and to Israel. While diplomacy has been the preferred alternative for dealing with Iran, despite occasional bellicose verbiage from the Bush administration, so far neither the European Union, nor the International Atomic Energy Agency, nor the UN Security Council has succeeded in getting the Iranian regime to stop its program of nuclear enrichment. Under the circumstances, the new U.S. administration should actively consider the military option, which would involve using U.S. air and missile assets to destroy Iranian nuclear installations. Destroying these installations would be a major political blow to rising Iranian political influence in the Middle East, as well as a significant blow to Iran’s military capabilities.

2. The Arab-Israeli conflict. Beginning in 2001, a number of illegal Jewish settlement outposts were established in the West Bank by Israeli settlers. Successive Israeli governments have vowed to remove the outposts, as part of the on-going Israeli-Palestinian peace process, but have failed to do so. The Bush administration has failed to pressure Israel to uproot these outposts, which are seen by most Arabs—and especially the Palestinians—as a process of expanding existing Israeli settlements on the West Bank and thereby seizing territory which the Palestinians want for their independent state. The new U.S. administration must pressure Israel to do what it has already promised to do—that is, uproot the outposts. If the post-Olmert Israeli government fails to do so, the new administration should consider financial sanctions against Israel until it complies. Such an action would do much to restore U.S. credibility in the Arab world while not affecting Israel’s basic security requirements.

3. Syria. In recent years, the Syrian regime of Bashar Asad has hinted that it was willing to make peace with Israel, if Israel returned the Golan Heights and went back to the pre-1967 war boundaries. The question perplexing many Israelis is whether Syria is serious about peace, or whether it is just using its peace offer

to improve ties with the United States. The Bush administration has chosen not to engage Syria in the peace talks, but the new administration should do so. Whether Syria would be willing to cut its ties to Hezbollah and Iran as part of a peace settlement is a very open question, but the new administration should test Syria to see if it is willing to do so. If Syria were to cut ties to Iran and Hezbollah, there would be a major transformation of the current Middle Eastern balance of power, both in America's favor and in Israel's. Consequently, whether or not the U.S. engagement with Syria turns out to be successful, it is definitely worth the effort.

4. Energy. Since the Arab oil embargo of 1973, U.S. dependence on foreign oil has jumped from one-third to two-thirds of total U.S. oil consumption of 20 million barrels per day, and much of this oil comes from undependable import sources such as Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Venezuela. Despite a good bit of verbiage, successive U.S. governments have done very little to reverse the trend of ever-increasing oil imports. There are a number of steps that the United States should take to reverse this negative trend—first and foremost, to consider energy issues as national security issues, rather than as primarily economic ones. Specific steps to be taken include the following:

- Double the fuel efficiency requirements for all cars built in the United States over a period of five years.
- Massively increase subsidies for solar and wind power projects.
- Upgrade the national electricity grid and build additional lines to link wind and solar power sites to population centers.
- Undertake a major effort to produce oil products from non-food sources such as switchgrass, and from non-vital food sources such as sugarcane (as Brazil does).
- Establish a crash program for the gasification and liquefaction of coal, America's most abundant energy source, with due respect to environmental concerns such as carbon. Such an effort should be coordinated with China, another country rich in coal, which is already surpassing the United States as the leading world polluter.



[3]Chuck Freilich :: Mr. President:

See it through in Iraq. A relative success is within your grasp, with vital ramifications for U.S. policy throughout the region. Maintain a robust military presence for the long haul, but as troops are withdrawn, maintain strong economic and political involvement to help ensure that Iraq is a moderate, pro-American force in the region.

Engage rogues, but carry a big stick. Engagement need not deteriorate into appeasement; it is in your hands. You will get nowhere with the rogues without a stick, but a carrot is also needed.

Iran's nuclear program must be stopped. The only question is how: engagement if possible, military action if necessary. Make engagement one of your first initiatives, to see if Iran is incontrovertibly aggressive, but with a clear price tag. This will probably fail, but only after trying will you be able to take the tougher measures required. Try to get Russia on board by ending gratuitous friction over outdated policies such as NATO enlargement and the anti-missile system, but prepare the ground for major extra-UN sanctions. Make it clear to all that the United States will go it alone if they do not cooperate. If real sanctions fail—and time is short—impose a naval blockade. Discount the doomsayers who warn of a severe Iranian

response to a blockade, let alone to an attack. Iran can inflict pain, but its options against the United States are limited.

Give Syria a chance. Decades of containment have failed because Syria was only interested in what the United States could not offer: the Golan. But Bashar may finally be seeking a rapprochement. Anything that can be done to weaken the Syria-Iran-Hezbollah axis should be pursued. Prepare for another round between Israel and Hezbollah.

Go slow on the Palestinian issue. Resist the advice of the “peace professionals” and old Washington hands to jump into the process. Bush stayed away for good reason: there is little the United States can do. Mahmoud Abbas is well meaning but speaks for no one. Try and help him postpone the elections in January and provide some tangible benefits to help maintain his rule, but prepare for a Hamas president and for internecine Palestinian violence and Palestinian-Israeli violence. If Binyamin Netanyahu is elected, forget major progress. If Tzipi Livni gets the brass ring, you definitely have with whom to work, which brings us back to the Palestinians’ disarray. Be prepared to focus on conflict management, not resolution.

Keep an eye on Egypt. The succession to Mubarak is likely during your first term. If neither his son nor a general from the junta takes over, Egypt could go Islamic. There is little the United States can do, but this would be a nightmare.

Strengthen ties with Turkey, which will have increasing importance for almost all U.S. interests in the region. Turkey is there for the losing, needlessly.

Democratization is good—selectively. Regional democratization is not going to happen. The United States cannot truly affect it, and it could undermine regimes in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan. Pursue democratization wherever doable without adversely affecting vital U.S. interests, primarily in Iran and some small Gulf and Maghreb states.

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[4]Adam Garfinkle :: Sir,

You will have a problem in and with the Middle East. That essence of the problem is simple to state: the Middle East does not exist.

We live at a time when causal connections between the region and the rest of world are more important than causal connections within it. This fact alone increases the usual level of uncertainty with which we must deal: Middle Eastern reality consists of more and different kinds of moving parts than it used to, and this puts added stress on a U.S. foreign policy decision structure not designed for such circumstances.

Three examples: Sources of and resources for Islamist terrorism flow back and forth among Europe, Southeast Asia and even Latin America as well as within the Middle East. The role of Middle Eastern oil and gas cannot be understood in isolation from broader pipeline geopolitics, global financial conditions and our own domestic policy choices. The Iranian nuclear challenge is a potential game-changer far beyond the Middle East, for it functions as a platform that a revanchist Russia can mount to bring countervailing pressure against the United States on a larger strategic canvas.

Meanwhile, linkages within the region are routinely exaggerated. The idea that solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the key to settling other Middle Eastern problems is widely believed, but wrong. The

idea that whatever happens in Iraq will ramify mightily throughout the Arab world is widely believed, but overwrought.

You will be told you need an integrated strategy for the Middle East. Not so. You need a coherent statecraft (by definition, integrating foreign and domestic policy) for the world based on core U.S. interests. The Middle East is an important—but not necessarily the most important—component in that statecraft, but regional policies must always flow from national strategy, never the other way around.

That said, here's what to do (or avoid doing) in the 100 days after the Inauguration:

- Do not announce a “policy review.” This will communicate irresolution to determined adversaries and worried clients, both in and beyond the region.
- Avoid any optic of defeat in Iraq. The global consequences for our reputation would be devastating. That does not require maximizing U.S. military activity or too rapidly ending it; it does require talking about a morning for sovereign Iraq rather than an evening for the U.S. military mission.
- Hammer out in private with our allies trade and financial sanctions with real teeth against Iran in return for a pledge not to use force for at least a year. Say nothing in public, in light of tumultuous Iranian political circumstances. Let Iran propose engagement as the sanctions draw blood.
- Name a prestigious, politically shrewd Special Envoy for Arab-Israeli Affairs who understands the poor prospects for quick significant progress. This will mute the braying of many donkeys and mules, get the portfolio off your desk, and purchase some equity with (and leverage against) several Arab states for later use..

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/first\\_100\\_days.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/first_100_days.pdf)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck\\_freilich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck_freilich/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)

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### The first 100 days (3) (2008-09-17 00:04)



The MESH roundtable on the theme of “The First 100 Days” continues. MESH members have been asked these questions: What priorities should the next administration set for immediate

attention in the Middle East? What should it put (or leave) on the back burner? Is there anything a new president should do or say right out of the gate? And if a president asked you to peer into your crystal ball and predict the next Middle East crisis likely to sideswipe him, what would your prediction be?

MESH members' answers are appearing in installments throughout the week. (Read the whole series [1]here[2].) Today's responses come from Josef Joffe, Mark N. Katz, and Walter Laqueur.



[3]Josef Joffe :: It was always wrong to claim that the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, or even with all the Arabs, was the root of all evil in the Middle East. That clash was always one conflict among many, both within and between Arab/Muslim nations—between states and states, rulers and ruled, and sects and denominations. Since the rise of Iranian power in the aftermath of Iran's war against Iraq (1980-88), the dominant regional conflict has again been over hegemony. Past claimants have been Egypt, Egypt-plus-Syria, and Saddam's Iraq. Now it is Iran, pitted against the reigning hegemon, the United States, and its regional allies ranging from Israel to Saudi Arabia.

Iran's hegemonic quest deserves the lion's share of the next administration's attention. The aim is to contain and deter and possibly intimidate a power that has married its revolutionary ambitions to sudden oil wealth, and which is well-advanced on the road to nuclear missile-weapons. Whatever happens in this arena will affect America's power and interests by at least an order of magnitude more than events unfolding between Gaza and Nablus. Indeed, the so-called "core" of the Middle East conflict has shrunk *pari passu* with the enlargement of the Middle Eastern stage that now extends from the Levant via the Gulf to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

By itself, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has no strategic implications simply because neither side has any strategic option against the other. The Israelis cannot "destroy" Palestine, and vice versa. Over the decades, it has also become clearer that no Arab state is willing to send its boys to die for Jenin, let alone Haifa. Iran would like to acquire a strategic option against Israel, but its murderous desires have very little to do with imposing a two-state solution on Jerusalem. The point is rather to eliminate America's most important regional pawn (well, make it "castle" and "rook") from the chessboard. So, for the next administration, "it is the hegemony, stupid."

Add to this a cold-eyed assessment of the Israeli-Palestinian issue. It may well be true that neither side is interested in a two-state solution. The Israelis will not repeat the "Gaza gambit"—unconditionally vacating Hamas- or Fatah-controlled lands that are turned into a launching pad for rocket and terror attacks against Green-Line Israel. What goes for Gaza, goes triply for the West Bank. No sane government will leave the security situation between Tulkarem and Jericho in the hands of a Palestinian authority, no matter whether it is Fatah- or Hamas-dominated. There may also be a more charitable element in play here: No Palestinian authority acceptable to Israel will want to forego the protection of the Israeli army.

Are the Palestinians truly interested in their own state? An affirmative answer is hardly a given. If statehood were their main business, the Palestinians would have turned Gaza into a proto-state between 1994 (when Arafat set up shop there) and 2005 (when Sharon vacated the Strip), and into a real state after the withdrawal. Instead, the Hamas game was not state building, but a test of wills and endurance, the object being to demonstrate that the Palestinians were (a) completely immune to deterrence and (b) willing to absorb any punishment the Israelis meted out to them, whether blockades, bombs or incursions. Entities



that want to become states do not behave in this self-debilitating manner. Hence, we ought to conclude that statehood (rather than, say, honor, pride or dreams of final victory) is not the primary objective of the Palestinian powers that be. Nor are two states what Israelis long for day and night.

Whence two prescriptions follow for the next administration. One, pay homage to the irradicable theory according to which Palestine is the "core" of the conflict; engage in meetings, bilaterals, conferences; be an "honest broker." But do not confuse motion with movement, given that neither Israel nor the Palestinians are pining away for two states. Second, keep in mind what the real issue is: the hegemonic ambitions of Iran. Talk to Iran, by all means, but keep piling up the powder and protect your alliances, especially with the strongest ally of them all, Israel. And do not expect too much from talking. Iran's is a classic revolutionary foreign policy—like that of Napoleon, Stalin/Trotsky, the Mussolinis and of course Hitler. Revolutionary regimes must be defanged or contained until the "break-up" or "mellowing" of their power; they do not lend themselves to the normal give-and-take of diplomacy. Read George F. Kennan's "Mr. X" article; that's the best one-sentence advice there is.

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[4]Mark N. Katz :: In addition to the many problems in the Middle East that we already know about (Islamic extremism in several countries, the conflict in Iraq, the Iranian nuclear issue, the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, etc.), it will be important for the new administration to recognize that there is a larger, overarching problem affecting the region: the fragmentation of existing states along ethnic, sectarian, and regional lines.

It is well known that Iraq has fragmented into Sunni Arab, Shi'a Arab, and Kurdish sectors. But the forces of fragmentation are also present in other countries in the region. These include Kurds in Turkey; Azeris, Kurds, Baluchis and others in Iran; Pushtuns and Baluchis in Pakistan; Pushtuns and others in Afghanistan; southerners in Yemen seeking to undo the 1990 unification of North and South; and both southerners and Darfuris in Sudan. Minority rule by Alawites in Syria is resented by the Sunni majority there, and in Lebanon there is a clash for control over the state between the Shi'a minority on the one hand and the other minorities on the other. Looked upon in this light, the ongoing tension between Israelis and Palestinians is not exceptional, but normal for the Middle East.

By ending the Sunni minority dominance in Iraq, allowing the Shi'a majority to dominate the national government, and furthering Kurdish control over the country's north, the American-led intervention that began in 2003 has strengthened the forces of fragmentation in the Middle East. The United States, however, did not cause them to arise. Indeed, fragmentation in the Middle East is part of a larger global tide of fragmentation that began at the end of the Cold War. While successful secession or transitions from minority to majority rule were rare during the Cold War, the breakup of the Soviet Union into fifteen different states led the way to further secessions, including the breakup of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia, and of Kosovo from Serbia. Russia has acted forcefully to secure Abkhaz and South Ossetian secession from Georgia, but is vulnerable to secessionist forces itself in the North Caucasus. Indeed, secessionist forces are active in Europe, Asia, Africa, and even the Americas.

In Europe, both democratic governments and the European Union are attempting to defuse the demand for independence by granting autonomy and providing resources that regions would not enjoy if they became independent. In the Middle East, however, where both governments and secessionist movements tend to be authoritarian, violence has so far proven to be the method preferred by both sides in these



struggles.

The potential impact on the rest of the world of conflict related to fragmentation in the petroleum-rich Middle East is enormous. Nor will quelling it be easy. Even the presence of large numbers of American troops in Iraq could not prevent widespread inter-communal fighting in Iraq during the early years of the occupation (they have had more success lately). They obviously cannot do much about this problem in countries where they are not present.

What can be done? Supporting one side could well prove an opportunity for Al Qaeda and its affiliates to side with—and gain control over—the other. Promoting democracy and conflict resolution, though, will not work either if they lead to all-or-nothing referenda on secession that prompt the losing side to reject the results and continue fighting.

A solution that could work is to promote federalism as a means of giving those who support and those who oppose fragmentation part of what each wants. The deployment of peace-keeping forces may be essential for the achievement and maintenance of such solutions.

Dealing with the fragmentation of the Middle East is clearly not something that the next administration will be able to resolve within its first 100 days. Just acknowledging that fragmentation is a serious problem and beginning to seriously think about how to deal with it during this period, though, would help the next administration in formulating its overall Middle East policy.

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[5]Walter Laqueur :: I remember countless position papers on every possible contingency written for new administrations. A few of them I wrote. I do not recall a single instance when use was made of them. New incumbents have their own agendas and limited attention span to absorb information and advice. And quite often they think they know better.

The major conflicts that seem most likely to occur are insoluble in present circumstances. There should be deterrence; the absence of deterrence invites aggression. But deterrence may not work. A change in this respect may occur but only after a major disaster has taken place affecting the major powers, when greater readiness to collaborate can be expected. This refers for instance to failed states which should be (and I think eventually will be) of equal concern to China, India and Russia. It refers to future proliferation and the use of weapons of mass destruction by states or terrorist groups. As long as they have not been used, there will not be sufficient readiness to cooperate on the international level nor sufficient understanding within societies.

With all this there ought to be intensive negotiations with friends and enemies alike. Unless this is done there will be recriminations about missed opportunities for the next hundred years. But there ought to be no illusions about the effectiveness of diplomacy in the contemporary world. The idea that the United Nations or our European allies or a new alliance of democratic states could be of great help facing a major crisis is fanciful—to put it mildly.

It will be more profitable to plan for the post-disaster age than for the very near future. However, governments are seldom willing to invest much thought in thinking how to confront threats that might (or might not) occur in a number of years. Some Russian hotheads have mentioned the possibility of war with

America in a decade from now. But this should not be taken too seriously. A new period of containment will probably be necessary. But having ignored (or underrated) Russia for a long time, there is now the danger that the threat will be overrated. It is a colossus on a base of oil and gas. It will recover some of its influence in the countries that once were part of the Soviet Union (and to some extent in the former "People's democracies"). Its moment of glory is likely to be short.

One issue which ought to have top priority is reducing the dependence on imported oil and finding new sources of energy. This is the Achilles' heel not only of the United States but of Europe and the developing countries. Technological breakthroughs are possible provided the enormous effort needed will be undertaken. Both parties agree in principle on the necessity to do this, but will they live up to their promise? It will always be difficult to find the huge funds needed and to mobilize science and technology. But this is the only way to remedy a fatal weakness, and the beneficiaries will be not only the United States but also many other countries. If America succeeds in this huge enterprise, it will find it much easier to gain support in world affairs.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/first\\_100\\_days.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/first_100_days.pdf)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/09/the\\_first\\_100\\_days\\_2/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/09/the_first_100_days_2/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef\\_joffe/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef_joffe/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_n\\_katz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_n_katz/)
5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_laqueur/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_laqueur/)

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### The first 100 days (4) (2008-09-18 00:04)



The MESH roundtable on the theme of "The First 100 Days" continues. MESH members have been asked these questions: What priorities should the next administration set for immediate attention in the Middle East? What should it put (or leave) on the back burner? Is there anything a new president should do or say right out of the gate? And if a president asked you to peer into your crystal ball and predict the next Middle East crisis likely to sideswipe him, what would your prediction be? MESH members' answers are appearing in installments throughout the week. (Read the whole series [1]here.) Today's responses come from Gal Luft, Jacqueline Newmyer, and Stephen Peter Rosen.



[2]Gal Luft :: During the first term of the next president, some 68 million new cars will roll onto America's roads. In China, the world's fastest growing auto market, sales of new cars will surpass those in the United States as early as 2015, and in India millions of \$3,000 Tata Nano cars will soon begin to flood

the bustling streets of Calcutta and Mumbai. Most of these cars will have a street life of roughly 15 years and (barring action by those countries' leadership) almost all of them will be able to run on nothing but petroleum, locking our future to OPEC and its whims for decades to come. In the words of the International Energy Agency: "We are ending up with 95 percent of the world relying for its economic well being on decisions made by five or six countries in the Middle East."

Avoiding such an outcome should be a top priority for the next administration. Unfortunately, despite the broad agreement by both presidential candidates on the urgent need to reduce petroleum dependence, they both focus on solutions that are politically contentious (like domestic drilling and increasing mandatory fuel efficiency standards) and that are by and large tactical rather than strategic. The reality is that neither efforts to expand petroleum supply nor those to crimp petroleum demand will be enough to materially address America's strategic vulnerability. Such solutions do not address the roots of our energy vulnerability: oil's monopoly in the global transportation sector—almost all of the world's cars, trucks, ships and planes can run on nothing but petroleum—and the stranglehold of OPEC over the consuming nations' economies.

This cartel, which owns 78 percent of global reserves, produces today about as much oil as it did thirty years, despite the fact that the global economy and non-OPEC production have doubled over the same period. Policies that perpetuate the petroleum standard, doing nothing to address the lack of transportation fuel choice, would therefore guarantee a worsening future dependence on the oil cartel as the relative share of non-OPEC oil reserves and production further shrinks.

The new president should therefore declare a strategic goal to break the petroleum standard and replace it with an Open Fuel Standard. This would require that every automobile sold in the United States (and, by extension, throughout the world, since no automaker would give up on the U.S. market) must be able to run on non-petroleum fuels in addition to gasoline. Flexible fuel cars (which cost automakers \$100 extra to make and can run on any combination of alcohol and gasoline), electric cars and plug-in hybrids cars (which enable us to use made-in-America electricity) are only some of the solutions at hand. Only through competition at the pump (and the socket) can we drive down the price of oil, reduce its strategic value and curb the transfer of wealth from oil importing countries to OPEC. To bring those solutions to the marketplace in mass would require some presidential signatures, and like everything in life there is some cost involved. But christening more aircraft carriers than would otherwise be needed isn't cheap either.

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[3]Jacqueline Newmyer :: The next president's foreign policy should be attentive to the ways in which the balance of global economic and military power has tilted toward Asia. To the extent that the Bush administration has been preoccupied with Central Asia and the Middle East since 9/11, an eastward shift in the U.S.'s foreign policy focus may be warranted. That said, the new administration should keep three points in mind as it crafts a Middle East agenda:

1. As the United States draws down its forces in Iraq (while renewing attention to Afghanistan), other external powers with strategic interests in the region are likely to perceive a vacuum to fill. For instance, China can be expected to continue to expand its ties in the Middle East by means of investments and agreements in Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. The United States may want to try to prevent any other single outside power from exercising undue influence. Options would include allowing India to develop better relations with Iran; encouraging Indian, Korean, and Japanese development of Iraq; and maintaining naval and air forces in the region.

2. The U.S.-India nuclear agreement is likely to have follow-on effects in the Gulf, where India has traditionally had strong ties. New Delhi will have incentives to transfer technology received from the United States. If American know-how is going to spread, it would be best for Washington to try to shape that process and build capital that might prove useful in the event of a future Middle East conflagration or crisis.
3. Whether John McCain or Barack Obama prevails, the United States will be led by a president with a compelling biography and personal appeal. Such a commander in chief creates a potential competitive advantage in executive diplomacy for the United States, relative to China and other Asian powers, in a region with a tradition of charismatic leadership and around the world. At least at the beginning of the first 100 days, the new occupant of the White House will project an image of U.S. strength, based on a record of self-sacrifice and resolve or a demonstration of the American electorate's liberal tolerance and openness. Both kinds of strength have their uses in outreach to strategic interlocutors. After a campaign that seems poised to revolve around domestic issues, President McCain or Obama would do well to exploit this advantage by visiting allies with interests in the Middle East early in his term.



[4]Stephen Peter Rosen :: There are a number of ways in which we can think about the president's agenda during his first 100 days. My suggestions reflect the belief that the new president will have essentially no staff in place, precious little knowledge of the ongoing work of the permanent bureaucracy, and not enough time to have developed a long term strategy. As a result, an agenda for the first 100 days should address an urgent problem in the international environment, and should make use of the president's political capital at home in order to undertake necessary but difficult initiatives.

Most issues in the Middle East are not amenable to bold initiatives. The Arab-Israeli problem is not a problem, but a more or less permanent condition. Managing Iran will call for the slow and quiet development of American and allied military capabilities in the region, and new nuclear guarantees. Iraq and Afghanistan are problems for the long haul, both militarily and economically. Limiting the growth of Chinese influence in the region is a basic strategic goal, which presidential diplomacy can assist, as Jacqueline Newmyer points out.

But the destabilization of Pakistan could occur quickly and might already be underway before the new president is sworn in. There is a generation of Pakistani Army officers who came of professional age in the 1990s, who remember the United States walking away from Afghanistan and abandoning Pakistan. They are reported to be more Islamist than their elders. The frontier province in the north of Pakistan is the current home of Al Qaeda because Al Qaeda is safe there from the Pakistani Army. No Pakistani officer, old or young, was willing to fire on Pakistani civilians in the rioting earlier this year. The expectation, valid for 60 years, that the Pakistani Army will be able to hold the country together, is no longer supportable.

The American president-elect should begin private discussions with India, Israel, and China about what those countries would do in the event of a civil war in Pakistan that splits the Pakistani Army. This discussion would focus on how to contain the effects of the war within Pakistan, and how to ensure control of Pakistani nuclear weapons. The president-elect must not only ask the American military to present their contingency plans for such an event, but become deeply involved in shaping them. Homeland security must prepare for Pakistani nuclear weapons that are suddenly not under verifiable control. History, recent and old, confirms that absent a process that educates both political leaders and military officers about their often

conflicting perspectives and needs, military plans will fail.

This is a problem which can benefit from timely preparation, in the days before and during the first 100 days of the next president.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/first\\_100\\_days.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/first_100_days.pdf)
  2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal\\_luft/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal_luft/)
  3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jacqueline\\_newmyer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jacqueline_newmyer/)
  4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)
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### The first 100 days (5) (2008-09-19 00:15)



The MESH roundtable on the theme of “The First 100 Days” concludes today. MESH members have been asked these questions: What priorities should the next administration set for immediate attention in the Middle East? What should it put (or leave) on the back burner? Is there anything a new president should do or say right out of the gate? And if a president asked you to peer into your crystal ball and predict the next Middle East crisis likely to sideswipe him, what would your prediction be? MESH members’ answers have appeared in installments throughout the past week. (Read the whole series [1]here.) Today’s responses come from Philip Carl Salzman and Michael Young.



[2]Philip Carl Salzman :: The new administration does not have the luxury of a blank slate. American policies, resources, and commitments have already filled up most of the space. Therefore...

Accept the fact that America’s main investment and hope is Iraq, a country of central importance to the Middle East. Stability and example in Iraq would not only be the fulfillment of past American efforts, but the best hope for future political and economic progress in the Middle East. A strong Iraq, friendly to the United States, would be a powerful influence and counter to Iran and Syria.

Avoid trying to be the hero who finally solves what no one else has been able to solve in the sixty years of ongoing efforts: the Palestinian problem. All previous attempts have seen the situation go from bad to worse. Minimizing the worse possibilities is the most realistic course. In any case, the Palestinian problem, central to ideological discourse in the Middle East, is in fact a minor problem of a minor population.

Afghanistan is a frontier fight, not critical to the Middle East—however important it may be to the prestige of America and the West, now that they have committed to making it into a real state and civil society. The project must be pursued, and pursued vigorously, but not at the expense of the more important

commitment to the central Middle East.

Look to hitherto peripheral players, Russia and India, who may increasingly contribute to future developments in the Middle East, Russia in a negative way, and India potentially in a constructive way. Both are giants on the borders of the Middle East, and both are feeling their oats and itching to benefit from their weight. The new administration must find ways of discouraging Russia and encouraging India.

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[3]Michael Young :: A priority of any new administration will be to take a pill against a rampant disease afflicting the Middle East policy community: engagement-itis. Everybody today advocates engagement: of Iran; of Syria; of Hamas; of whatever the Bush administration failed to engage. But no one seems to have clearly defined how engagement should happen and what it must bring about—neither the wonks of the campaigns nor the think tank mavens dying to be offered a policy position.

Depending on who the United States engages, the calculations will differ. Talking to Iran offers different gains than talking to Syria, for example. An American opening to Tehran may be inevitable in the coming months, because the United States wants to avoid a military confrontation in the region over Iran's nuclear program—whether Washington or Israel does the bombing. The next administration will also need Iranian cooperation in Afghanistan, which will emerge as a battleground in the coming years.

However, for the United States to successfully engage Iran, Washington will need leverage. That means consolidating its gains in Iraq while downgrading its military presence and getting the Europeans and Russia on board in imposing further sanctions on Tehran. A rather tall order. Whether the United States wants to attack Iranian nuclear facilities or not, not having leverage over Iran elsewhere may make more likely the administration's resorting to the military threat to compensate—belying the claim that engagement will necessarily calm tensions in the region.

One source of leverage over Iran is to weaken its ally Syria. There has been an argument making the rounds that it is time to talk to the regime of Bashar Asad. But talk to Asad about what? The engagers first suggested the United States should try this to break Syria off from Iran, and by extension from Hezbollah and Hamas. But then Asad made clear he wouldn't break with anybody. Why should he? His dubious relationships are what bring everyone to his doorstep, hat in hand.

So the engagers backtracked and suggested it was a good idea to engage Syria because this might advance Syrian-Israeli peace. But Asad again made plain that his priority in talking to Israel was to normalize relations with the United States and break Syria out of its isolation. And if Asad does that, why should he split with Iran if this was never an American precondition?

Iran will be at the heart of the administration's problems in the coming year, but Syria will be the Iranian Achilles' heel that everyone ignores. If the screws are tightened on Syria, Iran could be denied a useful ally in the Levant. But is that going to happen? No. So don't be surprised if Iran, Syria, and Israel, but also Saudi Arabia and Egypt, as they find themselves having to deal with a United States eager to engage but with little leverage or lucid ideas on how to do so, begin manipulating the dynamics of the one place that serves as everyone's default game board in the region: Lebanon.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/first\\_100\\_days.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/first_100_days.pdf)

2. [file:///blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/%E2%80%9C](file:///blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/%E2%80%9C)



3. [file:///blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_young/%E2%80%9C](file:///blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_young/%E2%80%9C)

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## Will Israel's center survive? (2008-09-22 00:29)

From [1]Alan Dowty



The Olmert era in Israeli politics is drawing to a close. Faced by no fewer than five ongoing investigations for various improprieties, the prime minister was forced to call new elections for leadership of his own Kadima party. By a surprisingly slim margin of less than one percent, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni edged out the more hawkish Shaul Mofaz, transport minister and former chief of staff and minister of defense, and will try to form a new government coalition.

One of the puzzles of Israeli politics has always been the weakness of the center. The electoral system, with pure party-list proportional representation and a threshold of only two percent, guarantees the proliferation of parties. And, as elsewhere, Israeli public opinion clusters around the center. Yet centrist parties have never gained traction in the system; typically they made an initial splash (in 1977, 1999, and 2003), and then faded from the scene before the next election.

The odds would seem to be against Kadima escaping this historical pattern. The party was formed around a dominant personality, Ariel Sharon, who then disappeared from the scene in the midst of the 2006 election campaign. Initially projected to win an astonishing 30-40 seats of the 120 in the Knesset, the party under Olmert managed to pull through the election with 29 seats, still the largest single party and, by virtue of its centrality, the dominant force in Israeli government. But with the double debacle of 2006-07—the inglorious war with Hezbollah and the Hamas takeover of Gaza—plus the growing sleaze factor, Kadima was sagging badly in the polls and seemed destined to go the way of its predecessors. Many or most of its voters, who came from Likud on the right, seemed set to return to Likud.

But the change in leadership may give Kadima a new lease on life. Livni enjoys considerable personal popularity, based in part on an image of squeaky-clean integrity—a great advantage in a political climate where (beyond Olmert) four cabinet ministers and eight other Knesset members are under investigation for various alleged misdeeds. Polls indicated that she alone, of potential Kadima leaders, might be able to defeat Likud's Netanyahu in the next elections.

Livni will have 42 days to form a new government. This will not be an easy task, but it is made somewhat easier by the fact that all four present coalition partners—Kadima, Labor, the Pensioners' Party, and the Sephardi ultra-orthodox Shas—would, according to current projections, lose seats in new elections. Nevertheless, Shas in particular is expected to demand a high price, including a commitment to non-compromise on Jerusalem that would severely handicap ongoing negotiations with the Palestinians (not that these negotiations have any immediate prospect of going anywhere). To offset the demands of Shas, Livni will talk with Meretz on the left and even toy with other parties on the right.

New elections are due in mid-2010 in any event, but should Livni fail to form a government, a new Knesset would be elected in February or March 2009. A Teleseker poll from September 10 has Likud at 29 seats and Kadima under Livni at 25 seats (Kadima under Mofaz would have won only 17 seats, a decisive argument for Livni in the party primary). Thus, under Livni, Kadima does seem to have a fair shot at coming in first again and remaining the vital central force without which no government could be formed. But the same poll showed other right-wing and religious parties gaining a combined 34 seats, demonstrating the equal or greater likelihood that Netanyahu could form a narrow right-religious coalition, leaving Kadima in the political wilderness—which would probably be the death knell for the party. Once again, the survival of a strong center in Israeli politics hangs in the balance.

In the meantime, should Livni become prime minister even temporarily, Israel would apparently become the first nation to have women simultaneously at the head of all three branches of government—Dalia Itzik being speaker of the Knesset and Dorit Beinisch president of the Supreme Court.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)

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## Internet map of the Middle East (2008-09-25 01:51)

From MESH Admin



[1]

Information Week publishes a [2]story on the [3]Internet Mapping Project:

2008 is the tenth anniversary of a project to map the Internet. Undertaken by Lumeta, the effort was undertaken as a long-range research project to study the growth of the online world... The project gathers routing data to all backbone routers hosted by ISPs. The map shows only the shortest path to each router. Lumeta says these paths can change over time as routers are reconfigured. Maps can be constructed based on a variety of data points, including IP address blocks, geography, Top Level Domains (TLDs) and service providers.

The report is accompanied by a number of sample maps, including this internet map of the Middle East. (Click on thumbnail to enlarge.)

1. [http://farm3.static.flickr.com/2424/3643528745\\_2494bc9b56\\_o.jpg](http://farm3.static.flickr.com/2424/3643528745_2494bc9b56_o.jpg)
2. <http://www.informationweek.com/news/internet/reporting/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=210600289>
3. <http://www.lumeta.com/internetmapping/>



## Anthropology and strategic studies (2008-09-26 00:10)

From [1]Philip Carl Salzman



There is one central lesson that cultural anthropology has to offer. It is the lesson of Franz Boas, who founded American anthropology, of his students Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict, and of their intellectual descendants, such as Clifford Geertz, arguably the most influential American cultural anthropologist of the second half of the 20th century.

That lesson is "culture matters." If we want to understand people, to grasp what people are doing and why they do it, we have to examine their own perspective. As Geertz said, we have to see things "from the natives' point of view," whether the natives are from Brooklyn or Calgary, Palermo or Bucharest, Baghdad or Quetta.

The reason that we must understand things "from the natives' point of view" is that people act according to how they perceive the world; according to what they value, what they disdain; and according to what they hope for, and what they fear. If we want to understand how people will act, we must understand the world from their perspective.

If we want to engage with people, to influence their actions and to win them over, to bring them into a counter-insurgency effort, to engage in economic exchange, to encourage development, to block their initiatives, or to fight them, we must understand why and how they act as they do. And thus we must know how they see the world.

When I say that we must grasp the natives' point of view, I am not saying that people are the prisoners of the norms and rules of their society, hemmed in by the "cake of custom." Cultural anthropology has moved beyond such an overly normative view of mankind. Rather, following the lead of Max Weber, and latterly, Fredrik Barth, we understand that people are goal-oriented, making decisions, choosing one alternative over another in order to advance their own goals. In other words, everyone, everywhere, acts strategically, at least in part. An anthropological approach to "strategic studies" is to study the strategies of people and peoples in the world as they pursue their goals. We had better know the strategies of other folks before we formulate our own.

Of course, culture, ways of understanding and evaluating the world, or, once again, as Geertz says, culture as "models of" the world, and "models for" action in the world, is not the only thing in the world. People may not just pursue their own visions, but must cope with the constraints of institutional limitations. British social anthropologists have stressed the ways in which societal institutions—such as chief, markets, descent groups, exogamous marriage patterns, ancestor worship, etc.—are constrained by their interconnection with each other. One consequence of which is that some institutions or patterns of action are incompatible. For example, sharing and mutual welfare in a large kin group, on the one hand, and capital accumulation, on the other hand, tend to be in conflict.

As well, people everywhere must cope with other populations and cultures, and their goals and strategies. Peoples and cultures often intrude upon one another, interfere with one another, and consequently every group must have a "foreign policy." Everyone is constrained one way or another by other peoples and other cultures.

And, of course, people, whatever their culture, must cope with the challenges and constraints of their physical and biological environments. Culture, to some degree, incorporates strategies for dealing with the environment, to adapting to the environment while pursuing their other goals.

Once we have some idea of others' cultures and the bases of their strategies, we are in a strong position to consider our own. Recently I received an inquiry from an Army major in the Judge Advocate General's Corps. Currently he is a graduate student at the Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School, and was assigned my book, [2]Culture and Conflict in the Middle East, for review. In that book, I stress the tribal foundation of Arab culture, and discuss its implications for state formation.

One question that this major raised was what I thought, in the light of my analysis, of the U.S. Army's [3]counter-insurgency manual's position that counter-insurgency should always be directed toward supporting the legitimate government.

In the light of my analysis—that there were no legitimate governments in the Middle East, and that in many regions, including urban areas, only tribal or sect-based organization was regarded as legitimate by the local population—I replied that the counter-insurgency handbook's position that counter-insurgency should always be directed toward supporting the legitimate government was a rationalization meant to justify our intervention in our own eyes according to our own values.

The emphasis on a legitimate government might not be a rational response to our practical interests in a particular region. For example, if we want to counter an insurgency, we might need to collaborate with non-governmental, even anti-governmental organizations, such as tribes. This is what happened in al-Anbar province of Iraq, where the U.S. Army gave support to the Sunni tribes when they rebelled against the impositions of Al Qaeda in Iraq, and in turn the Sunni tribes gave the Americans support as the Americans pursued Al Qaeda. If our interests and ambitions are to block an anti-American or anti-Western initiative, we might be wise to be satisfied with that result, once achieved, and allow local folks to carry on according their vision, rather than try to impose ours.

Another way to put this is that our culture matters in how we see the world. In trying to act upon the world, we must consider whether and to what extent our interests and desires coincide, or whether our interests are more limited than our desires. This question underlies some of the disagreements between foreign policy "idealists" and "realists."

The al-Anbar case is an interesting one for the general argument I am presenting here. No one needed a good cultural anthropologist more than Al Qaeda in Iraq. Mostly non-Iraqis, the Al Qaeda fighters

and functionaries pushed around local Iraqis, not realizing or appreciating that they were members of tribes, or the significance of that fact. They did not consider how the local Iraqis would receive their impositions, or understand that the Iraqi tribesmen had the capability to mobilize militarily in support of their own autonomy and self-determination. As a result, local Iraqi tribesmen rebelled against Al Qaeda, fought them, and turned for the first time to ally with the Americans. If Al Qaeda had had a good cultural analysis of al-Anbar, they might have acted with more restraint and respect, and might have advanced their cause rather than being crushed, as they have been.

In sum, one contribution of cultural anthropology to strategic studies is to urge pre-strategic studies of peoples' presuppositions, values, goals, and strategies—those of other peoples and those of our own—before moving to formulating strategies to act on the world. For to act effectively in the world requires that we know our own biases and that we know other people's trajectories.

Philip Carl Salzman made these remarks to a working session on strategic studies and the disciplines, convened by MESH at Harvard University on September 23.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1591025877/>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0226841510/>

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## America's challenges in the Middle East (2008-09-29 00:15)

From [1]Hillel Fradkin



One may say that American interests in the Middle East remain the same, only more so. For some time we have had a primary interest—and primary responsibility—for the security and stability of the region of the Persian Gulf. A more recent primary interest is protecting ourselves from terrorism rooted in this region. We have other interests as well, such as preventing the region from going nuclear. But this is subordinate to and derivative from these two primary concerns. (A third interest is more general and does not apply exclusively to the Greater Middle East: the maintenance of our credibility.)

The most important reason for our interest in Gulf security and stability is well-known: the reserves of oil and natural gas to be found there. But this is often discussed in a narrow, polemical, and even totally irresponsible fashion—through slogans like "No blood for oil." Yes, we want to protect our access to the fuels which run our economy. But the same resources fuel everyone's economy. This is why I refer to it not only as an interest but as a responsibility. As matters stand now, our efforts in the region amount to a responsibility for the whole world. There is no one else to perform this function, as everyone would quickly find out were we to abandon it. And our tasks are not limited to safeguarding these resources in the ground, but also as they move around the world. Here too there is no one else prepared to do the job—one

performed by the U.S. Navy—not only in the seas around the Gulf but further afield, for example in the Strait of Molucca.

As for terrorism, our most recent experience of its threat to us is rooted geopolitically in the dysfunction of the Middle East region, its apparent incapacity to deal with its own problems and thus its inclination to export those problems. Such was the character of the events of 9/11. According to bin Laden and others, they attacked the "far enemy," us, as a way to get at the "near enemy," their presumed adversaries in their own region. The circumstances to which they appealed, and the dysfunction they represented, went back many years, including the Iran-Iraq war and the first Gulf war. Our interest in protecting ourselves from terrorism thus amounts to an interest in the management, if not the resolution, of the dysfunction of the region.

Our pursuit of these interests is defined concretely in terms of the challenges we face. One somewhat general challenge is the expansion of the region of concern and the drift of its center of gravity eastward to embrace Afghanistan and Pakistan. We are now obliged to look at our tasks in terms of a larger interconnected whole and from a different center of focus. The main factor which continues to draw our attention to the western part of the region—Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria—derives less from its intrinsic threats to our security than from the Gulf itself, and the effort of Iran to make that area a zone of conflict.

Our immediate concrete challenges are two: to bring our current engagement in Iraq to a reasonably successful conclusion, and to do the same in Afghanistan. But overarching these objectives are the challenges of Pakistan and Iran. The problem with regard to Pakistan is clear: it will be difficult if not impossible to secure Afghanistan and defeat Al Qaeda without dealing with the latter's base in Pakistan. At the same time there is a related risk of a breakdown of order in Pakistan, a nuclear-armed country.

Serious as this is, the most serious challenge we face is Iran. For unlike the case of Pakistan, where the problems are partially if not exclusively those of omission, the problem of Iran is one of commission. With the exception of radical Sunni Islam, we have no more emphatically hostile enemy than Iran and its allies and proxies (for example, Syria and Hezbollah); we have no foe more ambitious and aggressive and determined to do us ill; and we have none which, through its pursuit of nuclear weapons, has the near-term capacity to change the entire structure of the Middle East region and our assumptions regarding its security. We have none which conceives of its ambitions in revolutionary terms and is as determined to expand its influence and power in the region—and for that matter the Muslim world. We have none that has as many instruments at its disposal to pursue those ends.

To add to our difficulties, we have already tried several different approaches to contain this problem: negotiations since the summer of 2003 and action at the United Nations. To this one may add our unilateral actions in the international financial and commercial sphere. None of these measures has been particularly successful, and at this point none is likely to succeed. Iran has continued its pursuit of nuclear weaponry and has made considerable progress over the past five years.

We have complicated our own efforts by succumbing—perhaps only briefly—to a false sense of security. By this I mean the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) of November 2007, whose opening sentences declared that Iran had ceased work on weaponization in 2003. This was highly misleading even in terms of the contents of the NIE. Since then we have had several reports from the IAEA which contradict it, by documenting the accelerating work on uranium enrichment, and by suggesting the likelihood that Iran is in possession of the advanced technical knowledge necessary for manufacturing a nuclear weapon.

There are at least two other factors which now complicate our efforts to address the challenge of

Iran. The first is the likelihood that Russia will actively obstruct our efforts. The second is the growing uncertainty in the Gulf itself about the relative balance of forces and American capacity and resolve. By this I mean the growing inclination of certain countries—most notably Saudi Arabia—to seek accommodation with Iran. The most dramatic expression of this was the Mecca conference. Apart from the specific national interests this involved, it confirmed the regional preoccupation with establishing Islamic legitimacy.

By emphasizing the challenge of Iran and the complications it entails, I do not want to suggest that we are helpless. We remain a very powerful country with many assets in the region. These include the desire of many parties that we remain engaged and forceful. But they are now in the business of hedging their bets.

One thing which has changed the betting line a bit over the past few months has been Iraq—our willingness to stick with it and the success which has resulted from that decision. And that has also presented a problem and even setback—however temporary—for Iran. Contrary to a great deal of talk, Iran cannot welcome another majority Shiite country on its borders over which it does not have control; the extent of its influence has diminished somewhat in the last year. In addition, it has other liabilities, both economic and social, as well as the discontent of its public.

Nevertheless, the possibility of a nuclear Iran is the primary concern. This will present us in the relatively near term with important questions: Is there some means by which we can prevent this? If not, and we are obliged to accept its eventuality, what will we have to do to restructure our approach to the region?

Hillel Fradkin made these remarks at a symposium on "After Bush: America's Agenda in the Middle East," convened by MESH at Harvard University on September 23.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/hillel\\_fradkin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/hillel_fradkin/)

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## Interests and costs in the Middle East (2008-09-30 03:04)

From [1]Steven A. Cook



Politicians, journalists, academics, and other observers of foreign relations are hardly rigorous when it comes to defining "national interests." Definitions tend to range from the tautological to something akin to Justice Potter Stuart's, "I know it when I see it." Too often scholars invoke interests to explain state or individual behavior without ever explaining how their claims were derived. Given how often the concept of national interest is invoked, it should not be too much to ask analysts to take some care explaining precisely what they mean.

Historical precedent is a good place to start, but it is not just a matter of declaring, "Washington has historically pursued Y policies to achieve X, therefore X must be in the interest of the United States." Maybe; maybe not. A better, albeit not perfect, way of getting to that interest is to examine critically the relative costs Washington has been willing to bear to achieve some goal. When you apply this kind of analysis to the Middle East, it is obvious that Washington's interests in the region are:

1. Securing the free flow of oil.
2. Ensuring Israel's security.
3. Countering terrorism and rogue states.
4. Preventing other powers from dominating the region.

Numbers three and four could be rolled into the first two interests. After all, countering terrorism, confronting rogue states, and preventing others from dominating the region are all derivative of Washington's core interests—oil and Israel.

It's important to note that democracy promotion is not and never was an interest of the United States. That's not to say that I do not support the aspirations of millions of Middle Easterners who want to live in more open and democratic societies. Rather, like the policy of supporting "authoritarian stability," promoting democratic change in the Middle East was the means by which the Bush administration sought to secure America's regional interests. Rather than rely on authoritarian leaders who, it is believed, contribute to an environment that breeds terrorism, the United States hoped to promote democratic politics so that angry (mostly) young men could process their grievances through democratic institutions rather than through violence.

The problem with the policy was that no one ever was able to answer how Washington could protect its interests in the short and medium terms—when transitions are fraught politically and states are unstable—until the long term when, it is believed, more appropriate democratic partners would emerge. I tried answering the question (see my 2006 [2]essay, "The Promise of Pacts"), but no one listened.

The threats to U.S. interests in the Middle East are not terribly surprising. First, in a "Back to the Future" moment it will likely be Moscow, not Beijing, that will be a competitor for influence in the region. The semi-authoritarian or authoritarian nature of the Russian regime and its crony capitalist system fit quite well with the Middle East. Recently, Moscow sent an aircraft carrier into the Eastern Mediterranean and has begun outspending the United States on cultural and public diplomacy in important countries like Egypt. It is unlikely that Russia will supplant the United States as the preeminent power in the region, but the Arab world may soon have an alternative to play off of Washington. The best evidence of this was the prevailing positive sentiment about Moscow in the Arab press after Russia invaded Georgia last August.

Obviously, Iran's drive for nuclear technology is a threat to a regional order that has generally been hospitable to the exercise of American power. As scary as this seems, Washington should start thinking about the day after the Iranians realize their nuclear goal and how to deter Tehran. There is very little evidence that either incentives or coercion is going to stop Iran's efforts. Deterring Iran is a tough sell politically, especially after President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad's odious remarks at the UN General Assembly, but deterrence is precisely what the Israelis are trying to achieve. We should do the same and extend our nuclear umbrella to our allies in the Middle East.

The other threat to Washington's interests in the Middle East is Israel's self-destructive behavior in the

West Bank. The United States cannot help ensure the longevity of the Zionist project if the Israelis keep doing things that will ultimately undermine the Jewish and democratic character of Israel. It is time for the settlements to go. There is no reversing the demographic trends that will result in more Arabs between the Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea than Jews. As long as Israel holds on to the West Bank, it will face the existential threat of too many Palestinian babies relative to the number of Israeli Jewish babies.

Steven A. Cook made these remarks at a symposium on "After Bush: America's Agenda in the Middle East," convened by MESH at Harvard University on September 23.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven\\_a\\_cook/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven_a_cook/)
2. [http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/journal\\_of\\_democracy/v017/17.1cook.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/journal_of_democracy/v017/17.1cook.html)

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## 2.10 October

### Israel-Palestinians: trilateral scenario (2008-10-01 00:10)

From MESH Admin

Israeli Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Giora Eiland served as head of the Israeli National Security Council from 2004 to 2006. He is the author of a [1]new paper, "Rethinking the Two-State Solution" (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy), in which he argues for exploration of two other alternatives: the "Jordanian option" and a "regional approach." Regarding the latter, Eiland writes:

Because Israel and the Palestinians have to share a parcel of land that is too small for both of them, neither can make substantive concessions, creating a zero-sum game that could lead to a true dead end. The only real contribution that the Arab countries can offer is exactly what the Israelis and Palestinians need—more land. The regional approach proposed in this paper involves a multilateral swap that would produce net gains for all relevant parties. For example, this solution would triple Gaza's size—the only way to offer a real prospect for the poor population of that area, and the only way to shift public opinion away from Hamas and toward a plan with real hope.



[2]

Eiland's idea is not new. MESH has already featured a [3]discussion of an even more ambitious regional land swap, and [4]another on a trilateral swap involving Israel, Egypt, and the Palestinians. But until now, land swaps have been championed most vigorously by geographers. Eiland may be the first ex-official to propose them, even providing a map of a three-way scenario. (The map may be enlarged by clicking on it.)

Update: There are [5]comments on this post by Nabil Fahmy, former Egyptian ambassador to the United States, and Marwan Muasher, former Jordanian foreign minister and ambassador to the United States, as well as by MESH members.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=299>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/09/trilateralscenario1.jpg>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/land\\_swaps\\_for\\_peace/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/land_swaps_for_peace/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/gaza\\_into\\_egypt/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/gaza_into_egypt/)
5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/israel\\_palestinians\\_trilateral\\_scenario/#comments](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/israel_palestinians_trilateral_scenario/#comments)

Philip Carl Salzman (2008-10-02 11:27:04)

Amb. Marwan Muasher, speaking with great experience and authority on the Palestine issue, makes a [1]strong case for the two-state solution and the Arab Peace Initiative as a guarantee of regional security. In doing so, he dismisses alternatives to the two-state solution. For example, he rejects "indefinite occupation," which "would fuel frustration and violence, and will not be acceptable to the international community." And he dismisses unilateral withdrawal, which "has already been tried in Lebanon and Gaza, and did not result in the weakening of organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah. This solution will further strengthen the radicals, weaken the moderates, or force them to take still more radical positions." However, a related possibility, much favored by doves of many colors, is "containment," often recommended as an alternative to harsher measures—for example, in response to Saddam Hussein's Iraq, the coming nuclear Iran, and the once-again expansionist Russia. Yet this alternative is never mentioned as



a legitimate and viable option for Israel. Why not? True, containment might drive Palestinian moderates to more radical positions—if there were any Palestinian moderates in reality rather than in our dreams. But let us say, for a moment, that Israel is prepared to consider a leap of faith, giving up its control of the West Bank and accepting statehood for the Palestinians, in exchange for security guarantees from the Arab states. Now the attitudes of the Arab states toward Israel have never been all that friendly, and the actions of the Arab states have been relentlessly rejectionist and hostile. On what basis could Israel have faith in guarantees from Arab countries? How is Israel to know that the Arabs are sincere and can be counted upon? The practical question, then, is what concrete and serious confidence-building measures would the Arab states undertake, prior to any Israeli concessions, to establish their good faith *bona fides*? I have a few constructive suggestions. The Arab states could: • agree to peace treaties with Israel, following the good example of Jordan; • act to control and undermine annihilationist forces such as Hezbollah and Hamas; • establish free trade with Israel; • accept Israel as a Jewish state, just as there are Muslim states, and insure the Palestinians to do the same; • and admit Jews as residents and equal citizens in Arab states, including Palestine. These confidence-building measures would reduce the long-existing atmospheric contamination in the region, defang the Palestine conflict, and contribute to a two-state solution. [2] *Philip Carl Salzman is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/israel\\_palestinians\\_trilateral\\_scenario/#comment-1096](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/israel_palestinians_trilateral_scenario/#comment-1096)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)

Marwan Muasher (2008-10-01 21:24:02)

The solution that Gen. Giora Eiland [1] suggests does not address the key needs of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The problem is not solved through giving Palestinians an added chunk of Egypt and Jordan, but rather establishing a viable Palestinian state on Palestinian territory with a shared solution to Jerusalem that would bring back East Jerusalem to Palestinian sovereignty. Before we become too eager to dismiss the two-state solution, let us remind ourselves of the alternatives. They are all less plausible: • **One-state Solution.** Bi-national state with equal rights for Arabs and Jews. It destroys the nature of the Israeli state, and is therefore a non-starter for Israel. • **Indefinite occupation.** This would fuel frustration and violence, and will not be acceptable to the international community. • **Unilateral withdrawal.** Israel would leave areas of the West Bank that it does not want, leaving open the issues of Jerusalem, borders and settlements. This has already been tried in Lebanon and Gaza, and did not result in the weakening of organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah. This solution will further strengthen the radicals, weaken the moderates, or force them to take still more radical positions. • **Relinquish security/political control to Egypt and Jordan.** This assumes Egypt and Jordan are willing to cooperate in a solution that would serve Israel's needs but leave Palestinian and Arab needs unaddressed. It also ignores two basic facts: (1) It ignores the needs of 3.5 million Palestinians who want to exercise self-determination and not be controlled by any other party; and (2) it ignores the wishes of all Jordanians, from the extreme right to the extreme left of the political spectrum, both East Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin, who have no desire for such a solution, albeit for different reasons. Jordanian thinking on this issue has evolved dramatically since 1967, while Israeli thinking among many on the right has not. • **Rename Jordan and call it Palestine.** This option has always amused me the most, because it assumes the Jordanians, Palestinians, Arabs and the Muslim world are so naïve that they would accept a state outside Palestinian borders, as if the 3.5 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza do not matter, not to mention the 5.5 million Jordanians, the status of Jerusalem, etc. What about renaming California as Mexico because of the large number of Hispanics there? • **Time.** Rabin was the first major Israeli politician to speak candidly about this in his speech before the Israeli Knesset when Oslo B was passed shortly before his assassination. If the two-state solution is made impossible, the radical argument is that time will take care of the problem. In 2025, Israel will be surrounded by 380 million Arabs, and it will have a majority of Arabs in the area under its control. Its future is clear. If the Arabs are pushed towards accepting solutions that only address Israel's needs and ignores their own, I assure you the "time" solution will be adopted not just by the radicals, but by everyone in the Arab world. A two-state solution is not only in the best interests of Israel, it is also possible. It is possible not through a separate Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, in which organizations such as Hamas are major players, but between Israel and the Arab Peace Initiative. It is perhaps useful to remind ourselves of what the Arab Peace Initiative offered Israel in return for full withdrawal by Israel from Arab territories occupied since June 1967 and the establishment of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. • **A collective offer to end the conflict with Israel.** As a former ambassador to Israel, I witnessed firsthand the importance of this clause to the average Israeli, who remains concerned that Palestinians or Arab states might make further claims on Israel or its territory even after Israel withdraws to its pre-1967 borders and a solution is reached to the refugee problem. • **Security guarantees for all states in the region, including Israel.** This is a significant offer because for the first time, Israel is assured that its security would be guaranteed not only by neighboring Arab states but by *all* Arab states. • **A collective peace treaty and normal relations**

**with Israel.** This signaled full recognition of Israel and normal relations similar to those between an Arab state and any other state in the world. • **An agreed solution to the refugee problem.** For the first time, the Arab world committed itself to an agreed solution to the refugee problem, addressing Israel's concern that Arabs would demand that four million refugees would be sent to Israel. A political solution already exists to the conflict. It has been already negotiated among the parties. Despite all the violence and political impasse of the last six years, not one Arab state has withdrawn its signature from that initiative, a testament to its resilience. Today, the gradual approach to peacemaking has exhausted its possibilities, simply because it has allowed the opponents of peace ample time to derail the peace process, something they have done repeatedly and effectively. The time has come to abandon this gradual approach, and go for a comprehensive settlement whose parameters have been largely defined through a number of frameworks starting with the Clinton parameters. Separate peace agreements between Israel and the Palestinians or the Syrians might not satisfactorily address key issues such as the positions of Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran regarding such agreements. A comprehensive agreement with the Arab world, in which the Arab Peace Initiative serves as a key term of reference, would address all Arab aspirations, including an end to the occupation and the establishment of a two-peace solution, as well as all Israeli security and other needs. [2] *Marwan Muasher served the government of Jordan as deputy prime minister, foreign minister, ambassador to the United States, and first Jordanian ambassador to Israel.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/israel\\_palestinians\\_trilateral\\_scenario/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/israel_palestinians_trilateral_scenario/)
2. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/0,,contentMDK:21260972~pagePK:51123644~piPK:329829~theSitePK:29708,00.html>

Chuck Freilich (2008-10-01 13:03:38)

Amb. Nabil Fahmy's [1]comment is a sad reflection of the realities of the Middle East, and his claim that "the problem between Israel and the Palestinians is not the lack of space but the lack of political will" is only partly true. The simple fact remains that even with the best of intentions and political will, the space available for Palestinians and Israelis is minute and grossly insufficient. With rapidly growing populations, every inch of territory is of vital importance for both. At the "Two-Seas Observatory" in the Galilee, a spectator can easily see the the entire breadth of the State of Israel with the naked eye—from the Mediterranean to the Sea of Galilee—and way beyond, deep into the Golan. In the "finger" of the northern Galilee, Israel is five miles wide, in the center of the country, 8.7 miles. Gaza is already one of the most densely populated regions in the world and its population doubles continually! Experts doubt whether it could ever support its population, even under the best of circumstances. In the West Bank, the land constraints are only somewhat less dire. The idea of land swaps and even unilateral territorial contributions to the Palestinians by their Arab neighbors is thus not an outlandish one at all, but a creative attempt to "get out of the box," in this case almost literally. The problem, however, is that it will never happen, at least not for decades, precisely because of the mindset reflected in Amb. Fahmy's comment. The simple truth is that neither Egypt nor any of the Arab countries has ever truly cared about the Palestinians. Yes, the Palestinian issue is a very sensitive one for Arab and Muslim countries; yes, it is the rallying point for whatever residual elements of Arab unity still exist. But this is only as long as verbal support for the Palestinians costs the Arab states nothing. Pride and self-interest subsume any practical desire to assist the Palestinians. The tiny speck of land required for the land swap ideas—an infinitesimal percentage of Egyptian territory—would be a radical boon for Gaza. Indeed, it might make the difference between its guaranteed doom as a socio-economic entity and the possibility, limited as it may be, of becoming a viable one. But Egypt will not agree to make any contribution, even of a tiny strip of barren desert and even if offered Israeli territory in compensation. Egypt simply will not do it, not for the sake of regional peace, not for its "Palestinian brethren." Hope, however, is eternal. Maybe some time in the future Egypt will reconsider. Positions rejected in Israel twenty years ago are mainstream today. Egypt certainly has an interest in a settlement of the Palestinian issue. As things stand now, a breakthrough does not appear to be in the cards for many years to come, at best. But Gaza will continue to boil and it will inevitably spill over into Egypt. We saw the first sign of this last year, when Gazans broke through the border wall and Egyptian troops opened fire. The rise of Hamas in Gaza—which may soon take over the West Bank as well—is as much a threat to Egypt as to Israel, in some ways more so if it continues to stoke the flames of Islamism in Egypt. Egypt will not be able to hide forever behind its wall along the Gaza border. Inshallah, it will show greater interest in contributing to a regional peace. [2] *Chuck Freilich is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/israel\\_palestinians\\_trilateral\\_scenario/#comment-1091](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/israel_palestinians_trilateral_scenario/#comment-1091)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck\\_freilich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck_freilich/)

Philip Carl Salzman (2008-10-01 10:27:50)

Gen. Giora Eiland argues: "Because Israel and the Palestinians have to share a parcel of land that is too small for both of them, neither can make substantive concessions, creating a zero-sum game that could lead to a true dead end." This argument assumes that land is at the heart of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and that if the Palestinians had sufficient land, they would be quite happy to live alongside Israel. Amb. Nabil Fahmy [1] appears to agree that land is the critical issue: "The Egyptian-Israeli agreement survived years of difficult pressures because it provided Egypt with all its territory, so that it was never tempted to be drawn back into conflict." The lesson for Israel, according to Fahmy, is that the Palestinians must get all of their land back. The flaw in both of these arguments is that for the self-defined "Palestinians" to get "all" of their land back, Israel would have to disappear entirely, and the Jewish population either leave or agree to revert to *dhimma* status as subservient to Muslim rule. The state of Israel is, of course, entirely illegitimate from the point of view of Muslim Arabs. The Arab view is that, on the one hand, no land once part of the land of Islam may be alienated from Muslim control; on the other, the despised Jews must be returned to their proper place as subservient *dhimma*. This is the view of Palestinians and has always been their view, both before the establishment of Israel and prior to Israeli control of the West Bank. Olmert could no more get his Palestinian "partners for peace" to agree that Israel must be recognized as a Jewish state, than he could lead a successful war or insure that Gaza did not become a terrorist territory. Europeans, Americans, and some Israelis like to delude themselves, indulging in deep but dangerous wish-fulfillment, that Palestinians want peace and development. But Westerners all suffer from interviewer's bias; they believe what is told to them, rather than what Palestinians say to each other. Chairman Arafat was notorious for saying one thing in English, and the absolute contrary in Arabic. But Westerners and some Israelis dismissed the Arabic pronouncement as no more than local politics. Well, they got it backwards; the English-language promises were never carried out, and the Arabic assertions proved to be action guidelines. Of course, it is impossible to forecast the future. Past events may fit future conditions only inexactly. The future may not resemble the past. Some Israelis want to "bet the farm" that the future will be different. But weren't those the same Israelis who told us that Gaza was going to become the new Hong Kong of the Mediterranean? Wishful thinking did not bring a bright present, and I venture to say it will not bring a bright future. [2] *Philip Carl Salzman is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/israel\\_palestinians\\_trilateral\\_scenario/#comment-1091](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/israel_palestinians_trilateral_scenario/#comment-1091)

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)

Nabil Fahmy (2008-10-01 00:18:41)

Creative solutions to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict should focus upon and expand the points of agreement rather than conflict. The problem between Israel and the Palestinians is not the lack of space but the lack of political will. Settlement expansion has eaten up far more territory than all the suggested land swaps, and it continues. Are the Arab countries supposed to continuously accommodate Israel with land swaps as its settlement requirements grow? The [1] idea of territorial swaps with neighboring countries such as Egypt has already been broached before and rejected. Any serious student of the Egyptian-Israeli Taba negotiations over border markers—a dispute which ultimately went to court—knows that Egypt won't get into land swaps. Consequently, one wonders whether retreading this idea is a diversionary tactic. In light of the low expectation that the Israelis and Palestinians will successfully conclude their negotiations this fall. The real difficulties for these two parties lie in the West Bank, and trying to solve them through land development in the Sinai is rather disingenuous. These proposals are nonstarters which will not lead to a solution of the critical issues on the West Bank, and consequently will not provide Israel with peace or security in the long term. The so-called Jordanian option suffers from the same flaws. It creates problems for the Jordanians and does nothing for Palestinian nationhood. It may appear to serve Israel, but since it will bring neither peace nor security, it really doesn't serve anybody. The best lesson to be drawn from the Egyptian-Israeli and Jordanian-Israeli agreements is that agreements have to be based on a balance of interests, not a transient balance of power which may shift like the hot sands of the Mideast. The Egyptian-Israeli agreement survived years of difficult pressures because it provided Egypt with *all* its territory, so that it was never tempted to be drawn back into conflict. That reality precluded an all-out Israeli-Arab war, which has not occurred since then. Internal Palestinian conflicts are tragic and detrimental to their cause of statehood and peace with Israel. However, many opportunities were missed before matters reached their present state. Comprehensive peace has not been achieved because Israel has gone back to "balance of power" rather than "balance of interests" politics. It actually may be time to look at a "true" regional approach to solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict—by embracing the Arab peace initiative, which brings forward all the players and would put tremendous pressure on the nay-sayers on both sides, provided Israeli and Arab peacemakers truly stood behind it. [2] *Nabil Fahmy was Egyptian ambassador to the United States from 1999 to 2008, and is a former political adviser to the foreign minister of Egypt.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/israel\\_palestinians\\_trilateral\\_scenario/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/israel_palestinians_trilateral_scenario/)
2. <http://www.udel.edu/global/agenda/2002/fahmybio.html>

### America's interests: a bedside briefing (2008-10-02 13:30)

From [1]Martin Kramer



I've already prepared my briefing for the next president. No point in waiting until he calls me at 3 a.m., which he certainly will. Of course, I could leak it then, but Bob Woodward is already working on his next book, so I might as well leak it now. Here we go.

Thank you for the White House invitation, Mr. President. You don't know how much I appreciate this appointment as your advisor—my talents were wasting away in that think tank. You've asked me to give you a ten-minute briefing on our interests in the Middle East, in a way even a community organizer or small-town mayor or U.S. senator can understand. You've asked for an unvarnished telling—no lipstick. No problem. Here's what you need to know.

The primary U.S. interest in the Middle East is the free flow of energy from beneath its soil to the United States and to our partners elsewhere. The United States is the largest consumer of oil in the world—it consumes a quarter of all world production. We consume twice as much per capita as the other industrialized countries, twelve times as much as the rest of the world. We're the biggest consumers of energy in the history of humankind. The Middle East is home to 60 percent of the world's remaining oil; the United States has less than 2 percent. Transferring energy from there to here—and elsewhere to people who depend on us—is our primary interest in the Middle East.

And within the Middle East, Mr. President, the epicenter of our interest is the Persian Gulf. The name "Persian Gulf" is a very old one, you'll find it on every map. But it might as well be called Lake Michigan, so integral is it to the lubrication of American life. This means that the U.S. must secure the Gulf, and can't allow any part of it to be dominated by any other power, global or regional.

But in the Middle East there are people as well as oil, and they have more than the usual share of pathologies. A prime U.S. objective, then, has been to isolate the energy flow from those pathologies, by deflecting or combatting or alleviating them.

The preferred way—the American way—had been to find allies among the rulers, and to work with them discreetly, from off-shore and over the horizon. This technique worked for many of your predecessors.

The American oil companies ran the oil fields in Saudi Arabia, American advisors assisted the Shah of Iran, arms sales kept clients happy, and there was no need to place an American boot on the ground. Almost every shore of the Gulf was friendly.

But beginning thirty years ago, the Gulf began to heat up. Vast oil wealth began to feed delusions of grandeur and hatred of America, in three forms. Let's call them, for short, Khomeinism in Iran, Saddamism in Iraq, and Bin Ladenism in Saudi Arabia. Iran's revolution, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and 9/11, were all Gulf-generated push-back against our primacy. Sometimes they cancelled each other out—as in the Iran-Iraq war—but by 2003, our grip on the Gulf was loosening. We had two of the three big states, Iran and Iraq, under a weak "dual containment," and the third, Saudi Arabia, was being pressured by jihadists to get us out. When the United States finally invaded Iraq in 2003, we were in search of a foothold. Instead, we almost sank into quicksand. But we've pulled ourselves out, and you should be careful not to fritter away our advantage in Iraq. There aren't many alternative platforms.

Mr. President, our problem in the Gulf remains acute. Oil is a finite resource, demand for it is growing, and we'll continue to have to expend energy to get energy. Unfortunately, our Gulf allies are really dependencies, and can't do the fighting for us. In Iraq, we've destroyed Saddamism and dealt a blow to Bin Ladenism. But Khomeinism lives, and all those who resent us in the region are rallying to Iran, which promises to succeed where others have failed, by acquiring a nuclear weapon.

The thing to remember about Iran, Mr. President, is that it was once an empire. The classical authors and early European mapmakers called it the "Persian Gulf" for a reason. What we face now is an Iran that's determined to erode our position in the Gulf, so that we'll disappear, just as Britain did before us. This is the most formidable of the three challenges we've faced in the Gulf. If Iran does acquire nuclear weapons, the Gulf waters will become almost impossible to chart, the oil states (and Israel) will be unnerved, and our primary interest will be at risk. History may not forgive you, so keep all your options on the table.

Mr. President, you ask how much attention should be devoted to Israel and the Palestinians. Once upon a time, it was thought that Israel versus Arabs was the source of all instability in the Middle East. Israel fought against Arab states in every decade, and in 1973, one of those wars actually harmed our primary interest: the Arabs imposed an oil embargo. The United States since then has worked hard, and successfully, to meliorate that conflict. We did it by upping our support for Israel, thus dissuading Arab states from more war, and bringing Egypt and Jordan to make peace with Israel. For the last thirty-five years, there have been no state-to-state wars involving Israel.

True, there have been a couple of Palestinian "uprisings," and Israel has chased the PLO and Hezbollah across Lebanon. But these skirmishes never rose to a level that would disrupt our primary interest, the energy flow. Fostering an Israeli-Palestinian deal would be a good deed, but its contribution to our overall interests would be marginal, and an attempt to negotiate one would be all-consuming. It could overload your bandwidth, pushing everything else out. In present circumstances, any problem that can be managed without our troops isn't that urgent. Show interest, but don't waste time.

Afghanistan is another perpetual crisis that's resistant to all attempts at resolution. The country itself is of little intrinsic importance, but it does export misery, from drugs to jihadists. Amelioration and containment are probably the best strategies—isolating its pathologies from spreading to Arab countries or Pakistan. But be careful not to portray this as the "good war," because we won't ever deploy enough troops to win it decisively, and we can achieve our limited goals short of that anyway.

One last warning, Mr. President. On the edges of the Middle East, we've relied heavily on two regimes which have been our most consistent partners in hunting jihadists: Musharraf's Pakistan and

Mubarak's Egypt. Musharraf is gone, and Mubarak is quite likely to be gone before you leave this office. Pakistan and Egypt aren't as central to our core interests as the Persian Gulf. But if extremists succeed in taking either, temperatures at the core of the Middle East will rise dramatically. (This will be so even if we disarm Pakistan's nukes before the country goes under.) It's difficult to judge the likelihood of such a debacle. But to hedge against the consequences, be prepared to upgrade security ties with Israel and India, which we'll need to absorb and deflect the shock.

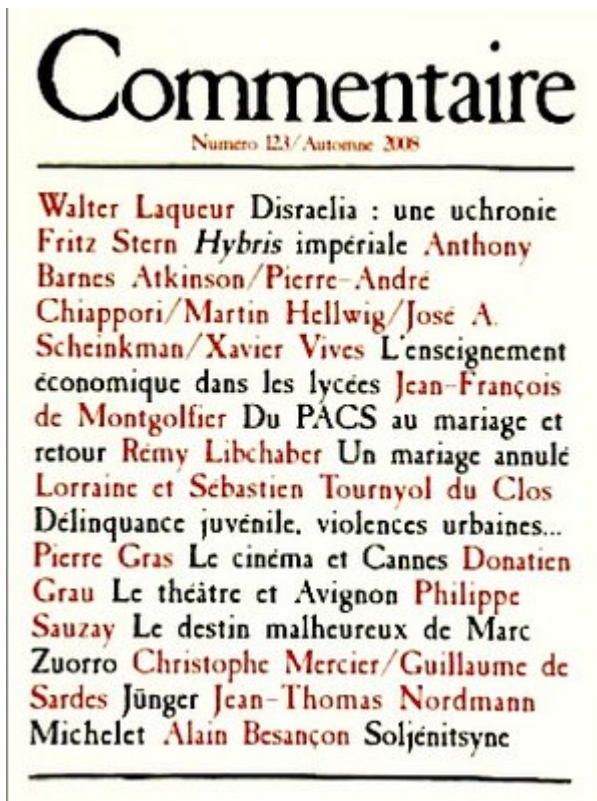
Again, Mr. President, it's an honor. I know we'll be seeing a lot of each other. At 3 a.m. Good-night, sir. Shall I tuck you in?

Martin Kramer made these remarks at a symposium on "After Bush: America's Agenda in the Middle East," convened by MESH at Harvard University on September 23.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)

### 'Disraelia' in Commentaire (2008-10-05 20:57)

From MESH Admin



[1] Back in April, MESH launched its Middle East Papers [2]series with [3]Walter Laqueur's [4]Disraelia: A Counterfactual History, 1848-2008. The paper gave rise to much comment on the web. Now the Paris journal Commentaire has published a French translation as the lead article in its autumn issue. The article isn't online, but the issue may be ordered [5]here.

1. <http://www.commentaire.fr/>

2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/papers/>

3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_laqueur/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_laqueur/)

4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/04/disraelia\\_laqueur.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/04/disraelia_laqueur.pdf)
5. <http://www.commentaire.fr/>

Open before January 20 (2008-10-06 00:00)

From MESH Admin



[1] A couple of weeks ago, MESH ran an online roundtable, in five parts, on "The First 100 Days." Fourteen of our members contributed their admonitions and advice on the Middle East to the next president, whoever he may be. The series was well-received, so we decided to assemble all the parts in a single number of Middle East Papers, MESH's occasional papers series. Download the paper (pdf) by [2]clicking here. This format will make it easier for an aide to the next president to print it up, for leisurely reading by his boss on Air Force One.

This is a reminder that authors of Middle East Papers need not be members of MESH. If you wish to submit an article for possible publication, send it to MESH at [3]this address.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/first\\_100\\_days.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/first_100_days.pdf)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/first\\_100\\_days.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/first_100_days.pdf)
3. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/contact/>

If only Maliki were Jefferson (2008-10-07 00:15)

From [1]Philip Carl Salzman



Peter W. Galbraith, in "[2]Is This a 'Victory'?" (in the current issue of *The New York Review of Books*), frets that there is no apparent way to "transform Iraq's ruling theocrats into democrats, diminish Iran's vast influence in Baghdad, or reconcile Kurds and Sunnis to Iraq's new order." It is apparent to him that the Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki is not "a Western-style democrat..., he is a Shiite militant from the hard-line Dawa Party." He sees the Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds each continuing to jockey for position and for maximum control. And in the Iraqi government, politics are in full play, various parties trying to hold or gain power. And Galbraith, a former U.S. ambassador to Croatia, where presumably ethnic splits and political maneuvering did not exist, is shocked, shocked.

Let us leave aside Galbraith's explicit shilling for the Democrats in the current election and his attempted refutation of the Republican position, although this appears to be much of the motive for the article. Rather, I want to focus on his criteria for assessment and on his analysis of the situation in Iraq.

Galbraith sets the bar to maximum height, judging according to "Western-style" democracy. Absent Westminster-class democracy, Iraq is a failure. To be a success, Iraq must look like Canada, or at least the Czech Republic. Is Galbraith's a realistic and practical criterion to apply to Iraq?

Alternatively, we could consider the changes in Iraq as major steps toward a democratic system. From a personality-cult dictatorship maintained by a brutal secret police and the application of outlawed weapons against the populace, Iraq has been transformed into a parliamentary system with elected representatives. From the reins of power totally held by a minority ethnic group, with the great majority of the population marginalized, powerless, and often victimized, Iraq has moved to full enfranchisement of all Iraqis, with the majority Shiites carrying the greatest weight. All of this might not be good enough for Galbraith, but it is a big improvement for Iraqis.

Galbraith is aghast at the enmity between Shiites and Sunnis, and Arabs and Kurds (and Turkmen, although they remain unnamed in the article). Such conflicts are of course endemic to the region, having developed and been nurtured over thirteen hundred years. The wonder is not, as Galbraith would have us believe, that each group does not love the other as itself, but that attempts at accommodation remain part of the quest for control by each party. It is thus more reasonable to see the glass as half full, rather than broken into shards with the water run out and lost.

Galbraith points out that the Shia-dominated government sees the Sunni "Awakening Council" militias as "mortal enemies." Perhaps so, and perhaps, as he says, the government is unwilling to integrate them, as requested by the Americans, into the Iraqi security forces. Is this proof positive of ultimate doom, as Galbraith seems to suggest? One important point is that the government realizes that it cannot deal with the Awakening militias the way it dealt with Sadr's Mahdi army. It could suppress the Mahdi army militarily because this was a dispute among Shiites. Doing the same with the Awakening militias risked all-out civil war. Of course, the Americans support these militias, which would be a major factor discouraging the government from such a military initiative. The current position of the government is that it will integrate ten percent of the Awakening militia members into the security forces, and find other jobs for the other ninety percent. Will this work to everyone's satisfaction? We do not know, but it is an attempt at a viable accommodation, and thus a step in the right direction.

Galbraith sees Shia-dominated Iraq as Iran's greatest supporter. "Shiite religious parties ... are Iran's closest allies in the Middle East [and] control Iraq's central government and the country's oil-rich south." But Galbraith does not mention that Maliki's military initiative in Basra defeated and chased out of Iraq military operatives of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. Galbraith is of course correct to emphasize the importance of Shia identity and loyalty. But he should also appreciate that the Shia-Sunni divide is not the only important opposition in the Middle East and in Iraq and Iran. There is no love lost between Arabs



and Persians, who have been on-and-off rivals and antagonists throughout history. Nor have Arabs forgotten who were the first Muslims, and in what language the Quran is written. For their part, Persians have not forgotten that they were the established civilization and dominant force before Islam for thousands of years. Today many Persians, if not the theocratic elite, resent the arabization of their culture, going so far as to return to pre-Islamic the greetings of darood and bedrood in place of salaam and khuda hafez. Even leaving aside any sense of Iraqi nationalism, it is highly doubtful that the Iraqi Shiites would look with equanimity at Persian domination.

Americans, both in and out of the administration, have been a bit shocked that the Middle East has turned out to be rather different from Europe and North America. But is it not late in the game for observers such as Galbraith still to be uncritically applying Euro-American criteria to Iraq? It is more useful to apply realistic criteria of progress, by which measures we can take some pride in how far Iraq has come.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)
2. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/21935>

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Peter Sluglett (2008-10-08 01:15:56)

I am probably the only person in North America who has not read "[1]Is This a 'Victory'?" by Peter Galbraith, but I am probably sufficiently familiar with his thinking to comment on Philip Carl Salzman's [2]remarks. First, I imagine that Galbraith is still keen on Joseph Biden's unrealistic wheeze of dividing Iraq into what they both think are its 'natural' constituent parts, Kurdish, Sunni, and Shiite. An autonomous Kurdistan is fair enough, but any further attempts at partition are doomed to failure in spite of the ethnic cleansing that has taken place in Baghdad and other cities. Iraqis simply don't live in the kinds of discrete sectarian units that would be a precondition for such an arrangement to work. The fighting around Basra earlier this year was intra-Shiite. Of course in many ways Salzman is right: constant interference on the part of the United States and the Soviet Union in Iraq during the Cold War, a very weak state structure and some 35 years of Baathist dictatorship, mostly condoned by the United States, are not the best foundations for Jeffersonian democracy, nor would they be for Czech, or Argentinian, or Chilean democracy. Only those who were entirely ignorant of the recent history of the Middle East—a group including almost all those concerned with the 'planning' of the invasion of Iraq in 2002-03—could possibly have thought that some version of Western democracy would be a likely outcome. Even then, more troops and more serious attention to the 'day after' could well have brought about a more positive outcome. Salzman says, and I agree with him, that things are somewhat better than they were. The overthrow of Saddam Hussein was always a necessary precondition for progress in Iraq, and the majority of the population is now in some sense in charge. Where I part company with Salzman is his willingness to trot the tired out mantras of Sunni-Shiite hatred and Arab-Persian hatred "from time immemorial." It just ain't so, or at least it wasn't always so. Sunnis and Shiites have coexisted, if often a bit warily, for most of Islamic history, and the differences between them were becoming less and less of an issue during the wave of secularism that spread over much of the Middle East in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. In those years, intermarriage between Sunnis and Shiites was quite commonplace, both in Iraq and Lebanon. There are parallels; the general atmosphere of secularization in late 19th-century Germany produced a number of 'mixed marriages' between nominal Jews and nominal Christians, and nominal Muslims and nominal Christians married regularly in the former Yugoslavia. Sectarianism is rarely set in stone: relatively few Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland kill each other any more. Finally, religion in the Middle East is an accident of birth: it's not a matter of choice. Sunnis and Shiites don't seek to convert each other. It's pretty much the same with Arabs and Persians, who fought each other, OK, during the Ottoman-Safavid conflicts of the 16th and 17th centuries, but not much since then. The Iran-Iraq war was one of Saddam Hussein's frequent errors of judgement rather than symptomatic of anything deeper. While we're here, I wasn't quite sure why Salzman mentioned the substitution of *darood* and *bedrood* for *salaam* and *khuda hafez*: do I need to tell him that *khuda* is a Persian word? The Awakening Councils are only a finger-in-the-dike solution. As the United States should remember from Afghanistan, it doesn't actually help in the long run if you arm one group against another. Those Sunnis may not like Al Qaeda all that much, but they don't like the Shiite politicians of Baghdad either. And so on. Yes, Iraq is better off without Saddam Hussein, but it would have been a damn sight better off without George Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, the neo-cons and the assorted bunch of ignoramuses who were in charge for so long. [3]Peter Sluglett is professor of Middle Eastern history at the University of Utah.

1. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/21935>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/if\\_only\\_maliki\\_were\\_jefferson/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/if_only_maliki_were_jefferson/)
3. <http://www.mec.utah.edu/?module=facultyDetails&personId=637&orgId=302>

Reidar Visser (2008-10-08 01:22:09)

A very good point made in the [1]post by Philip Carl Salzman concerns the distinction between civil war and manageable conflict. As he says, "the wonder is not... that each group does not love the other as itself, but that attempts at accommodation remain part of the quest for control by each party." All too often, Western commentators who have seen signs of sectarian tensions in Iraq infer that a solution of total physical separation is urgently required. What is interesting in Iraq in terms of politics is that despite violence that can sometimes be described as sectarian, all parties south of Kurdistan continue to insist on a unified Iraq as the best framework for the future. As long as they do so, Iraq will remain fundamentally different from other cases of multi-ethnic and sectarian struggles such as the Balkans, and many of Peter Galbraith's assumptions will be wrong. Still, Galbraith may be right in voicing skepticism with regard to the relationship between some Shiite members of the Iraqi government and Iran. However, where things go seriously wrong in his essay is in the portrayal of Iraq's Shiites as an undifferentiated mass. The description of the process towards new parliamentary elections is particularly misleading. According to Galbraith, "The Sunnis had demanded early provincial elections since they had boycotted the previous local elections in 2005... The Shiite-dominated parliament inserted a poison pill into the election law, a provision that would invalidate the 'One Man, One Vote' principle in the Kirkuk governorate... a system of equal representation for each of Kirkuk's three communities." In reality, the coalition that demanded elections consisted of Sunnis and Shiites, Islamists and secularists: they were Sadrists, Fadila, Iraqiyya, al-Hiwar al-Watani and others. And it was they too who inserted Galbraith's "poison pill"—a somewhat surprising label from someone who has championed Kurdish veto rights and disproportionate influence in almost every other aspect of Iraqi government. Their stated goal was to preserve Kirkuk as an example of Iraqi cross-sectarian coexistence. It is the existence of this sort of political alliance—it is now often referred to as the "Forces of 22 July"—that makes generalizations about a tripartite Iraq of Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds meaningless. These forces now command a majority in the Iraqi parliament, and the Iraqi government can no longer afford to ignore them. It is however a potential problem that the United States prefers to support the government rather than the majority in the parliament in the current situation. Nouri al-Maliki shares the nationalist aspirations of many of these oppositionists but he continues to rely on a hollow alliance of federalists—chiefly the Kurds and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq. If he does not realign himself towards the centre of parliamentary politics, he may have no other option left but to turn to increased authoritarianism or to Iran as the number of U.S. forces in Iraq is gradually reduced. [2]Reidar Visser is a research fellow at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and editor of the Iraq website [3]historiae.org.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/if\\_only\\_maliki\\_were\\_jefferson/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/if_only_maliki_were_jefferson/)
2. [http://english.nupi.no/virksomheten/forskningsprogram/den\\_persiske\\_golf/reidar\\_visser](http://english.nupi.no/virksomheten/forskningsprogram/den_persiske_golf/reidar_visser)
3. <http://www.historiae.org/>

Rex Brynen (2008-10-08 23:31:55)

My colleague Philip Carl Salzman [1]writes:

Galbraith sees Shia-dominated Iraq as Iran's greatest supporter. "Shiite religious parties ... are Iran's closest allies in the Middle East [and] control Iraq's central government and the country's oil-rich south." But Galbraith does not mention that Maliki's military initiative in Basra defeated and chased out of Iraq military operatives of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard [IRGC].

Galbraith overstates this, but by the same token the events in Basra were rather more complicated than Phil suggests. Iran's influence in Iraq is multifaceted: Tehran simultaneously supports Maliki/al-Dawa, the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council (SIIC), and Sadr. In Basra, therefore, Iraqi security forces (heavily penetrated by cadres from SIIC's Badr Corps, which fought on the Iranian side in the Iran-Iraq war and many of whose officers held IRGC commissions) fought a not-entirely-conclusive battle with the (also Iranian-supported) Jaysh al-Mahdi, ending in an (Iranian-mediated) ceasefire. It is true that Arab identity and Iraqi nationalism among Iraqi Shi'ites represents an obstacle to "Persian domination." However, the Iranians are smart enough to not push so hard as to appear to be seeking domination, but rather to position themselves as the funder, facilitator, and helpful fixer for a variety of Iraqi Shi'ite groups. They are also able to play up the threat posed by U.S.-supported Sunni "Awakening" militias. Both the IRGC and Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security have proven highly adept at the covert part of this game, as has the Iranian

foreign ministry at the more public part. [2]*Rex Brynen is professor of political science at McGill University.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/if\\_only\\_maliki\\_were\\_jefferson/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/if_only_maliki_were_jefferson/)

2. <http://www.mcgill.ca/politicalscience/faculty/brynen/>

Monica Duffy Toft (2008-10-09 13:05:40)

Peter Galbraith raised several important issues in [1]his piece about whether Iraq represents a victory. For him it does not, yet for others, including some respondents here ([2]notably Philip Carl Salzman), Iraq does represent a victory. In the current debate the key issue hinges first, on what qualifies as "democracy," and second, on interpreting trends. It is true and fair to say that there are numerous variations or styles of democracy, but that is not equivalent to saying that what is happening in Iraq meets the minimum functional definition (which, we might say, is a broad franchise). Overall, however, the question of whether Iraq is a democracy cannot actually be answered, since there is no widely agreed-upon general definition of what minimally counts as a democracy. For Galbraith, it is a Western-style, parliamentary and broadly representative government; these are the terms of reference that the Bush administration has used, so on this score Galbraith is right. Iraq does not yet meet these requirements. The Salzman comment uses questionable logic to say that even if Iraq is not a real democracy (whatever that means), it is so much more democratic than it was, and therefore Galbraith is wrong. It is not a sound argument. Second, and more importantly for me, the Salzman response raises the issue of how to judge what is actually going on in Iraq. Salzman invokes the image of glasses half full or shattered, but the real difficulty is that the objective evidence can soundly support more than one interpretation. Galbraith regards Maliki's moves as a kind of window dressing: Maliki is biding his time until the United States leaves, and then he will move to become the new Saddam in a state torn into three by the civil war. Salzman, however, sees the same moves as (a) a genuine transition to "Iraqi-flavored democracy" (whatever that means), or (b), at a minimum, at least an improvement over the Ba'ath Party (but what wouldn't be?). The bottom line here is that it is unwise and premature to rest much weight on Maliki's words or deeds in relation to the democracy question (and to rest notions of victory on it), both because they support either interpretation and because "democracy" is too vague to serve well as an outcome variable. At this point it is not clear whether Maliki is steering his government toward a federal system or biding his time until the United States leaves. It is simply too soon to tell. [3]*Monica Duffy Toft is a member of MESH.*

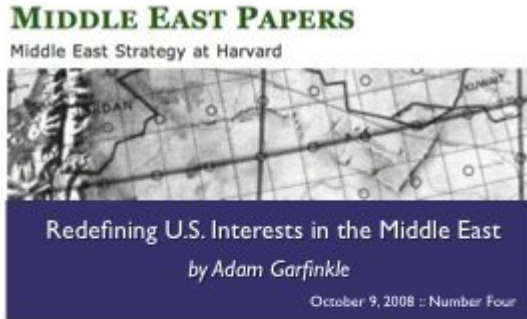
1. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/21935>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/if\\_only\\_maliki\\_were\\_jefferson/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/if_only_maliki_were_jefferson/)

3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/monica\\_duffy\\_toft/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/monica_duffy_toft/)

## 'Redefining U.S. Interests in the Middle East' (2008-10-09 14:26)

From MESH Admin



#### The assumption of continuity...

is liable to blind us to differences between the Cold War and the present era, leading us to underestimate opportunities and exaggerate dangers.

#### Default assumptions

During the Cold War, U.S. interests in the Middle East were quite stable: keep the oil flowing from the Persian Gulf at reasonable quantity and price; protect the security of Israel, the region's only democracy; and keep the Soviets out insofar as possible, both for its own sake but also because doing so made satisfying the foregoing two interests much easier. In time, a couplet of additional interests were added to the three core ones as the discipline and constraints of bipolarity ebbed: reducing the threats posed by so-called rogue states, particularly those toying with weapons

of mass destruction programs, and mitigating the often-associated frequency and effects of terrorism.

The default assumption of interest continuity suggests that little in essence has changed. Many argue that the flow of oil is still the most critical U.S. interest in the region, made perhaps even more critical in the face of increased global demand and other stresses on the world's still predominately liberal trading system. Israel's security is still a principal Western and especially American interest. And we still need to make sure no other state can achieve hegemony over the region, al-

Adam Garfinkle : Redefining U.S. Interests

Middle East Papers : Middle East Strategy of Harvard

[1] The [2]latest contribution to Middle East Papers is by [3]Adam Garfinkle, editor of the journal *The American Interest*. Garfinkle (a particularly prolific contributor to MESH) argues that the conventional understanding of U.S. interests no longer accords with post-Cold War realities. The protection of oil, support for Israel, and preservation of U.S. hegemony need to be reconfigured in the absence of a great power rival. Yet the United States is stuck in Cold War-think. Garfinkle analyzes the changes, and proposes his own prioritized list of top four U.S. interests in the Middle East. Download [4]here.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/interests\\_garfinkle.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/interests_garfinkle.pdf)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/interests\\_garfinkle.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/interests_garfinkle.pdf)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/interests\\_garfinkle.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/interests_garfinkle.pdf)

## Financial crisis: OPEC to blame? (2008-10-11 08:50)

From [1]Gal Luft



There is so much blame to go around in the wake of the financial crisis that there is no wonder OPEC's name shows up high in the list of culprits. After all, soaring oil prices and loss of wealth in 2008 to the tune of \$1.2- \$1.9 billion each and every working day, depending on the price of crude, not only helped pop the U.S. mortgage bubble but have also helped create the economic conditions that brought the U.S. economy to its current dire straits.

I don't like the oil cartel and have even been called "the most hated man in Riyadh." My positions on

OPEC and its methodical price manipulation and looting of the world's poor are [2]well documented. But alleging that OPEC by some grand design brought America to the abyss and then pushed her over the cliff or, worse, concocted a vast conspiracy to impoverish millions of middle-class Americans seems like one bridge too far, especially in light of the fact that OPEC countries themselves are among the biggest casualties of the crisis. Oil prices have already fallen to \$88 from their record \$147 in July.

Since the beginning of the crisis, the Saudi stock market, the largest in the Arab world, lost more than 17 percent of its value. Qatar lost 19 percent, and Dubai's exchange shed a quarter of its value in just four days of trading. Due to their relative insulation, Iranian and Venezuelan stocks were almost unscathed by the meltdown, but make no mistake: Iran and Venezuela are likely to suffer greatly from the current downturn. The IMF recently determined that oil prices must remain at \$90- \$95 for Iran and Venezuela to be able to balance their books. If the price of oil falls to \$75- \$80 a barrel, Caracas and Tehran will have to cut government subsidies and shave government spending. At such price levels the Iranian economy alone will lose \$50 billion a year, which amounts to a per capita loss of \$700- \$800.

Furthermore, sovereign wealth funds owned by Persian Gulf governments are heavily invested in crumbling financial institutions, and their losses are monumental. Only last July, Abu Dhabi Investment Council caused a stir when it bought the Chrysler building in New York City for \$800 million. Considering the desolation of New York's financial district and the slumping U.S. real estate sector, this no longer looks like such a great deal.

So if OPEC indeed has a grand economic warfare plan, as of this writing it proves to be a spectacular failure. No doubt most OPEC governments do not have America's best interests in mind, but their correlation of interest does not imply causality. The problem with laying the blame for our economic calamity on OPEC is that it hides the plain truth that this crisis is about our greed, not theirs. Any attempt to masquerade this inconvenient truth will only obstruct our lesson-learning process and therefore undermine our road to recovery. As Pogo once said "we have met the enemy and he is us."

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal\\_luft/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal_luft/)

2. <file:///frontpagemagazine.com/Articles/Read.aspx?GUID=E4E01729-16D3-4DE1-AAD6-CA007C69A6D8%E2%80%9D>

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## And the winners are... (2008-10-13 14:55)

From [1]Michael Mandelbaum

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy has launched a [2]book prize for the three best books on the Middle East published in the previous year. I had the honor and pleasure of serving as one of the three jurors for the inaugural awards, along with Jim Hoagland and Bernard Lewis. The first prize, worth \$30,000, went to Yaroslav Trofimov's [3]The Siege of Mecca; the second to [4]Foxbats Over Dimona by Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez; the third to Anthony Pagden's [5]Worlds at War. While we did not plan it this way (in fact, none of the three judges knew the identity of the other two until the decisions had been made), I am pleased that we chose three worthy but very different books: a gripping piece of investigative journalism, a provocative and controversial revisionist account of a major episode in 20th-century history, and a graceful, sweeping synthesis of two and one half millennia of history. Each of the books draws on the past—from the very recent to the very distant past—to provide insight into issues confronting the people and governments of the Middle East, and those outside the region who must deal with them—today.

Below is a clip of my announcement of the winners. (If you don't see it, click [6]here.) The jury's commendations may be read [7]here.

[kml \_flashembed movie="http://www.youtube.com/v/tCWDmdRFJ5g" width="425" height="350" wmode="transparent" /]

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_mandelbaum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_mandelbaum/)
2. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC11.php?CID=479>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0307277739>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/030013627>
5. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1400060672>
6. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tCWDmdRFJ5g>
7. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC11.php?CID=495>

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## Democracy promotion: three fallacies (2008-10-14 02:00)

From [1]Michele Dunne



Can the United States still promote democracy in the Arab countries?

There are three misguided assumptions and assertions circulating in discussions on this question:

1. The United States has contaminated the idea of democracy in the Middle East and now Arabs do not want democracy because it is connected with U.S. policy.
2. It is not possible for the United States to pursue democracy promotion and work with Arab governments on regional peace and security at the same time; we have to choose between the two.
3. If a new U.S. administration pursues democracy promotion in the Middle East at all, it should focus on developing the institutions of democracy rather than pushing for early elections.

In what ways are these three notions misguided?

- Contamination of democracy. Certainly U.S. actions in the Middle East in recent years have caused a spike in anti-U.S. sentiment in the Middle East, although even there I would caution that it is by no means a new phenomenon. As a former U.S. diplomat, I remember well being beaten up for alleged U.S. bias during the 1980s and 1990s. But the question is whether U.S. actions—including the invasion of Iraq—have turned Arabs against democracy.

While Arab government officials and pundits often say so, public opinion data say otherwise. Have a look at

the analysis of data from the Arab Barometer Project presented in a [2]new article entitled "Has the United States Poisoned Democracy?" by Amaney Jamal and Mark Tessler. Correlating polling data on support for democracy—as high in Arab countries as in any other region of the world—with anger at the United States, the authors conclude that "our data do not support the argument that Arab popular support for democracy has been undermined, and the concept itself has been discredited, by the anti-Americanism that results from Arab complaints about U.S. foreign policy."

Further, those of us who study the region and visit frequently have found a shift in the debate about political systems. Ten or twenty years ago, we indeed heard many debates about whether democracy was compatible with Islam, consonant with Arab culture, or an imposition of Western imperialism. Nowadays such debates are over, and when you still hear such arguments, generally it is from an older person or from someone who is part of or connected to the ruling establishment. Islamists, leftists, and others who once made such arguments have moved beyond them to an acceptance of democracy, though they might have a certain character or spin they would like to put on it. But my point here is that, whatever sins the United States might have committed in the Middle East, turning the Arabs against democracy has not been one of them.

- Pursuing democracy and security interests. Clearly the United States has many items on its agenda with Arab countries, and promoting democracy is only going to be one of them. Can we pursue more than one interest at once? I think the key point here is how far we expect the U.S. government to push democracy promotion. If the United States government were lending its support to dissidents who were an immediate challenge to regime—in other words, if the ruling group believes they are in immediate danger of losing power—then that ruling group most likely would not cooperate with the United States.

But the United States has not adopted a policy of regime change toward most Arab countries; rather it is promoting gradual change along the lines of increased media freedom, civil society freedom, judicial freedom, freer and fairer elections, etc. There are very few countries in which the opposition is even strong enough to attempt to take over—Palestine and Lebanon come to mind, and the United States is not inclined to ally itself with those opposition movements. While the sort of incremental democracy promotion that the United States generally does might annoy Arab governments at times, it will not stop them from cooperating with us on shared interests. Egypt, for example, never ceased cooperation with the United States on military affairs, counter-terrorism, or Arab-Israeli diplomacy during the time (2004-05) in which the US had quite an active democracy promotion program there.

- Institutions rather than elections. Building up the institutions of democratic government and a democratic society is a critical part of any democracy promotion strategy. But I am troubled by the suggestion that the United States should stop promoting free and fair elections, which springs from the traumatic experience of the Hamas victory in Palestine in 2006.

First, a strategy of institutional development without political competition is doomed to failure, because in most cases autocrats do not create institutions that will limit their power unless they are compelled to do so by opposition forces. (For more on this, see the [3]article entitled "How Democracies Emerge: the Sequencing Fallacy," by my colleague Tom Carothers.) The enlightened dictator who makes a gift of democracy to his country is a rare commodity. Political competition and the development of sound and empowered institutions reinforce each other.

Second, the fact is that nearly all Arab states (except Libya) are holding elections of one kind or another on a regular basis, with no pushing from the United States. So the real dilemma for the next administration will not be whether or not to push Arabs to hold elections, but whether to encourage them to make the elections that they will hold freer and fairer.

Michele Dunne made these remarks at a symposium on "After Bush: America's Agenda in the Middle East," convened by MESH at Harvard University on September 23.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele\\_dunne/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele_dunne/)
2. <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/arb/?fa=show&article=22230>
3. <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=18957&prog=zgp&proj=zdr1>

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## Our shaky coalition, and how to save it (2008-10-15 02:00)

From [1]Tamara Cofman Wittes



There are two opposing coalitions in the Middle East today. On the one hand, there is a revisionist coalition comprised of Iran, Syria, Hamas and Hezbollah—a coalition dissatisfied with the distribution of power in the region, and dissatisfied with the current agenda-setters and frameworks for state action. These revisionists include states and non-state actors. Like other such coalitions in the region's past century of history, they are using their ability to play spoiler on regional issues and within the domestic politics of certain Arab states, in order to force status-quo states to give them a greater share of attention and power.

Hezbollah's dynamic leader, Hasan Nasrallah, and Iran's populist president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, envision a region defined by unending "resistance" against Israel, the United States and status-quo Arab governments. Nasrallah and Ahmadinejad argue for the redemptive value of violence and offer the promise of justice and dignity for Arabs humiliated by decades of defeat at the hands of the West and Israel, and decades of humiliation and neglect at the hands of their own governments.

Against this group of revisionist actors is a looser coalition of status-quo actors who are trying to preserve the regional balance of power, including the role played by the United States. It is notable that today's status-quo coalition, unlike any in the Middle East's past since 1948, includes all the major Arab states alongside Israel and the United States.

Even on the streets of their own cities, moderate Sunni Arab leaders such as Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, Jordan's King Abdullah II and Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah (all associates of the United States) are less popular than Nasrallah and Ahmadinejad. The radicals' message of resistance is always combined with denunciations of Sunni Arab leaders for cowering under an American security umbrella and making humiliating deals with Israel, and for ignoring the plight of their own people. The revisionists' critiques of Arab governments' performance both regionally and domestically are echoed and reinforced by the narrative of the domestic Islamist opposition inside Egypt, Jordan, and the other Arab status-quo states.



This balance of forces in the region had its coming-out party in the 2006 Lebanon War, and the diplomacy and developments since that conflict all represent the efforts by regional revisionists to capitalize on the openings that conflict created for them, and by the status-quo states to recover and contain the revisionists' influence.

Because of this regional face-off, and the imperative of containing this revisionist coalition of actors, America and her major Arab partners need one another more than ever. But Arab states are cooperating with America in the face of unprecedentedly high levels of public anti-American resentment and anger. America and the status-quo Arab states must attempt to cooperate in containing these regional threats at a time when each of them individually, and their partnership itself, are subject to widespread public resentment and opprobrium. And the regional revisionists are proving themselves very effective at wielding this public sentiment against both the Arab regimes and against Washington. That puts them in a real dilemma. Over time, in the absence of some kind of regional progress, this U.S.-Arab strategic cooperation on big regional issues like Iran, Lebanon, Iraq, Israel will only survive if Arab governments are willing to repress that domestic resentment and anti-Americanism.

That is not a stable foundation for long-term relations, and it's a situation that plays right into the arguments of regional radicals like Hasan Nasrallah as to why these regimes have to be overthrown: they sell out to the Americans, they make humiliating deals with Israel, and they don't care about the people.

Washington and the Arab capitals are like two donkeys tied together on a cart: neither can stand without the other's help, and neither can escape unless the other is also freed. The Arab regimes are implicated by our failed foreign policies in the region, and we are implicated by their failed domestic governance. If we don't help each other, we are both in trouble, and we know it.

Escaping from the bind that the United States and its Arab friends are in in the Middle East today requires several things that seem in short supply in 2008: a commitment to sustaining our investments when many weary Americans would prefer to walk away from the table; new investments in issues like Arab-Israeli diplomacy even though the returns are likely to be meager at best; and a commitment to the long term, despite the urgency many feel for quick results.

Here are my thoughts on what such a policy must comprise:

- A renewed effort at Arab-Israeli peacemaking—not because the situation is ripe for resolution, but because a peace process is part of containing the regional revisionists and especially the efforts of Iran to plant both feet firmly in the heart of the Levant. A peace process will not solve all the problems of the Middle East. But a peace process is important because it creates tensions and disagreements among members of the revisionist coalition, weakening their impact on the region and on our regional allies.
- A continued U.S. commitment to security in the Persian Gulf. Despite Russia and China's more energetic commercial efforts in the region, neither of these countries is eager to take over this job. The United States must continue to keep the Gulf open for all, and I am fairly confident it can be done peacefully. But it does require concerted multilateral diplomacy to deal with the Iranian nuclear program, to deal with Iraqi stabilization, and to help the GCC states build the capacity and will to play a greater role in Gulf security.
- Initiatives that will present a compelling narrative of progress, peace and prosperity to counter the narrative of rejection and resistance put forward by the revisionists. As I said, that suggests the value of efforts at Arab-Israeli peace, but it also suggests the need to present the vast majority of Arabs

who live outside Palestine with the opportunity to shape their own future. This promise can only be fulfilled through far-reaching political, economic and social reforms that create a new relationship between Arab governments and their citizens.

Arab leaders keenly feel the threats from radical Islam within their own societies. They know that Islamists have capitalized on state failures and weaknesses, and that the critique put forward by local Islamists is magnified by the rising popularity of Iran and its allies. In this insecure environment, U.S. efforts to persuade at least some Arab leaders of the need to reform should resonate—if it is part of a broader regional agenda, and if it is accompanied by the right kind of incentives.

For now, most Arab regimes believe that the best way to manage the threat from domestic Islamist opposition is to focus on resolving regional conflicts like Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine, relieving them of the burden of addressing domestic grievances. While the United States should work with them to resolve regional conflicts, the next president needs to help them understand that the best insulation against the destabilizing effects of regional revisionists and rising domestic Islamism is to repair the frayed social contract between citizens and the state.

Tamara Cofman Wittes made these remarks at a symposium on “After Bush: America’s Agenda in the Middle East,” convened by MESH at Harvard University on September 23.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara\\_cofman\\_wittes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara_cofman_wittes/)

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Philip Carl Salzman (2008-10-18 18:48:01)

It is not easy being an anthropologist, so good advice is always welcome. Tamara Cofman Wittes offers [1]some suggestions about how anthropologists should understand the Middle East. But I confess to being unclear about her guidelines. First, Wittes objects to my characterization that Middle Easterners are attracted to power on the grounds that everyone, everywhere is attracted to power, and so it is a universal characteristic of all people. Then, Wittes objects to my characterization on the grounds that Middle Easterners are various, diverse, and different from one another, so one cannot generalize. So which is it: all people are the same, so regional generalizations do not distinguish one region from another, or people everywhere are different, so regional generalizations are invalid? Wittes’s objections to “essentialist statements” and “analytically fruitless reductionism” are today widely held in the social sciences, and very politically correct. These formulations are at the heart of Edward Said’s arguments against what he calls “orientalism” and have been carried forward by the influential Saidian postcolonial theorists. Unfortunately, these arguments have proven to be epistemologically unsound, as demonstrated convincingly by the philosopher Irfan Khawaja ([2]here). The reason is that all knowledge is based on abstraction, on the selection of certain features for categorization and generalization. For example, our concept of “tree” is validly distinguished from “grass,” although there are important different types of trees, e.g. soft wood and hard wood, and many varieties of each. Returning to human populations, nomadic peoples are different from sedentary peoples, notwithstanding the differences within each category, just as are tribal peoples different from subjects in agrarian societies, and from citizens in civil societies. Wittes is uncomfortable with regional generalizations. But without generalizations, there is no regional knowledge at all. Objections to generalizations about the Middle East can equally be applied to generalizations about any individual country, e.g. Iran, which has much internal regional diversity, or about any region, e.g. Fars or Mazandaran or Baluchistan, or any subregion, individual tribe or community, or any particular family. And yet there are patterns, and distinctions between patterns are evident from one place to another. To be sure, full confidence requires that generalizations must be well substantiated, and evidence must be presented, which is why we write books. But if we did not find patterns, did not generalize, we would have nothing useful to say. As for my practical policy advice, Wittes rejects (her own interpretation) America “swaggering around the region carrying a big stick,” on the grounds that America is too weak, has lost credibility, and has little support from its own citizens for further “Middle East adventures.” On the tendency of the American public to desire quick results at little cost (a generalization that Wittes is not shy to formulate), we do not differ. That America is too weak to use its power in the Middle East is open to dispute. But none of this explains American policy. For example, why was the U.S. government so keen to stop

Israeli forces from destroying Hezbollah's military capacity, just when they had, under the disability of incompetent leadership, finally managed to get moving? There was widespread sympathy, both in the Arab Middle East and around the world, for "big stick" action against Hezbollah. But instead of supporting it, after no more than a few weeks of conflict, America pulled the rug out from under Israel. The result? After a short breather, Hezbollah crushes its opposition in Lebanon, the Hezbollah-Syria-Iran axis is strengthened, and prospects for peace and development in the region are set back substantially. If this is the kind of "courage and leadership at home" that Wittes favors, I fear that the state of the Middle East will worsen greatly for the foreseeable future. [3]*Philip Carl Salzman is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/our\\_shaky\\_coalition\\_and\\_how\\_to\\_save\\_it/#comment-1155](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/our_shaky_coalition_and_how_to_save_it/#comment-1155)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0415443253>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)

Tamara Cofman Wittes (2008-10-16 17:49:16)

I shudder when commentators, especially trained scholars of the region [1]like Philip Carl Salzman, write phrases like "Middle Easterners love the strong and despise the weak." My academic discipline, International Relations, teaches that respect for power is not a trait restricted to those of Middle Eastern origin, but is common to all organized political groups, and is especially evident in environments of insecurity like that of the contemporary Middle East. In politics, power attracts allies and deters enemies; weakness repels would-be allies and draws attacks. This is no more or less true in the Middle East than anywhere else, and no more or less true of Osama bin Laden today than of tyrants and revolutionaries in ages past. But even if we posit that such essentialist statements are grounded in empirical evidence, how much guidance do they really provide for a new U.S. president wading through the Middle Eastern morass left behind by his predecessor? America's declining prestige and power in the region are not facts that a new president can immediately change. It is all very well for Salzman to suggest that swaggering around the region carrying a big stick will work to cow the Middle Eastern masses—but doing so when we are in fact relatively constrained risks having our weakness even more fully exposed than it is at present. Restoring American power and credibility should be our real concern, so that we can pursue and preserve our interests in a lasting manner. America should already have learned in the last eight years that, while we might try to stand as tall as Gulliver in the Middle East, those living close to the ground are well-positioned to strike at our Achilles' heels: our impatience for quick results, our distaste for extended overseas engagements (especially those that taste of empire), and our understandable reluctance to invest our own blood and treasure in other nations' well-being (when we don't see the link to our own). Americans are exhausted with our Middle Eastern adventures, and that is why I [2]suggested above that fixing our problems in that region will demand courage and leadership at home, as much—or perhaps even more—than abroad. Of all people, an anthropologist should know that such broad regional characterizations as those evidenced in Salzman's post usually mask considerable local variety, as well as masking real, if tragic, commonalities in human affairs. I hope we can discuss Middle Eastern affairs henceforward without resorting to this sort of analytically fruitless reductionism. [3]*Tamara Cofman Wittes is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/our\\_shaky\\_coalition\\_and\\_how\\_to\\_save\\_it/#comment-1152](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/our_shaky_coalition_and_how_to_save_it/#comment-1152)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/our\\_shaky\\_coalition\\_and\\_how\\_to\\_save\\_it/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/our_shaky_coalition_and_how_to_save_it/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara\\_cofman\\_wittes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara_cofman_wittes/)

Philip Carl Salzman (2008-10-16 10:19:49)

Tamara Cofman Wittes has usefully [1]identified the dilemmas America faces in countering the oppositional alliance of Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, and Hamas. Among them is the same dilemma faced by those who wish to advance democracy in the Middle East; to wit, popular discontent among the populations of our status-quo allies takes the form of anti-American extremism, and internal reforms play to the advantage of the extremists. Wittes recommends policies—such as a Palestinian-Israeli peace process and "initiatives that will present a compelling narrative of progress, peace and prosperity to counter the narrative of rejection and resistance put forward by the revisionists"—to assuage the masses, if not entirely, at least sufficiently to maintain the status quo and block the increase of power by the oppositionists. Exactly what those initiatives might be apparently remains to be developed. I would suggest that we also consider a basic dynamic not discussed by Wittes, that of winners gaining support and losers losing support. It appears to me that Middle Easterners are less moralistic and more pragmatic than Americans: Middle Easterners love the strong and despise the weak. Recall once again the metaphor one of our prime informants, Osama bin Laden, about the strong horse and the weak horse. When America appears strong and acts effectively, Middle Easterners tend to back off.

After the destruction of the Saddam Hussein regime, Iran froze its nuclear program and Libya gave up its weapons of mass destruction. But, on the other hand, when America could not impose order on Iraq, Iran reactivated its nuclear program. When Israel is forced to stop before it can defeat Hezbollah, when Hezbollah is allowed to assert militarily its dominance in Lebanon, when Hamas rains missiles on Israeli towns without response, and when Iran boosts its nuclear program and its annihilationist threats against Israel with no more than empty moralizing from the West, the oppositionists and their sympathizers are encouraged and inspired. Wittes suggests several carrots to be offered to susceptible Middle Easterners. Equally important, I would suggest, is a big stick for unsusceptible Middle Easterners. The susceptible others are watching, and prefer to side with the stronger, for it is the stronger who can deliver the benefits. [2]*Philip Carl Salzman is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/our\\_shaky\\_coalition\\_and\\_how\\_to\\_save\\_it/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/our_shaky_coalition_and_how_to_save_it/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)

Martin Kramer (2008-10-21 11:09:27)

The [1]epistemological debate over what we know about the "Middle East" (or even whether there is one) is interesting. As shown [2]elsewhere on this site, its definition has been unstable, so that even the space shared by "Middle Easterners" is vague. In any case, though, it is impossible to draw a straight line from an *episteme* to a policy. So I come back to Tamara Cofman Wittes's [3]three policy recommendations to bolster our shaky coalition: reinvigorate Arab-Israeli peacemaking; multilateralize security in the Persian Gulf; and promote internal Arab reforms. All of these may offer some long-term benefits—it's anyone's guess—but in the short term they might strain the coalition still more. Start with the Arab-Israeli peace process. A successful one would be a feather in America's cap. But its actual pursuit puts strains on the coalition. The late Elie Kedourie put his finger on the problem exactly thirty years ago, commenting on a now-forgotten policy report on the Middle East prepared by the Brookings Institution in the mid-1970s. The report had determined that the security and future development of Arabs and Israelis would remain in jeopardy "until a durable settlement is concluded." Kedourie interrogated the claim: "Is it not inconceivable that the very search for a 'durable' settlement between Arabs and Israelis will so exacerbate matters, and arouse among various parties such fears for their security and interests, that tensions in the area will be *increased* rather than lessened?" This is exactly what happened when Bill Clinton made his last-minute bid to end the conflict with a grand bargain in 2000. The region went up in flames as a result. So it might be best to see the peace process as a gamble. In the short term, it will increase friction within our coalition, probably in equal measure to the friction it creates in theirs. In the long term, we will either win big or crash. Unfortunately, the odds of success have deteriorated considerably over the last decade. This is good enough reason to view America's compulsive gamblers (the "expert" peace processors) with a dose of skepticism, and limit one's bets. Multilateralizing security in the Persian Gulf is also likely to weaken, not strengthen the coalition. If you are an Arab state on the Gulf looking for reassurance, you have stayed firmly in the coalition because there is one higher address for appeals and complaints. If you are now told that all your security requirements will have to go before a committee of the willing and reluctant—well, you're going to cover your bases and send out a line to Tehran. This is already happening, because of our own internal divisions, as manifested in the last National Intelligence Estimate on Iran and the upcoming elections. (See my "[4]Memo from Gulfistan.") We shouldn't delude ourselves—this will weaken, not strengthen, our coalition, and it could embolden Iran in its own nuclear gamble. If Iran wins it, our coalition will shake to its foundations. As for reform, ideally we would like to have both governments and their peoples in our coalition. Ideally, too, we would like them to come together in a way that enhances our interests. Unfortunately, we have discovered that reform, at least in politics, promotes the ascent of those very groups that demand that their countries exit our coalition at the least, and join up with our opponents at the worst. In a long-term, best-case scenario, we might hope to win out. In the short and medium term, we are more likely to empower the various Hamas-equivalents (as we empowered Hamas), which will weaken our coalition, and which has already moved the odds against us in the Arab-Israeli arena. The last two presidents doubled our bets and rolled the dice in the Middle East. Policy here as elsewhere reflected a growing tendency in American society to take on more risk than necessary, and America is now paying the price. It would be wonderful to make peace, act in accord with the will of all nations, and see friendly rulers and peoples strike democratic bargains. But things do go wrong, the dice have come up snake eyes for the last two presidents in the Middle East, and so if I were the next one, I would ask this question: How about a policy that manages our risk? Looking at Tamara's recommendations, I would say that all three have more downside risk than upside potential. That's not a reason not to experiment with them—we could get lucky. But we mustn't bet the farm. [5]*Martin Kramer is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/our\\_shaky\\_coalition\\_and\\_how\\_to\\_save\\_it/#comment-1155](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/our_shaky_coalition_and_how_to_save_it/#comment-1155)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/09/east\\_near\\_middle\\_far/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/09/east_near_middle_far/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/our\\_shaky\\_coalition\\_and\\_how\\_to\\_save\\_it/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/our_shaky_coalition_and_how_to_save_it/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/memo\\_from\\_gulfistan/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/memo_from_gulfistan/)
5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)

Tamara Cofman Wittes (2008-10-22 12:52:30)

Martin Kramer rightly [1]points out that serious pursuit of Arab-Israeli diplomacy might well strain our coalition, even as it strains our revisionist adversaries. Many Arab states might like to continue to hedge their bets, or show us up, through freelance efforts to entice Hamas and/or Syria away from Iran. Still, given the regional balance of forces, I'm optimistic that we and our allies can bear greater strain than the last go 'round, and that the attempt will bring us net benefits—if not a peace agreement (I don't expect it will bring that). Even if, say, Israeli-Syrian talks induce our "moderate Arab allies" to fly to Damascus bearing gifts, that can have a positive impact on our broader regional confrontation. It may give Assad material incentives to constrain radical activity, and the improvement in intra-Arab relations will create concomitantly greater tensions between Damascus and Tehran. These two core members of the revisionist coalition already face disagreements over Hezbollah's priorities: Syria wants Hezbollah to focus its attention on protecting Syrian and Shiite interests inside Lebanon, while Iran wants to use the group across borders, as a club against Israel and the West in the confrontation over Iran's nuclear program. What Hezbollah wants is perhaps the key question (anyone want to weigh on that?), but my point is that our Arab allies, even when they're going behind our back, might actually help exacerbate these tensions among the revisionists, to our benefit. The downside is real, but I think the upside is significant. On reform, what I'm advocating is that the U.S. government lay out a case to its Arab counterparts that it's been unwilling to make before—that they must take some responsibility for the rise of regional radicalism, and their fault lies in their selfish, short-sighted, ham-handed grip on power; that they are cultivating their own worst nightmare—and ours—and that is not something we can tolerate; and that liberalizing reform, like peace, is part of building a Middle East we can all live with and live in. I doubt that America's making this case will transform any Arab leaders into disciples of Thomas Paine and Adam Smith. But we may get more movement out of some of them than we have so far. Unlike Martin, I don't believe said movement is likely to sweep Islamist radicals into government across the region. The regimes still have what John McCain would call a "strong hand on the tiller"—meaning that the changes we'll see will not be open contestations for executive power. If we are smart about it, as I write in [2]*Freedom's Unsteady March*, we will press for improvements in basic political freedom, to create a more pluralistic political marketplace, one that will weaken regimes but also weaken the Islamist forces Martin worries so much about. The downside, in other words, is not as bad as Martin makes out. In the end, this case for reform makes strategic sense for the United States. It accords with our national values and with our vision for a future Middle East where we can continue to preserve and advance our interests. If we get anything out of the governments as a result, it will improve our operating environment by putting the revisionist radicals on the defensive and reducing their appeal. And if we don't get anything out of them as a result, at least we will not be blamed as much by their angry populations for what comes next. Being on the right side of history is worth something, I think. Just don't ask me to quantify it. Gulf security is the hardest piece of my tripartite program to put into place. This is because the prospects for a more multilateral Gulf security regime are dependent on the progress of Iran's nuclear program. If Iran can be dissuaded from its current path through concerted multiparty diplomacy and sanctions, then I think my vision of a more multilateral Gulf security framework is possible. If not, then Martin is right that the Gulf Arab states will demand a hegemonic U.S. security guarantee, as they have since the late 1980s, and we will have little choice but to provide it. I guess all I can say for sure is what I said above—the next U.S. president, one way or another, must remain committed to a strong investment in Gulf security. The modalities are still up in the air. Finally, let me assure Philip Carl Salzman and MESH readers that I have no problem with generalizing, but generalizations are useful only to the extent that they fit the data and illuminate something new about what we observe. What we can observe is that many non-Middle Eastern political actors respect power, while many Middle Eastern political actors demonstrate an apparent indifference to clearly superior force. Just to take one momentous case, Saddam Hussein knew in both 1991 and 2003 that he would face military defeat at the hands of an American-led coalition, yet he decided that losing a war was preferable to backing down. Clearly, there is something going on in the Middle East that is not adequately explained by the notion that "Middle Easterners love the strong and despise the weak." More broadly, I could not agree more with Martin Kramer's point that "it is impossible to draw a straight line from an *episteme* to a policy." Debating Edward Said's influence on Middle East studies is a hobby I leave to my colleagues in the academy; as Martin demonstrated so well in [3]*Ivory Towers on Sand*, those academic debates are of little relevance to the world of policy. One of this blog's great strengths so far has been its ability to avoid such self-involved discourse in favor of considered attention to real policy problems. That's a tradition I'd like to uphold.

[4]Tamara Cofman Wittes is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/our\\_shaky\\_coalition\\_and\\_how\\_to\\_save\\_it/#comment-1191](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/our_shaky_coalition_and_how_to_save_it/#comment-1191)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0815794940>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0944029493>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara\\_cofman\\_wittes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara_cofman_wittes/)

## Is peace normal? (2008-10-16 02:00)

From [1]Philip Carl Salzman



In Israel, there is a political lobby group called "Peace Now," as if peace were a circumstance that could be brought into being by the political will of one party. The same sentiment was expressed, somewhat less arrogantly, by Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, when he famously (or infamously) said that Israelis were tired of fighting and beating their Arab neighbors. The assumption appears to be that peace is normal and war is anomalous, and thus if war is present, someone must be doing something wrong.

But the historical and ethnographic evidence suggests that it is peace that is anomalous, and war that is normal. Even desiring peace, as opposed to desiring victory, is anomalous.

Nothing is more normal in tribal life than hostile attack against one's neighbors. In fact, usually there was a normative graded scale of conflict according to distance: those closest to one were fought with more restrictions, and those more distant fought more freely. For example, [2]among the Nuer of the southern Sudan, within settlements men fought with only clubs; between settlements men fought with spears, but did not kill women or burn housing, and Nuer could not be taken as slaves; outside of the Nuer, fighting the Dinka, not only were the men fought to the death, but the very young and elderly were murdered and settlements were burned, with youths and nubile females taken as slaves. The same was true among the Bedouin: in raiding among the camel-herding tribes, camel herds were taken, men were fought, but women were not interfered with, and families were left a few milch camels to support their subsistence needs (William Irons, "Livestock Raiding among Pastoralists"). But in raids among non-tribal peoples, no such provisions were made, and women and men were [3]taken as slaves, to provide household labor and sexual services.

In tribes, all men are warriors, a few ritual specialists excepted. Responsibility for social control and defense is diffused throughout the group. Each man must hone his fighting skills and be ready to fight, whether against neighboring groups, other tribes, or more distant peoples. It is common that rights of

passage for young men involve [4]fighting and returning with a trophy. Raiding between tribes for livestock and other valuables is a [5]constant sport and means of production. We have to keep in mind that in labor-intensive subsistence economies, under constant threat from adverse environmental cycles, increased production, even reliably maintained production, is arduous and chancy. By far the easiest and most exhilarating (if not the least dangerous) way to increase income is by predatory raiding of what others have sweated to produce. Among Bedouin, raiding and warfare were [6]endemic. Furthermore, prestige rested upon success in [7]raiding and generosity in distributing the captured camels among one's kinsmen.

Emir Nuri Sha'alan of the Rwala Bedouin produced, through a long series of multiple marriages, thirty-nine sons. Of these, thirty-seven died violently, mostly in raids, seeking fame and fortune before they married, and the thirty-eighth was killed after he married but before he had children. "The [camel] economy was booming," [8]wrote William Lancaster, "the inner desert was still inviolate and raiding and warfare extremely bloody." The Hamawand Kurds [9]are described as "adapting their whole society to an economy based on war and looting." Charles Lindholm [10]has described the "continuous and fruitless struggles for power" characteristic of segmentary tribal societies, which in some cases extended to conquering and ruling settled societies.

Among the Baluch of the Sarhad region of Iranian Baluchistan, until 1935 when the tribe fell under the control of the Iranian crown, raiding of Persian caravans and villages was not only common, but [11]regularly organized on a tribal basis, with raids twice a year led by the Sardar, chief, in addition to raids initiated on a more spontaneous basis anytime during the year by any tribesmen who cared to undertake the venture. Livestock, grain stores, carpets, and other valuables were seized, as well as captives to be kept as agricultural slaves, or married (with no bridewealth required), or to be sold. When I did my ethnographic field research among the Yarahmadzai Baluch, the matriarch of the Dadolzai lineage was a woman who had been captured forty years earlier from a Persian village by a fourteen-year-old raider, now long her husband. If anything, the Yomut Turkmen of northeastern Iran were [12]even more assiduous raiders. They viewed the racially distinct Persians as free game to be captured at will and sold into slavery at markets in Central Asia. When not slave-raiding in Persian villages, the Turkmen preyed on Persian caravans. At the same time, they also pursued intratribal feuds and intertribal wars among the several Yomut tribes.

If tribes are notoriously bellicose, can the same be said for other forms of societal organization? Hunters and gatherers have come to have a [13]reputation for peacefulness. After all, they live off of the plenty of the land and have no possessions to speak of; what would they have to fight about? And yet fight they do. A [14]worldwide ethnographic survey indicates that 64 percent of hunters and gatherers had warfare at least every two years, while 26 percent had warfare less often; only 10 percent were described as warring rarely or not at all. Even among the peaceful 10 percent, homicides, executions, and vendettas were common, at a much higher level than in industrial societies. Agrarian societies usually produce sufficient goods for a surplus to be skimmed off by the dominating clergy and military, who use their powers primarily to [15]control the populace. But these are static societies, and increase of riches requires expansion, commonly territorial and military. For the military elite and their priestly allies, conquest and empire bring new recruits and new dependents, new glory and new wealth. Once again, war provided the means that production did not.

Only in the 17th century, with the development of science and technology, was a dynamic of ever-increasing production initiated. For the first time, in the increasingly industrial societies, riches did not depend upon expropriating wealth from others. The military became less dominant, and more under the control of civil authorities. Fewer people were involved in the military, and non-military virtues came to the fore. Industrial societies internally were and are the most peaceful in history, with stunningly low rates of physical conflict and intentional death. And yet, wars for expansion continued, for glory and for wealth, success enabled by industrial capabilities. No amount of wealth attained is, it appears, ever sufficient. And

glory, status, and honor, while universally desired, must be, by their natures, differentially distributed and thus inevitably scarce and awarded only to the most successful.

The Middle East, not yet industrial and still [16]to a degree tribal, enjoys neither dynamic production nor a demilitarized public. Governments tend to be predatory and individuals' security rests largely with kinship groups. Such groups contest for status conceived as honor, as well as for economic resources and benefits. Governments look beyond their borders for expansion, as well as for enemies to frighten their "citizens" into solidarity and support. In such societies, when a gain appears possible, it is normal to engage in armed conflict. It is only when such a gain appears undeniably impossible that a temporary period of peace seems attractive.

As members of industrial, civil societies, we are ill-prepared to appreciate the nature of non-industrial societies. Each man and woman makes the world in his and her own image. It is normal for us to universalize our particular cultural norms and expectations to the world at large and all peoples in it. But such projection is unavoidably misleading, and acting on our assumptions guarantees major contusions as we bump into reality as constructed by the "other." Anyone who convinces himself that he must have peace at all costs, probably does not understand what "all costs" means, and shall end up paying on the other's terms. A "solution" at any cost to conflict may well be considerably worse than the conflict itself. If we feel compelled to pursue peace, we might more realistically call our group "Peace, If Possible," and consider how to generate the conditions necessary, beyond our hopes, both for the establishment and maintenance of a peace, if inevitably only a temporary one. The main condition for peace, I would suggest, is that gain from conflict appears to one's opponents undeniably impossible

Illustration: Georges Washington, "Retour d'une razzia: Oued R'hir, Afrique," 1876. The painting depicts a raiding party returning home to the walled city of Oued Rhiou, located between Algiers and Oran.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0195003225>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1591026024>
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14. <http://www.jstor.org/pss/3773193>
15. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0226287017>
16. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1591025877>

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Steven Caton (2008-10-17 10:43:00)

Though Philip Carl Salzman [1]is correct to point out the fact of raiding in pre-industrial times between so-called stateless tribal societies and has provided a nuanced political, economic and symbolic account of it, what he leaves out is the evidence of conflict-resolution mechanisms within those same societies. Take, for example, the Nuer whom he cites at length. Cattle raiding was indeed a major activity, as was capturing people who were "adopted" into the kin-



ship system in order to maintain the local population. But when the Nuer broke out into hostilities among themselves, they would not club each other to death but appeal to the "leopard skin" chief to resolve their differences peacefully. A similar mechanism was in play among the pre-modern Rwalla Bedouin, whom he also cites, where the sheikh of the tribe was expected to wield his influence—mostly through persuasive means—to get opposing parties to agree to a lasting settlement. What Evans-Pritchard, the first great anthropologist of the Nuer, proposed was a dialectical (more my usage than his) relationship between war *and* peace among "nested" tribal segments, the degree of the feud increasing in intensity the higher the structural order of the opposed segments, with the potential or threat of warfare increasing as the segments became in the end, like the Nuer and the Dinka, opposed tribes. His argument was that at that stage, someone or something had to intervene to bring peace—the ultimate justification for the state or the colonial order. In short, far from war or hostility being the prevailing condition of pre-industrial society (a Hobbesian view that is endlessly repeated in the literature on tribes), it is rather *war-and-peace* that seems to be the dynamic. I certainly found this to be the case in tribal Yemen, which I have written about in [2]*Yemen Chronicle* (2005). That said, the real issue, in my view, be it in peace or war, is leadership, and it is no surprise that the tribal sheikh was expected to be an expert in the arts of both. It was the lack of a state or of state leaders, presumably, that left the Nuer to fight their traditional Dinka enemies. Rather than locating the problem of peace in Palestine-Israel in some presumed endemic condition, might we not better off to question the political will of our leaders to solve problems that everyone, apparently, *wants* to have solved? [3]*Steven Caton is director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and professor of social anthropology and contemporary Arab studies at Harvard University.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/is\\_peace\\_normal/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/is_peace_normal/)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0809098822>
3. [http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~anthro/social\\_faculty\\_pages/social\\_pages\\_caton.html](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~anthro/social_faculty_pages/social_pages_caton.html)

## Listening in, in Dubai (2008-10-16 18:42)

From [1]J. Scott Carpenter



In a Policy Watch of The Washington Institute that ran today, [2]I reflect on yet another Bush Administration initiative that has been left to crawl forward weakly without sustained U.S. leadership: the G-8's [3]Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) Initiative. Like a man dying of thirst in a hot desert, it won't have to crawl much farther.

Back in the distant past—four years ago—the Initiative was something the Administration just had to have: a multi-lateral framework that would work to create and support a common reform agenda for the Broader Middle East. It was novel in many ways, and a re-read of its founding documents makes interesting reading, if you're into that sort of stuff. Its chief innovation was to involve business and civil society actors in the deliberations with governments and ask them to help inform reform priorities. For some groups, it is their only chance to meet face to face with their governments at any level.

For five years now an ever-expanding network of activists and reformers has been meeting and making recommendations to their governments on a whole slew of topics. Policy recommendations have flooded into capitals on everything from vocational training and media reform to election monitoring and women's

empowerment. Annually the groups come together at something clumsily called the Parallel Forum at the Forum for the Future, to summarize their recent meetings and to finalize a set of recommendations to make to ministers when they meet one or two days later. In 2005 in Rabat there were just five such activists, all of whom were hard-core human rights activists. Today in Dubai, there are hundreds representing hundreds more in all sectors.

Over the course of the past two days I've been listening in on their conversations and deliberations as an invited delegate at this year's gathering, and have a number of quick impressions to share.

First, these folks are seriously interested in partnering with governments to stimulate change. These are not wild-eyed revolutionaries of either the secular or the Islamist sort. They are people who want to see their governments and their societies thrive. Not because the United States or anyone else wants them to but because they believe it profoundly themselves. They recognize the failings of their governments but they also fear militant Islam and believe they can help compete with it, if governments would only let them.

Second, and this should [4]encourage Michelle Dunne, they all still want to have elections. When I walked into a discussion on how to improve election monitoring, I asked with shocked incredulity if they were still hoping for and encouraging elections. They looked at me strangely and said of course. Elections are poorly run in this part of the world but they do take place and they should be freer and fairer they said. I agree with them.

The other big take-away from this meeting is that governments—aside from bits of our own—don't care about this process. No government officials were allowed by the UAE government to participate in this year's sessions, a sharp break with past practice that allowed government observers. So there was no one to hear the delegates offer constructive criticisms, truly thoughtful ideas or truly bad ones. Moreover, the Emirati government is thinking of curtailing civil society participation at the ministerial altogether, a huge step backwards if it happens. Typically, elected delegations from the parallel session and various meetings that take place over the course of a year make short presentations at the Forum. Apart from Rabat where the NGOs were inadvertently kicked out of the session by the foreign minister (they were later brought back in after the FM called them on their cell phones to apologize) and in Bahrain, where a member of a local human rights organization was not allowed to participate despite having been selected, an ever-larger group of civil society activists has been allowed in the room for the entire ministerial.

So why the change? In part it has to do with the fact that in the Emirates there is no real civil society and so they are unaccustomed to having to deal with it. But in part it also has to do with Secretary Condoleezza Rice's last minute announcement that she's not coming to the Forum. Again. The government is clearly embarrassed that she would cancel, knowing that others will now downgrade their participation. Why should they risk being embarrassed further by activists who just might say or do anything? Or perhaps they are trying to force the activists to protest the event giving them a pre-text to cancel it altogether? Last year after Secretary Rice canceled her trip the Yemeni government canceled the Forum—without a pretext.

What is strangely encouraging about all of this is what I heard most of all from the delegates with whom I spoke. They are frustrated the G-8 is not taking the process seriously enough and upset at their own governments' blindness to the hand that's being offered, but they want the process to continue. As one of them put it to me, "It's arrogant and even outrageous that the G-8 would invent this initiative and then abandon it but I hope we can continue to have this sort of meeting. Even without ministers. What do foreign ministers know about privatization or election law anyway? If we could routinely have senior officials from relevant ministries dialogue with us it would be a huge step forward."

It's not a whole lot to ask, frankly. But unless attitudes towards the initiative change within the G-

8 and the governments of the region, even that may be a bridge too far. Fairly diversified funding for the initiative has all but dried up and most activities are supported now by the United States. With the next Administration even that slim trickle of support could dry up and then the BMENA Initiative would be yet another quickly forgotten grand scheme.

As I write in my piece today, no one will likely mourn its passing, but it truly was a missed opportunity. It occurred to me after reading [5] Tamara Cofman Wittes's post that this would be one way of partnering with the countries of the region and representatives of their societies to challenge the revisionists of Iran and their proxies. By seriously addressing reform issues and perhaps adding security to the mix, a broad consensus and partnership could emerge to confront the extremist narrative. But it's late here in Dubai and I'm jet-lagged out of my mind. Perhaps I'm already dreaming.

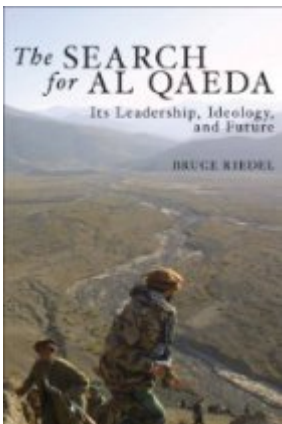
1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j\\_scott\\_carpenter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j_scott_carpenter/)
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5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/our\\_shaky\\_coalition\\_and\\_how\\_to\\_save\\_it/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/our_shaky_coalition_and_how_to_save_it/)

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### 'The Search for Al Qaeda' (2008-10-20 03:00)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Bruce Riedel is a senior fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, and a 29-year veteran of the Central Intelligence Agency. His new book is *The Search for Al Qaeda: Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future*.

From [1] Bruce Riedel



[2] When I retired from the CIA two years ago, I began researching the statements and writings of the senior Al Qaeda leadership. I found that the picture that emerged from their own words was often very different from the imagery of Al Qaeda conveyed to most Americans, even by experts. Many experts after the 9/11 attacks, for example, argued that Al Qaeda's primary goal was to evict American troops from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. If so, then the terrorists won their war five years ago when the Bush administration withdrew U.S. combat forces from the Kingdom. Of course, this was not the fundamental issue motivating Al Qaeda but a useful tactical rallying cry in a much larger game to evict the United States and its allies from the Muslim world as a whole, overthrow pro-Western regime and destroy Israel. Al Qaeda's own words had been clear on this from the start.

The Search for Al Qaeda takes the reader into the minds of the leaders of the world's first global ter-

rorist organization and the perpetrators of the largest mass murder in American history. It uses the words of Osama bin Laden, Ayman Zawahiri, Mullah Omar and Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi to understand their ideology and the narrative of history that they think justifies their action. By examining their words and their life stories, it exposes the strategy they are pursuing, including its strengths and weaknesses.

Unlike other books on Al Qaeda, the focus is more on what has happened since 9/11 rather than on the road to September 11, 2001. Since 9/11, Al Qaeda's leadership has written and spoken often about their plans for that day and their plans for the days since. This book looks at that literature in depth and decodes it for those who are not experts in Islamic history and thinking.

The picture that emerges is chilling but realistic. Al Qaeda's vulnerabilities are highlighted so that an effective grand strategy to defeat the terrorists can be developed: a strategy that seeks to bring together all elements of American leadership—diplomacy, vision, intelligence operations and military force—to defeat this enemy. The central role of our Muslim allies in this battle is explored and a strategy for gaining their assistance is laid out. The critical importance of addressing the Arab-Israeli conflict and stabilizing Pakistan is explained. My hope is that this book will in its own way help both Americans and Muslims understand better how Al Qaeda thinks and thus how to deal with it.

[3]Order from Publisher | [4]Amazon

1. <http://www.brookings.edu/media/NewsReleases/2006/20061110.aspx>
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51IG2JmSyIL.jpg>
3. <http://www.brookings.edu/press/Books/2008/searchforalqaeda.aspx>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0815774141>

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## The Bush legacy (1) (2008-10-21 02:00)



As the presidency of George W. Bush draws to a close, MESH members have been asked to assess his legacy. What did the Bush administration do right and do wrong in the Middle East? What is the proper yardstick: Administration rhetoric or the range of the possible? Finally, as the pollsters put it, are we better or worse off in the Middle East than we were eight years ago?

MESH members' answers will appear in installments throughout the week. We begin with responses from Michael Young, Raymond Tanter, and Philip Carl Salzman.



[1]Michael Young :: The question posed—What did the Bush administration do right and do wrong in the Middle East?—seems almost provocative in light of the conventional wisdom in recent years stating that the administration has done nothing right. The view is both politically tendentious and ahistorical. The administration has done both right and wrong, and in that way has pretty much replicated

the behavior of its predecessors.

Iraq, of course, may seem to disprove that contention of continuity, but it also ended up being the exception confirming the rule that the administration subsequently very much behaved in the context of the international consensus on affairs of the region. In fact, almost immediately after the war ended the United States went to the Security Council to get sanction for the invasion from the United Nations.

Was Iraq a bad idea? To this day I think the forcible removal of Saddam Hussein was both necessary and meritorious. Nor do I believe it required any other justification than the fact that removing mass murderers from power is necessary and meritorious. That is why I am especially bitter over the aftermath of the war—the shoddy planning, the insufferable hubris, the indecision, and all the other American errors helping to ensure that in the future the United States will shy away from similar actions—not to say from more effective and aggressive support for those in the Arab world who continue to suffer at the hands of the region's despots.

Lebanon was a verifiable success for the Bush administration. Never a high priority for the United States, ending the Syrian presence in the country was nonetheless something George W. Bush alone successfully pushed for, along with the French President Jacques Chirac, when all other American presidents since 1976 were willing to partly or completely subcontract Lebanon to Syria. Bush received help from the Lebanese in 2005, when they took to the streets in the hundreds of thousands to demand a Syrian pullout, but he stuck with them afterward. That alone, from my perspective, makes him worthy of a more generous legacy than he will get.

Otherwise, the administration has been all multilateral compromise. It has worked in the context of the Quartet on the Palestinian-Israeli track, and through the 5 + 1 Group and the International Atomic Energy Agency in the nuclear dispute with Iran; has backed international law and the Hariri tribunal in Lebanon, through the Security Council; and has stood by in allowing Turkey to sponsor indirect Syrian-Israeli negotiations. In Afghanistan it has worked through NATO, under UN authority.

Alas, despite the rhetoric in favor of democratization in the Middle East, the administration has largely abandoned that message, in large part because it needs the collaboration of Arab dictatorships against Iran. This makes the Bush administration today so little different from the Clinton administration when it comes to the basics of regional behavior and thinking, that what comes next in Washington (most probably an Obama administration) will seem very little different than what Bush administration turned into once the Iraq war ended.



[2]Raymond Tanter :: The legacy of George W. Bush rides on Iraq in the short term and Iran in the mid-term. As Iraq slid into chaos during 2006, the Bush legacy suffered as well. During 2007, Iraq was resuscitated by a U.S. surge, counterinsurgency strategy, and political reconciliation between Shiites and Sunnis led by the Iranian opposition in Iraq. The surge provided more U.S. forces in Iraq to execute a counterinsurgency strategy that provided security for Iraqi civilians who, in turn, provided intelligence about Shiite militia and Sunni insurgent groups. Interviews in Iraq confirm that political reconciliation between Shiites and Sunnis, as well as between former Sunni insurgents and the U.S. military, was fostered by the Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MEK), an Iranian opposition group in Diyala province. This reconciliation reinforced the surge and counterinsurgency strategy.

Although the Iraqi story is still unfolding, deterioration of 2006 has yielded to significant security gains and a political bounce in Iraq. Not so for Iran. Washington's efforts to deter and coerce the Iranian regime fall short due to infighting within the Bush administration, not much different from bureaucratic warfare about Iraq. The State Department's approach ranges from hints to open an interest section in Tehran, to subcontracting Europeans to negotiate with Tehran, to fostering multilateral sanctions by the UN Security Council. Meanwhile, the Department of Defense reportedly draws up war plans for dismantling Iran's nuclear weapons program. There are, in addition, American military plans for destroying the terrorist infrastructure that Tehran maintains in Iraq and for engaging in raids across the Iraqi border to eliminate the supply of sophisticated roadside-bomb technology manufactured in Iran.

Developing an approach that does not embolden the regime in Tehran or rely on problematic military strikes would require the same strong presidential leadership President Bush showed in changing course in Iraq. President Bush demonstrated rhetorical leadership on Iran when he spoke directly to the Iranian people in his 2005 State of the Union address, saying, "As you stand for your own liberty, America stands with you." In 2006 he added, "We respect your right to choose your own future and win your own freedom. And our nation hopes one day to be the closest of friends with a free and democratic Iran." Before President Bush leaves office, he should match his strong words with deeds that would reinforce the diplomatic option yet keep the military alternative on the table.

One way of closing the gap between rhetoric and action is to develop a third option regarding Iran, between failing diplomacy and challenging military strikes. Empowering democratic forces both inside and outside of Iran would be a step toward creating such a third option that puts pressure on the Iranian regime to rethink its pursuit of nuclear weapons and sponsorship of terrorism, before resorting to military action. Reaching out to the same Iranian oppositionists who fostered political reconciliation in Iraq is such an option.

The Mujahedeen-e Khalq is feared by Tehran. Delisting the group from the U.S. list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations would pressure Tehran on the nuclear issue, terrorism, and Iraq. Knowing the potency of this democratic opposition group, Tehran is pressuring Baghdad to extradite the leadership to Iran and disperse the rank and file. If President Bush allows Iraqi Security Forces to take control of the MEK pursuant to a Status of Forces Agreement and the MEK is destroyed, the United States will lose a valuable source of intelligence, political reconciliation gains in Iraq, and leverage against Tehran, permanently tarnishing the Bush legacy.

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[3]Philip Carl Salzman :: It is too early, substantially too early, to judge the Middle East legacy of President George W. Bush.

Before assessing the Bush legacy in the region, we must have some idea how his initiatives and policies turn out, and how the region develops and changes over the next years. Above all, will Iraq hold together, develop democratically, and prove to be an American ally? Secondly, will the Taliban and Al Qaeda be held off in Afghanistan, will the Afghan government gain strength, and will Afghan society evolve into a civil society? Finally, will Lebanon remain independent from Syria and avoid further civil war, and will Libya continue to regularize its behavior to international norms or return to its earlier radical and disruptive activities? At the moment, it is too early to say.

What we can say, is that the bar is very low in assessing U.S. presidential legacies in the Middle East. From 1945 until 1990, U.S. presidents were concerned above all with the Communist threat, in Europe, Latin America, and East Asia, while the Middle East was regarded as a secondary theater. American presidents acted with purpose and effect in Greece, Italy, and Europe generally, and in Korea and Latin America, and with purpose and less good effect in southeast Asia. But U.S. presidential performance in the Middle East was for the most part indecisive and weak. While Truman recognized Israel, Eisenhower undermined British, French, and Israeli efforts to counter Nasser. Carter undermined the Shah of Iran, and flinched at checking the Islamic revolutionaries, while Reagan cooperated with the Iranians in aid of conflicts in Latin America. The first Bush did stop Saddam in Kuwait, but let slip the opportunity to remove him. Clinton fiddled while American assets were repeatedly attacked by Islamists. All relied for stability upon Middle Eastern dictators. So the Middle Eastern legacies of American presidents are largely of neglect and weakness.

There are some things that can be said about the G. W. Bush legacy in the Middle East. First, he responded with decisive force against American enemies. Does anyone remember the world of experts who said that the Afghans and Iraqis could never be beaten? Yet a handful of American special forces with air power were enough to bring the Taliban down in record time. And the American military did not suffer serious threat from the Iraqi military. American military performance was extremely impressive; that legacy is clear. The civil war in Iraq has tended to obscure that, but clarity returned somewhat with the defeat of Al Qaeda in Iraq. Second, America has suffered no terrorist attacks since 2001. This is a stunning record. And yet, little credit is given for events that have not taken place.

There are also clear negatives. First, the rationale for invading Iraq was imprudently simplified for public consumption, and, although all intelligence agencies around the world were confident that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction, the absence of such weapons undermined public support. "Bush lied" is a dishonest distortion, but widely accepted. Second, the defense against terrorist attacks tended to set aside, or be seen as a threat to civil liberties and constitutional rights. Perhaps this was inevitable, but striking a balance, and appearing to strike a balance, were not sufficiently achieved.

At the same time, neither the American public nor the Democratic opposition covered themselves with glory. The public appears to have a sit-com length attention span and tolerance of effort, while the Democrats flinch from defending the country and often appear to be tempted to side with the enemy. The Europeans have gone well beyond being tempted.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_young/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_young/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_tanter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_tanter/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)

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## The Bush legacy (2) (2008-10-22 02:00)



As the presidency of George W. Bush draws to a close, MESH members have been asked to assess his legacy. What did the Bush administration do right and do wrong in the Middle East? What is

the proper yardstick: Administration rhetoric or the range of the possible? Finally, as the pollsters put it, are we better or worse off in the Middle East than we were eight years ago?

MESH members' answers are appearing in installments throughout the week. Today's responses come from Michael Mandelbaum, Mark N. Katz, and Michael Horowitz. (Click [\[1\]](#) here for yesterday's opening installment.)



[\[2\]](#)Michael Mandelbaum :: Asked what he thought of the French Revolution, Zhou Enlai is supposed to have replied, "It's too soon to tell." Similarly, it is too soon to render a verdict on the centerpiece of the Bush administration's Middle East policy, the attempted political transformation of Iraq. To be sure, the American public has already decided that the effort has gone on too long and has cost too much in blood and treasure. Historians may, however, be kinder, if Iraq eventually becomes a stable country with a reasonably representative government and a free press in which Shia, Sunni and Kurds coexist more or less peacefully.

The administration was correct in believing that democracy—which includes liberty and the rule of law as well as free elections—would be a potent antidote to many of the Middle East's pathologies and correct, as well, to believe that a democratic Iraq could serve as a positive example for the rest of the region. It erred insofar as it believed that democracy could take root there quickly or easily, or that the United States could do much to hasten this generations-long process.

What is most important for American interests in the region, however, is not a democratic Iraq, welcome though that would be, but rather a non-nuclear Iran. Here the administration has not done well. The mullahs are surely closer to having the bomb now than they were in January 2001. Just what could have been but was not done to slow or stop them will inevitably be a matter of controversy: perhaps, short of the use of force, nothing would have worked. My own view is that the foolish and pointless American alienation of Russia, beginning in the mid-1990s with the eastward expansion of NATO, cost us Russian support for maximal pressure on Iran, which might at least have helped to restrain the Islamic Republic.

Whatever its failings concerning Iran, the Bush administration is not guilty of the frequently-made charge that it missed the opportunity to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. If, as Samuel Johnson observed, patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel, then the Middle East peace process is both the last refuge of the exhausted administration and the first recourse of those who aspire to replace it. The next administration, if it plunges immediately into negotiations, will not do better; it will simply fail sooner, absent fundamental changes in the attitudes toward Israel of the Arab world in general, and the Palestinians in particular, changes that are not within the power of the United States to bring about.

In the Bush Middle East policy, finally, and indeed for the outgoing administration's foreign policy in general, one grand failure does stand out: in energy. The global pattern of the production and consumption of oil, leading to massive transfers of wealth to oil-exporting countries, has created or aggravated virtually every problem American foreign policy confronts. It funds terrorism and the global spread of the Wahhabist form of Islam. It props up the anti-American regime in Iran, as well as the rule of Vladimir Putin in Russia and Hugo Chavez in Venezuela. It worsens the American current account deficit and global warming.



The key to alleviating all these problems is to lower the world's consumption of oil. That in turn requires higher prices for gasoline, which would promote both conservation and substitution. The Europeans and the Japanese have done their part by imposing high taxes on gasoline. The United States has not. Here the Bush administration has done badly, but its would-be successors offer no improvement. Both candidates have promised the American public lower gasoline prices, which is the opposite of what is needed.



[3]Mark N. Katz :: Perhaps the best way to assess President George W. Bush's legacy in the Middle East is by measuring it against the standard that he himself set in his November 6, 2003 speech marking the 20th anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy.

On that occasion, President Bush stated:

Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe—because in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty. As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export. And with the spread of weapons that can bring catastrophic harm to our country and to our friends, it would be reckless to accept the status quo.

Therefore, the United States has adopted a new policy, a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East. This strategy requires the same persistence and energy and idealism we have shown before. And it will yield the same results. As in Europe, as in Asia, as in every region of the world, the advance of freedom leads to peace.

Nearly five years later when he is about to leave office, it is easy to point out where President Bush's Middle East policy has fallen short. The United States has fostered democracy in Iraq, but it is extremely fragile. There is reason to doubt whether it could survive the withdrawal—or even the reduction—of American armed forces. Afghanistan appears to be a democracy in name only despite the continued presence of American and NATO troops. The Bush administration's hopes for progress toward democratization in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the Palestinian territories, and elsewhere in the Arab world have not been fulfilled. Pakistan may have become more democratic, but it certainly does not appear to have become more peaceful or willing to cooperate with the United States vis-à-vis the Taliban.

Many will conclude, then, that President Bush's foreign policy in the Middle East has failed. Such a conclusion, however, might be premature. President Bush himself has frequently claimed that despite those who assess his Middle East policy as a failure now, history will vindicate him. He may be right.

President Woodrow Wilson's vision of a peaceful, democratic Europe appeared overly optimistic and naïve not just in the immediate aftermath of World War I, but for decades afterward. Yet ninety years after the November 11, 1918 armistice, his vision has largely been fulfilled in Europe.

Why did this happen? Two key components were 1) the spread of democratic values first in Western and later in Eastern Europe, and 2) America's commitment to supporting West European democracies after World War II (though not after World War I) and East European democracies after the Cold War.

The main problem with Bush's support for democratization in the greater Middle East was that demand for it in the region has been weak. But the demand for democratization was also weak in much of Europe after World War I—especially after the onset of the Great Depression. This, however, did not prevent the demand for democratization from growing in Europe later. And American support was crucial for transforming this demand into actual democracy first in Western and later in Eastern Europe.

The demand for democratization may be weak in the greater Middle East now, but Europe's experience suggests that this need not prevent it from developing later. If and when the demand for democratization does grow in the Middle East, American support will also be crucial for transforming it into actual democracy. But for this to happen, a future American president must first be willing to acknowledge that it can happen, as President Bush was.

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[4]Michael Horowitz :: Is the United States better off in the Middle East now than it was eight years ago? We probably will not know the real answer for quite a while. Though the short-term implications of policy choices often reveal themselves fairly quickly, the long-term implications often escape easy analysis. It is through the actions of the next administration that we will find out about the Bush legacy in the Middle East from an American policy perspective; once in power and away from the rhetoric of the campaign trail, what they choose to continue, what they choose to discard, and how things turn out. The United States, along with other states, has set in motion a series of events in the Middle East that could end with vast improvements in regional security and the welfare of the people of the Middle East. However, that same series of events could easily lead to a set of outcomes that destabilize the region and fail to improve the welfare of the people of the Middle East.

Evaluating the short term, the answer is decidedly mixed. On the plus side, the Bush administration helped the Iraqi people rid themselves of a brutal despot: Saddam Hussein. For that they should always get credit. However, it does not take a trained strategist or brilliant military mind to recognize that things in Iraq did not go as planned.

On Iran, eight years ago the Iranian regime was pursuing nuclear weapons and the United States had to choose between dealing with the regime, pursuing a containment strategy, or taking more aggressive action. It seemed like some progress had been made in the later few years of the Clinton administration in improving U.S.-Iranian relations and that the people of Iran might be ready for a thaw. Back-channel communication apparently continued in the early days of the Bush administration, but then halted. Eight years later, the United States faces the same choices it did in 2001, while in the interim Iran has made more progress towards a nuclear bomb.

(I will leave it to people far more expert than me to comment on the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.)

What about the status of the region as a whole? Data from the Polity IV dataset, a popular political science dataset measuring the characteristics of individual regimes, suggests that the Middle East remains one of the most fragile regions in the world. Many states in the region have fragility "scores" at the medium or high levels, indicating significant regime instability. Yet this was also true before the Bush administration ever took office. At the end of the day, perhaps the greatest feeling is that of a missed opportunity. It seemed like great progress in the region was possible, yet great progress was not made. Perhaps that merely indicates the short attention span of Americans, but it also suggests that we will be

debating the legacy of the Bush administration in the Middle East for years to come.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/the\\_bush\\_legacy\\_1/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/the_bush_legacy_1/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_mandelbaum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_mandelbaum/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_n\\_katz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_n_katz/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_horowitz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_horowitz/)

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### The Bush legacy (3) (2008-10-23 02:00)



As the presidency of George W. Bush draws to a close, MESH members have been asked to assess his legacy. What did the Bush administration do right and do wrong in the Middle East? What is the proper yardstick: Administration rhetoric or the range of the possible? Finally, as the pollsters put it, are we better or worse off in the Middle East than we were eight years ago?

MESH members' answers are appearing in installments throughout the week. Today's responses come from Robert O. Freedman, Hillel Fradkin, and Alan Dowty. (Click [1]here for Tuesday's installment, and [2]here for yesterday's.)



[3]Robert O. Freedman :: The main blunder of the Bush administration was switching from the war in Afghanistan to Iraq before the war in Afghanistan had been successfully completed. Making matters worse, there was no serious "after action" plan for U.S. policy after Baghdad fell, and there were not enough U.S. troops to deal with the insurgency that followed. Further exacerbating the situation was the decision to dissolve the Iraqi army, which freed up a number of the soldiers to participate in the insurgency.

The administration's second major mistake, and one related to the first, was not taking strong action against Iran as it moved toward acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. While there was a good bit of rhetoric, the administration proved unwilling to use force, and as the United States got increasingly bogged down first in Iraq and then in Afghanistan the possibility of using force diminished, especially after Robert Gates replaced Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense.

If Iraq and Iran can be described as a series of blunders for the Bush administration, its policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict cannot be seen as a major failure. This is because the U.S. inability to achieve a major breakthrough in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be attributed more to a lack of a desire of the parties involved, especially the Palestinians, than to errors by the Bush administration, although the administration was not without its mistakes.

On no fewer than three separate occasions the Bush administration made a major effort to bring about an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. The first two—the Zinni missions of 2001 and 2002 and the Road Map of 2003—failed because they were sabotaged by acts of Palestinian terrorism. The third effort, after the death of Arafat in 2004 and the establishment of the Abbas-led Palestinian Authority, failed for

a number of reasons. The first was that Abbas was just too weak to crack down on Hamas, and in the absence of such a crackdown, the Israeli governments of Sharon and Olmert were not willing to seriously deal with him. The second mistake was the American insistence, as a result of its ill-fated democratization program, on the participation by Hamas in the January 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections, that resulted in a Hamas election victory and an at least partial international legitimization of the terrorist organization. The third mistake was that the United States did not seriously pressure Israel to dissolve its illegal settlement outposts, whose expansion exacerbated Palestinian anger against Israel.

One might also fault the Bush administration for not being more supportive of Israeli efforts under Ehud Olmert to engage Syria in peace talks. The potential payoffs of such an engagement—drawing Syria away from Iran and cutting Syrian support to Hamas and Hezbollah—were sufficiently large as to warrant an American effort to facilitate, if not mediate, the Syrian-Israeli talks.

In sum, as future historians write about the Bush administration, the Middle East will be seen as one of its major areas of policy failure, although more because of Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan than because of an inability to achieve an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement.



[4]Hillel Fradkin :: It is always difficult to assess the foreign affairs legacy of a presidency so close to its end. It is even more so in the case of President Bush and the Greater Middle East. This is because it has involved so many dramatic changes from past American policy and involved so many actions which are still ongoing and whose ultimate consequences are so difficult to see. These include the general war on terror and the struggle with radical Islam; the particular wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and now, in a manner of speaking, Pakistan; and the struggle with Iran over its nuclear weapons program and much else.

Two other things further complicate matters. First is the fact that although the Bush policy and actions began with a view to protecting American security and interests as relatively narrowly defined, they acquired another and different objective known as the "Freedom Agenda." Second is the new and unpredictable dynamic within the region itself, which was set in motion by American action but of course is not simply controlled by American action.

One way to approach the issue is by starting from the perspective provided by the Gulf region. This has become ever more central to our concerns and ever more the locus of our actions. Here one may appropriately observe that this region has been more or less in permanent crisis for 30 years beginning with the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and continuing through the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, the first Gulf War of 1991, the decline of the Iraqi inspection regime and the emergence to light of the Iranian nuclear program. Almost inevitably it was further exacerbated by the consequences of the Afghan jihad and in particular the rise of Al Qaeda.

The Bush policy has had the effect of removing one of the two most dangerous actors—Saddam Hussein—from the scene. However, and as many have observed, it has had the consequence of enhancing the potential danger from the Iranian quarter. However, now that Iraq is moving in a more positive direction, the Iranian impact may be diminished. This is true even if Iraq does not have a fully representative government. For the interests of Iraq and Iran's respective rulers will almost certainly diverge. This alas is subject to the important proviso that Iran not acquire nuclear weapons, which will give Iran added leverage in Iraq as elsewhere. As the Bush policy has accomplished very little in that regard, its legacy in this area is

still very mixed. The one additional positive note has been Bush's determination to see Iraq through. This has—for the time being—prevented a wholesale stampede of frightened allies into the arms of Iran.

At the moment, there is a new and improved coordination of American and Pakistani policy with regard to Al Qaeda and the Taliban. One may hope that if it continues, then in combination with the thrashing that was administered to Al Qaeda in Iraq over the past year and a half, it will have dealt a very heavy blow to Jihadi Islamism. However, this coordination is still too new to lead to firm expectations, and for now the results are mixed.

So too is the record of the "Freedom Agenda," if judged by its own standard. As noted earlier, Iraq may still prove to be a partial success in that respect, and may outweigh its failures. But failures there have been. The most important was the failure to come to the assistance of the democracy movement in Lebanon, with the result that the position of Hezbollah has been enhanced. This failure was partially the result of the misguided attempt to invest energy and resources into the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

Overall, the net result is that the United States still has not found policies to address the threat of Iran and its allies and proxies.



[5]Alan Dowty :: In the long sweep of history, George W. Bush's legacy—generally, let alone in foreign policy or the Middle East specifically—will be read in the shadow of 9/11. Impending calamity, as Samuel Johnson said in another context, wonderfully concentrates the mind. Accordingly, observers in the distant future will unfailingly note that the Bush administration did not apprehend the top perpetrators of this crime, and that at the end of their term in office Al Qaeda, its Taliban allies, and other Islamic extremists were enjoying a resurgence of sorts.

The intervention in Afghanistan attracted international support and dealt a hard blow to the extremists. But the administration then turned its attention to Iraq, a move that history will probably judge, in the kindest terms, as a diversion. Ridding the Middle East of Saddam Hussein was welcome to many within and outside Iraq, but its linkage to the main U.S. interest in the region—weakening Islamic extremist movements—was unproved at the time and appears to be negative in the sequel. The overall impact on U.S. interests will depend on what comes in place of Saddam; if the outcome is civil war in Iraq or a Shiite-dominated regime dependent on Iran, it would be hard to claim that there is a gain to U.S. interests commensurate with the costs, not just in immediate terms but also in prestige, political leverage, and instability.

Perhaps the most consequential of these costs is the geostrategic gain for Iran, which now profits not only from Iraq's weakness but also from an enormous increase in oil revenues—reflecting lack of action on the critical issue of world dependence on Middle Eastern oil. And having not chosen clearly either a conciliatory or a totally confrontational approach to Iran's nuclear weapons program, the administration finds itself facing renewed hostility from an Iranian extremist regime that is eight years closer to the bomb.

In the Arab-Israeli arena, Bush came to power in the aftermath of the Camp David/Taba collapse and the onset of the second intifada. Concluding that too much activism was counter-productive, the administration proceeded in a manner that seemed designed too show that too much passivity could be just as futile. Given the lack of a credible Palestinian negotiating partner, it is quite arguable that there was,

in fact, no real point in pursuing a comprehensive negotiated Israeli-Palestinian settlement at that time. It must, however, also be pointed out that the victory of Hamas in Palestinian elections and its takeover of Gaza happened on this watch. And it is legitimate to question whether the prospects for Syrian-Israel negotiations, a favorite of many observant strategists, were pursued as they might have been.

So with a more powerful and potentially nuclear-armed Iran, Hamas in control of the Gaza Strip and powerful in the West Bank, Hezbollah now with veto power in Lebanon, with Osama bin Laden still on the loose and Islamic extremism on the rise on several fronts, and with Iraq still as a large question mark, are we better or worse off in the Middle East than eight years ago? It's hard to see how or where we are better off.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/the\\_bush\\_legacy\\_1/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/the_bush_legacy_1/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/the\\_bush\\_legacy\\_2/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/the_bush_legacy_2/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/hillel\\_fradkin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/hillel_fradkin/)
5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)

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### The Bush legacy (4) (2008-10-24 02:00)



As the presidency of George W. Bush draws to a close, MESH members have been asked to assess his legacy. What did the Bush administration do right and do wrong in the Middle East? What is the proper yardstick: Administration rhetoric or the range of the possible? Finally, as the pollsters put it, are we better or worse off in the Middle East than we were eight years ago?

MESH members' answers have appeared in installments throughout the week ([1]Tuesday, [2]Wednesday, and [3]yesterday). Today's responses, the last in the series, come from Steven A. Cook, Mark T. Clark, and Jon Alterman.



[4]Steven A. Cook:: George Bush's Middle East report card:

Effort: B

Willingness to Listen: F

Cognitive Issues: F

Grasp of Abstract Issues: F

Recognition of Complex Problems: F

Group Interaction: D

Overall Grade: D-  
Comments:

George and his friends have demonstrated strong views about the Middle East, but precious little grasp of the region's history, politics, and culture. While the President et al. have made a strong effort, their unwillingness to listen and insistence that their views were superior to all others accentuated their knowledge deficit. As a result, not only have they not achieved their goals in the region (democracy in Iraq, a Palestinian state living side by side in peace with Israel, OBL "dead or alive," the end of the Asad regime in Syria, Egypt leading the region in freedom, ending the U.S. addiction to oil, draining the swamp of extremists, getting Hezbollah to "stop this s\*\*\*," and disarming Iran), but in most cases Washington's approach has produced precisely the opposite of the desired effect.

Many of George's friends argue that things are better in Iraq these days. This is certainly true, but nobody is quite sure what will happen in Iraq. There are still a variety of issues that can undermine the progress of the last year. In addition, George's grade suffered because he was unable to think through the consequences of his actions. The invasion of Iraq did get rid of an awful regime that was a menace to the region, but created an opportunity for another awful regime to be even more of a menace to the region.

I have to give some credit to the President for speaking out forcefully about democracy and freedom in the Arab world. A lot of people there did not like it (at least publicly), but it did have a salutary effect on the dominant discourse in the region. Arab leaders have had a very hard time changing the subject from reform and political transformation since the "forward strategy of freedom" was articulated in November 2003.

Still, the rest of this effort to promote change was either poorly conceived (see Al-Hurra), or old ideas wrapped up with a new bow (see MEPI). The administration's diplomatic tin ear did not help (see Rice, Condoleezza "birth pangs of the new Middle East" or Hughes, Karen "Saudi women should drive, Middle East tour 2006"). Once again, deficits in grasping abstract issues, in group interaction, and in willingness to listen forced the administration to virtually abandon the freedom agenda once the situation in Iraq deteriorated and Islamists scored electoral gains in Egypt and Lebanon as well as a victory in Palestine. This resulted in a return of the state throughout the region, but particularly in Egypt. It turns out Cairo did not lead the region in freedom but rather repression, as the Mubarak regime used almost every coercive instrument at its disposal to undermine, intimidate, and destroy its opponents.

George does not generally avoid conflict, but he exhibited a demonstrable unwillingness to deal with the Arab-Israeli problem. He did get involved from time to time, but only reluctantly and for reasons that often had little to do with finding a resolution to the conflict. Moreover, when the President did get involved, he failed to grasp the complexities of the issue, resulting in cavalier commitments about the establishment of a Palestinian state by the end of his term. Indeed, while actively discouraging Israel from exploring peace talks with Syria, the administration's problem with abstract issues resulted in the belief that negotiations between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas—two weak and wounded leaders—held "special promise."

I am afraid that despite a lot of effort, exorbitant resources, and a not insignificant amount of blood, Middle East policy over the last seven and one-half years is a D-.



[5]Mark T. Clark :: On the broadest level, I agree with John Lewis Gaddis's assessment of what may become George W. Bush's legacy in an article found [6]here. Comparing previous presidential legacies, he points out that many of the arguments that now rage over Bush's policies will, as with the majority of policies of previous presidents, fade into the background.

Importantly, though, Gaddis believes that in Bush's "Second inaugural" the president laid out a vision—a transformation, if you will—of the U.S. approach to international politics regarding the promotion of democracy in the world, including the Middle East. He proposed promoting democracy with the "ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world." Gaddis adds:

If the Bush Doctrine was meant in that sense—if ending tyranny is now to be the objective of the United States in world affairs—then this would amount to a course correction away from the 20th-century idea of promoting democracy as a solution for all the world's problems, and back toward an older concept of seeking to liberate people so they can solve their own problems. It could be a navigational beacon for the future that reflects more accurately where we started and who we've been.

I believe Bush will have a second, narrower legacy as well, one that will serve U.S. interests in the future. In the proving grounds of the Middle East and Southwest Asia, Bush has restored the belief that the United States can fight and win an insurgency. We could win a conventional conflict, as in Iraq in 1991, but after Vietnam, it became conventional wisdom that insurgencies were virtually impossible to win. Lebanon in 1983 and Somali in 1993 only confirmed that view. The rapid defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan after 9/11 began to change that perspective. That war, of course, is not yet finished, but there are signs that it may settle soon.

Iraq, however, may come to cement this view. The initial success of rapidly defeating Saddam's ragged army was overtaken by the unexpected insurgency, fueled by sectarian strife and outside support. Despite mounting problems, Bush insisted on pursuing the "surge" against opposition by many of his generals and members of Congress. The surge restored the fundamentally important element in a new, stable government: security for its citizens.

In other areas of the Middle East, he will have a mixed legacy. It will be unaffected by the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. If it was difficult to get resolution with the Palestinian Authority, it became impossible with a government split between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas. The one stain on his legacy in the Middle East may be the Iranian nuclear program. Giving Europe the lead to negotiate with Iran failed to net any gains. And, as the Europeans are learning, the Iranians are not serious about a diplomatic solution. They want a nuclear weapons program. Anything short of military intervention may never have worked. But given the administration's preoccupation with Afghanistan and Iraq, it had no serious cards to play against the Iranians.

Excepting the last point, we are better off than we were eight years ago.



[7]Jon Alterman :: The United States is far worse off in the Middle East than it was eight



years ago. There is an easy way to tell this is so: those whom the Bush administration has most avidly sought to weaken and isolate are stronger than they were, while the United States and the secular liberals that the Bush administration sought to nurture are weaker.

While the world does not miss Saddam Hussein, the governments of Iran and Syria did not cower after his fall. To the contrary, by acts of omission and commission they helped deepen Iraq's agony despite the presence of more than 100,000 U.S. troops intended in part to intimidate them. Their allies, Hezbollah and Hamas, have also seen their fortunes rise, despite U.S. insistence on their isolation. Hezbollah's influence in Lebanon has increased, and it now has veto power over the government. Hamas not only won an election that the Bush administration pressed forward, but it now controls territory of its own.

Although the Bush administration denied it vehemently at the time, the invasion of Iraq was always a roll of the dice, and a trillion dollars in, it remains unclear how those dice will land. Given the intelligence information available in 2002-2003, one could make a plausible argument for going in, but it is impossible to either justify or excuse the rank incompetence that characterized the first years of the occupation (which, in the best-case-scenario reasoning that underlay the military planning, was only supposed to last 90 days). Driven by hubris and a belief that with the events of September 11, "everything had changed," officials were selected for loyalty over experience, with predictable results. Saddam's fetish of loyalty had destroyed Iraq the first time; the Bush administration's fetish of loyalty helped destroy it a second.

Bloodied in Iraq, the United States has far less pull in the region than it had a decade ago. In the Gulf, friendly governments actively undermine the Bush administration's policy and engage in energetic diplomacy among Palestinians and Lebanese to make up for the administration's shortfall. While these governments remain reliant on U.S. arms, they actively seek to balance U.S. influence with that of other outside powers such as France and China, and they seek to assuage the Iranians out of fear that the United States cannot protect them.

The bright spot is that there has been a good deal of progress on counterterrorism, especially in the last several years. A series of attacks within the Arab world persuaded governments that the problem is not merely a Western one, and their security services are both better prepared and better informed than a decade ago. Their newfound skills have helped decrease the number of attacks against civilian targets around the globe, and deeper intelligence cooperation has helped protect U.S. civilian lives.

Yet, much of the progress in counterterrorism has come at a cost. In 2003, the Bush administration appeared convinced that the brutality and ineptitude of Middle Eastern governments were principal drivers of terrorism; by 2007, it was clear that regional governments were the U.S. government's chief allies. The U.S. government went suddenly from seeking to reform the status quo to zealously supporting it, and abruptly abandoned a wide range of opposition figures who had taken risks out of confidence in U.S. backing.

While there have been a series of U.S. missteps in the region, what has not happened is as important as what has. After the death of Yasser Arafat, the United States had an unprecedented opportunity to move forward on Arab-Israeli peace issues. A new Palestinian president came into office with broad support and legitimacy, and a record of speaking hard truths to Palestinians in Arabic. Yet, the opportunity to build up Mahmoud Abbas as a credible peacemaker was lost, in part out of an ambition ceaselessly to wring yet one more concession out of him.

The setbacks that the United States has suffered in the Middle East are reversible, but it will take years of effort to bring the United States back to the same level of regional influence enjoyed in 2000. The Bush administration has little of which to be proud.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/the\\_bush\\_legacy\\_1/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/the_bush_legacy_1/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/the\\_bush\\_legacy\\_2/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/the_bush_legacy_2/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/the\\_bush\\_legacy\\_3/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/the_bush_legacy_3/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven\\_a\\_cook/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven_a_cook/)
5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_t\\_clark/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_t_clark/)
6. <http://www.the-american-interest.com/ai2/article.cfm?Id=459&Mid=21>
7. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon\\_alterman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon_alterman/)

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## Saudi angle on U.S. elections (2008-10-30 01:00)

From [1]Bernard Haykel



The Saudis have been remarkably tight-lipped about the U.S. presidential election and about whom they favor among the candidates. Their reticence can be explained, in part, by their bewilderment at the choice.

They don't know what to think of the real possibility that a young and charismatic black candidate might win. Senator Obama represents the joker in the deck, although they also have a sense that in terms of the pillars of U.S. policy in the Middle East (i.e., oil security and Israel's security) little will change regardless of the election's outcome. In other words, they feel the regime's survival is assured because of the importance of oil.

Historically, the Saudis have favored Republicans for the following reasons: 1) a shared social and economic conservatism and a visceral anti-Communism; 2) the closer ties that Republicans are thought to have to the oil companies and the weapons industry, which represent the two domestic constituencies of, and therefore lobbyists for, the Saudi government in the U.S. political system; and 3) a highly personal (anti-institutional) form of political engagement in foreign affairs, especially in the Middle East. The Saudis like the current President Bush on a personal level, and he appears to relish the all-male gatherings in Saudi Arabia, as can be seen during his last trip to Riyadh in January.

The royal family's objection to G.W. Bush's policies have to do with what they perceive to be his impulsive and rash behavior as well as his high-stakes style in foreign policy. On the whole, the Saudis were not in favor of the invasion of Iraq because they were worried of the instability that this would create in the region. The Saudis are, if anything, conservative and don't like to gamble their survival on military campaigns unless these are absolutely necessary, as in the 1991 Gulf war against the Iraqi invader of Kuwait. Instead, they prefer other means, which include financial inducements and fighting through proxies (e.g., Lebanon today).

Based on all the above, I would guess that the Saudis would prefer if McCain were to win. Furthermore, there are indications that they have a strong dislike to Senator Biden, primarily because of his [2]public criticism

of the Saudi royal family, its religious policies, and the very form of rule it represents. The Saudis have been relatively discreet about this animus towards Biden, and when it has surfaced, as in an editorial article by Jamal Khashoggi in Al-Watan newspaper earlier this year, it has criticized Biden for his plan to divide Iraq into three parts. I believe the Saudis feel that they can proceed with business-as-usual with McCain but not with Biden, who is, paradoxically perhaps, more ideological when it comes to reforming Saudi Arabia's regime.

Whatever the outcome of the U.S. election, the Saudis are sitting on a large pile of cash which is the result of record-high prices for oil and they can easily balance their budgets as long as the price remains roughly at or above the \$50 mark per barrel. They are secure in the short term and confident that their people don't want to see an Iraq-like scenario envelop the Kingdom.

The more imaginative among the Saudis think that they can reinvigorate their relationship and alliance with the United States on the basis of the excess capacity Saudi Arabia enjoys in terms of oil production. What this means is that the Saudis today have a significant power over the downward price of oil because they can increase supply of this product at will, and the demand is no longer there to suck up all the world's production. Unlike the Saudis, the Iranians and the Russians cannot balance their budgets if the price is anywhere below the \$70s to \$90s per barrel range. The Saudis therefore have the means, but not necessarily the will, to punish the Iranians and Russians, and this is a fact that should not escape any new administration in the White House. The luck of the House of Saud never seems to run out.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bernard\\_haykel/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bernard_haykel/)
2. <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/episodes/the-saudi-question/interview-senator-joseph-r-biden/2842/>

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Thomas W. Lippman (2008-10-31 14:48:23)

First, one correction: President Bush's last trip to Riyadh was in May, not January as Bernard Haykel's [1]piece says. Overall, I agree with some of this and disagree with some of it. I think it's true in general that the Saudis have been more comfortable with Republicans, although they were very warm toward Jimmy Carter when he went there in 1978 because of his outreach to the Palestinians. But when I talked to Saudis about this during a visit in June, I basically heard the same thing from all of them: Please, just let us get to January without another stupid catastrophe and then we'll worry about it. They opposed the invasion (and "illegal occupation," as King Abdullah called it) of Iraq and they were afraid Bush was going to bomb Iran. In addition they had differences with the Bush administration over policy toward Hamas, support for a Shi'a government in Iraq, and U.S. criticism of the "Qatif Girl" rape case. But that hasn't stopped them from proceeding with bilateral agreements such as the nuclear cooperation deal that Bush signed when he was last there. As for the next president, Arabs as a group seem to be fascinated by Obama. They know there isn't going to be any basic change in U.S. policy toward Israel, but given the Saudis' desire to avoid armed conflict with Iran, I think they'll be happy to live with an Obama victory. [2]Thomas W. Lippman is adjunct scholar at the Middle East Institute in Washington, and the author of [3]Inside the Mirage: America's Fragile Partnership with Saudi Arabia.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/saudi\\_angle\\_on\\_us\\_elections/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/saudi_angle_on_us_elections/)
2. <http://www.mideasti.org/scholars/thomas-w-lippman>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0813343135/>

## U.S. strikes Al Qaeda in Syria (2008-10-31 00:31)

From [1]David Schenker



Earlier this week, U.S. helicopters killed a high-value Al Qaeda target in Syria. While the attack shocked some observers, the presence of Al Qaeda operatives on Syrian soil has surprised few. According to CENTCOM, since 2003 Syria has been the leading point of entry of insurgents—Al Qaeda and others—into Iraq. Damascus allowed these insurgents to establish training bases and facilitated their movement across Syrian territory, not only to Iraq, but to Lebanon and Jordan as well.

Predictably, Damascus condemned the strike as unprovoked U.S. aggression. One might have thought, given the Asad regime's documented ties with Al Qaeda, Baghdad would have had less of a problem with the U.S. cross-border raid. Yet Iraq—like North Korea and many Arab states—roundly condemned the operation.

In the days following the strike, there have been large government-sanctioned demonstrations in Syria protesting the U.S. military action. No doubt, popular outrage over the loss of innocent civilians is genuine. Seemingly lost on the protesters, however, was the fact that the target was Al Qaeda—which was widely believed to have been behind an early October car bomb that killed 17 in Damascus. Of course, this oversight is understandable: the Syrian government-controlled print media neglected to mention the Al Qaeda connection to the strike.

The Asad regime's response to the attack stands in stark contrast to its reaction to the September 2007 Israeli strike on Syria's nuclear weapons facility in Al Kibar. Relatively speaking, Israel's audacious raid hardly elicited a protest. Indeed, although Syria accused Washington as having been "party to the execution" of the Israeli attack, unlike this week, the United States did not have to close the embassy, nor did the Asad regime respond by shuttering the American School and cultural center in Damascus.

Many analysts both in the region and in Washington are saying that the strike was politically motivated, with some even speculating it was authorized by the few remaining "hawks" in the administration intent on rolling back the seemingly inevitable march toward U.S. diplomatic re-engagement with Syria. Given the Bush administration's long-standing policy of hot pursuit, however, this line of thinking seems rather conspiratorial. More likely, the decision to cross the border was made by commanders on the ground eager to take advantage of actionable intelligence on a high-value target.

In the short term, the strike may derail eleventh-hour Bush administration efforts to engage the Asad regime, but it is unlikely to have any lasting impact should either President Obama or McCain determine to initiate dialogue with Damascus. The U.S. strike will also have no bearing—as some have [2]argued—on whether Damascus will ultimately split from Tehran. Even the most ardent advocates for U.S. diplomatic re-engagement with Syria no longer believe this type of strategic reorientation is possible.

What's more, there is very little evidence to suggest a correlation between Washington's posture and Syrian behavior. Syrian behavior is not necessarily any more appealing—either domestically or in regard to its neighbors—when Washington takes a conciliatory tack.

Just compare events of this week to what happened in April 2007, shortly after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi traveled to Damascus for a cordial meeting with President Asad. The similarities in the headlines are uncanny. Days after the U.S. airstrike, the Asad regime sentenced twelve Syrian liberals to two and a half years in prison for signing the Damascus Declaration—including Riad Seif, who suffers from advanced prostate cancer. In 2007, judging from the pictures of Asad and Pelosi strolling and shopping in Suq al-Hamadiyah, conciliation was in the air. Yet days after Pelosi's departure, Asad sentenced six leading dissidents to harsh jail terms of three to twelve years.

Nearly five years after the invasion of Iraq, the fact that high-value, high-profile Al Qaeda figures continue to operate on the Syrian side of the border—even after Damascus dispatched an ambassador to Baghdad—should be instructive. If the past thirty years are any guide, regardless of what Washington does, Damascus will likely remain a problem. Whether Obama or McCain comes to the White House in January, it would be advisable for the next administration to diminish expectations of what diplomatic engagement with Damascus can achieve.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david\\_schenker/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david_schenker/)
2. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/oct/27/syria-usa>

## 2.11 November

### Strategic case for U.S.-Iran rapprochement (2008-11-03 23:20)

From [1]Mark N. Katz



The recent Russian intervention in Georgia has made an American rapprochement with Iran highly desirable both for the United States and for the West as a whole. Israel has long opposed such a rapprochement, but this would also serve its interests too. Here's why:

Europe has become increasingly dependent on Russia for natural gas supplies, and this dependence is only likely to increase. This would not be undesirable, except that Moscow has shown a proclivity for

cutting back or halting gas shipments to states with which it has disagreements. To prevent Russia from acquiring leverage over Europe through greater control over its gas imports, the United States and many European governments have sought alternative gas supplies from Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan through pipeline routes bypassing Russia.

Iran has enormous natural gas reserves. Iran could also serve as an alternative pipeline route for Azeri and Turkmen gas for transshipment through Turkey to reach Europe. But Iranian-American hostility has resulted in Washington acting to block American and discourage other Western investment in this Iranian gas pipeline option in favor of a route through the South Caucasus.

Continued Azeri-Armenian hostility over Nagorno-Karabakh, though, prevents pipelines being constructed from Azerbaijan through Armenia to Turkey. This has left Georgia as the sole available route for a gas pipeline from Azerbaijan (and possibly Turkmenistan) to Turkey and Europe that bypasses both Russia and Iran. (An oil pipeline is already carrying Azeri oil through Georgia to the Black Sea, while another carries it through Georgia all the way through Turkey to the Mediterranean.)

But Russia's successful intervention in Georgia casts doubt on whether Georgia can serve as an alternative to Russia as a pipeline route. The ease with which Russian forces took control of both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as pushed into Georgia proper, demonstrated how readily Moscow could disrupt pipelines through Georgia. There is also the possibility that Moscow could wait until a gas pipeline through Georgia is built, and then take over both the country and all pipelines through it. This would not just frustrate Europe's efforts to reduce dependence on Russia for gas, but actually increase it. Just the possibility that this could occur may prevent the proposed gas pipeline from Azerbaijan through Georgia to Turkey from being built.

How is Europe going to react to the problem of pipeline routes through Georgia being so vulnerable to disruption or takeover by Russia? Will Europe see dependence on Russia for its gas imports as inevitable and henceforward adjust its behavior so as not to antagonize Moscow? Or will Europe attempt to limit its dependence on Russia through seeking yet other suppliers and supply routes?

Past West European behavior suggests that Europe will do the latter. During the Cold War, when growing West European economies needed more gas but North Africa was seen as an unreliable supplier, Western Europe began to import gas from the Soviet Union. Further, it did this despite American objections at a time when Western Europe was dependent on the United States for protection against a possible Soviet attack.

Europe is now less dependent on the United States for security but increasingly dependent on the importation of gas. Europe, then, can be expected to do now what it did during the Cold War when it needed more gas and doubted the reliability of its existing suppliers: find alternative suppliers. Europe is now, in fact, attempting to increase its imports of gas via pipelines from North Africa as well as of liquefied natural gas (in both of which, by the way, Russia is trying to gain a stake).

Sooner or later, though, Europe is likely to seek to import gas from Iran, especially since: 1) the Iranians have already indicated their willingness to sell it to Europe; 2) Russia cannot interfere as easily in Iran as it can in Georgia; and 3) Iran can also serve as a transit route for gas from Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan.

As Western Europe's behavior with regard to gas imports from the Soviet Union during the Cold War demonstrated, Europe is likely to buy gas from Iran despite opposition from America (and, of course, Israel). If Europe is determined to buy Iranian gas, then the United States will face two choices: either

it can attempt to prevent Europe from doing so, or it can work with Europe by attempting to normalize Iranian-American relations.

Attempting to prevent Europe from buying Iranian gas is highly inadvisable since not only are such efforts likely to fail, but will only result in worsening European-American relations. Nor will doing this result in Iran moderating its behavior toward Israel, since it is doubtful that Europe is going to let Israeli opposition stand in the way of furthering its efforts to reduce dependence on Russia for gas. Further, an American effort to prevent Europe from buying Iranian gas would prevent the United States from being able to exploit the increasing differences between Russia and Iran that can be expected to emerge, especially if Tehran is willing to serve as a transit corridor for Azeri and Turkmen gas.

An Iranian-American rapprochement, by contrast, would help preserve European-American relations as well as allow the United States to benefit from the Russian-Iranian differences that would arise from this. But would Iran moderate its behavior toward Israel for the sake of rapprochement with the United States, especially if an Iranian-European rapprochement seems likely even if Iranian-American hostility remains?

There is reason to believe that it would. For while Europe can provide Iran with much needed cash, Europe is neither willing nor able to provide Iran with help on its security problems to the extent that America can. And Iran has some very serious security problems, including:

1. an increasingly active Sunni opposition inside Iran to the Shi'a government there;
2. the likelihood that a resurgent Taliban will renew its hostility toward Iran, which it actively pursued prior to 9/11;
3. the possible spillover into Iran from the renewed sectarian conflict in Iraq that may well result as the American presence there declines; and
4. the growing Russian hostility toward Iran that can be expected to result from Tehran competing with it as a gas exporter as well as pipeline route for Azeri and Turkmen gas.

Tehran has little incentive to change its behavior toward Israel if Iranian-American hostility continues at a time when American intervention in Iran appears highly unlikely. By contrast, the United States has a far better chance of moderating Iranian behavior toward Israel as a condition for providing Tehran with assistance against the very real threats Iran faces than if the United States remains hostile toward Iran.

Where America's interests lie, then, should be clear: Opposing European gas purchases from Iran will worsen European-American relations, give Russia further opportunity to exploit European-American differences, and do nothing to moderate Iranian behavior toward Israel. An American rapprochement with Iran, by contrast, would promote European-American cooperation, assist Europe in avoiding over-dependence on Russian gas and Russian-controlled pipelines from Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, and offer a better opportunity to moderate Iran's behavior toward Israel.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_n\\_katz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_n_katz/)

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## Surprise! No October surprise (2008-11-04 14:00)

From [1]Daniel Byman





Terrorism watchers [2]repeatedly [3]warned that Al Qaeda [4]might strike in the days leading up to election day yet, thankfully, we have reached November 4 without incident. Al Qaeda's logic for striking seems straightforward. An attack would dominate media coverage at a time when world (not just U.S.) attention is focused on the U.S. election. In a tight race, a terrorist attack might even tip the balance, enabling Osama bin Laden to claim that American politics dances to his tune. Experts point to Spain's elections in March 2003, when a terrorist attack (and the Aznar government's bungled handling of it) led to a surprise socialist victory, which in turn led to a government that withdrew troops from Iraq, as Al Qaeda had sought. Democratic electoral strategists in particular feared that an Al Qaeda attack might play to Senator McCain's perceived strength among voters in national security affairs and that Bin Laden would want to bolster McCain in the belief that he was more likely to entangle the United States militarily in the Muslim world.

Yet with the clarity of hindsight, we know that Al Qaeda did not strike. (Though, before we relax too much, several experts warned that the transition after an election is also a time of higher risk.) This is not because bin Laden lacks interest in an attack. As he knows, attacks on U.S. soil would be popular among his key constituents and would help him recruit and raise money. In addition, he genuinely believes that the United States is evil and deserves punishment.

I don't know why Al Qaeda did not strike, but there are several plausible explanations:

- Bin Laden has other fish to fry. Although Americans understandably focus on the threat Al Qaeda poses to the United States, from Bin Laden's point of view we are only one concern of many—even if we still are a favorite target of his rhetoric. Al Qaeda's primary day-to-day focus now is on events in Pakistan, where the organization is based, and Afghanistan, where it is helping support the massive insurgency that is battling the U.S.-backed Karzai government. As if this were not enough, Al Qaeda has ambitions in Iraq, the Maghreb, and Central Asia as well as against Israel. These theaters are important to Al Qaeda leaders, and many in the organization would prioritize them over attacks in the United States. Even if the United States remains the primary focus of the leaders of the Al Qaeda core, expanding operations in several of these theaters gives Al Qaeda opportunities to strike at America outside the U.S. homeland. Iraq and Afghanistan allows it to showcase one of its preferred methods: support for insurgents.
- Al Qaeda's operational capacity is limited. Al Qaeda has reestablished a base in tribal parts of Pakistan, and its operational capacity is growing when compared to the organization's dark days in 2002. Yet while Pakistan is an excellent haven, in many respects it is a tougher one than the Taliban's Afghanistan. From Pakistan Al Qaeda can still plot attacks, and its propaganda is prodigious. However, its leaders must also spend much of their time battling or bribing government forces, hiding from U.S. Predator strikes, or otherwise focusing on their daily survival.
- U.S. government efforts at home are paying off. The Department of Homeland Security is much-maligned, but at least it is trying to stop jihadists from entering the country. And trying counts. The



FBI has made numerous arrests on terrorism charges (often, we find out later, on quite thin grounds), suggesting that it is aggressive in going after any potential jihadist threat at home.

- Aggressive intelligence efforts abroad keep us safer at home. More important than strictly domestic efforts, U.S. intelligence is working with its counterparts around the world to disrupt the organization, making it harder for Al Qaeda to do sustained operations. Remember, the 9/11 attack involved not only the United States and Afghanistan, but also Germany, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and other countries. Such a global plot would be far more difficult to orchestrate today. Senior leaders would be more likely to be killed, and junior operatives would be more likely to be arrested.
- Al Qaeda wants to outdo 9/11. Bin Laden does not think small, and he consistently seeks terrorism "spectaculars" against the United States (for example, the plot to bomb transatlantic flights from the United Kingdom, which was foiled in the summer of 2006). A spectacular attack might inflict mass casualties like 9/11, or it might involve a lower casualty but novel method, such as chemical weapons. This ambition may dissuade Bin Laden from a low-level strike before the election, as he wants to save his powder for a time when he can inflict the maximum damage.
- There is no "Al Qaeda of the United States." Even if the United States were not more aggressive at home and abroad, Al Qaeda's ability to operate in the United States is limited. In contrast to Britain, Egypt, France, Saudi Arabia, Spain and many other countries, the United States does not have a significant domestic jihadist network within its borders. Government prosecution efforts reveal that many arrested plotters were incompetent dreamers who had little or no ties to the Al Qaeda core, in contrast to their counterparts in Europe and the Arab world. Infiltrators Bin Laden sends to the United States would find it hard to gain local assistance as they prepare for an attack. The few radicalized American Muslims might still attack in Al Qaeda's name, but the likelihood is far lower than in many other countries, and the skill level of the attackers would probably be limited, making a 9/11-scale operation particularly unlikely, which (as noted above) is probably one of Bin Laden's goals for operations in the United States.

Taken together (and these must be, as several of these explanations overlap), these are plausible reasons for why Al Qaeda did not strike the United States despite the publicity that would surround an attack near the election.

Making it safely past election day suggests two somewhat contradictory lessons. First, Al Qaeda does not always, or even often, strike according to our calendar. There are regular predictions about attacks during elections, New Year's Day, the Super Bowl, and other events that concentrate the media. I suspect that, someday, one of these predictions will eventually turn out to be right. That means we should prepare for strikes, but at the same time there is no need to panic before each celebration. Second, several of the above explanations depend on aggressive U.S. efforts at home and abroad and at least one (operational capacity) is turning in Al Qaeda's favor with the development of a haven in Pakistan. So success depends in part on remaining aggressive, not just congratulating ourselves on making it past another milestone.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel\\_byman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel_byman/)
2. <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/news-events/news/commentary/beware-october-surprise>
3. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/08/AR2008080802947.html>
4. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/us\\_elections\\_2008/7684782.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/us_elections_2008/7684782.stm)

Reuven Paz (2008-11-06 04:30:19)

The [1]analysis of Daniel Byman correctly identifies the possible reasons for the absence of an "October surprise" by Al Qaeda. But there is a bigger question: is there any foundation for the solid belief of U.S. officials and academic researchers, in addition to "experts" and "terrorism watchers," that Al Qaeda is planning an attack on U.S. soil? This question is salient without reference to any particular date. There was nothing special about 9/11; it was chosen because Al Qaeda had completed its operational preparations. The calendar of Osama bin Laden or of any of his associates—operatives or groups—is different, and is based upon the potential effectiveness of the attack. 9/11 took place and was planned when the Bush administration started talking about attacking Saddam's Iraq. Bin Laden saw it as the best opportunity to drag the United States into a battlefield in the heart of the Arab world, and try to defeat or weaken American power. Byman writes: "This is not because bin Laden lacks interest in an attack. As he knows, attacks on U.S. soil would be popular among his key constituents and would help him recruit and raise money. In addition, he genuinely believes that the United States is evil and deserves punishment." But bin Laden does not merely seek revenge. Al Qaeda seeks symmetry with its enemies, which is easier to achieve in its own local arenas. In these arenas, Al Qaeda and its affiliated groups are very much on the march. Their popularity and ability to recruit support owe more to fighting Arab or Muslim dictatorships, than to killing American in the United States. The present priority is to shake the local regimes in the Arab world, in addition to Somalia (as well as Kenya, perhaps), Afghanistan and, in the past year, Pakistan. Bruce Riedel ends his [2]comment by saying: "Al Qaeda may calculate it needs to do something different this time around." That something is most likely escalation of its efforts in the Middle East and South Asia. The United States might respond by escalating its attacks against these insurgents in return, as it recently did in Syria. But this will only add to Al Qaeda's popularity. A more effective strategy for fighting Al Qaeda and the other Jihadis would be pushing through real changes and reforms in the Arab world, especially in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Morocco. [3]Reuven Paz is diirector of the Project for Research of Islamic Movements (PRISM), the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya (Israel).

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/11/surprise\\_no\\_october\\_surprise/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/11/surprise_no_october_surprise/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/11/surprise\\_no\\_october\\_surprise/#comment-1259](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/11/surprise_no_october_surprise/#comment-1259)
3. <http://www.e-prism.org/>

Bruce Riedel (2008-11-04 15:21:15)

I very much agree with Dan Byman's excellent [1]analysis, especially his points about Al Qaeda's desire to outdo 9/11 and the lack of an American base. I would only offer two other points to bear in mind. First, we did see at least one and perhaps two major Al Qaeda attacks on American targets in the run up to our elections. On September 17, the U.S. embassy in San'a, Yemen was attacked by an Al Qaeda terrorist squad with the apparent goal of breaking into the Embassy and killing or capturing American diplomats. If not for the effectiveness of the local guard force, we might have witnessed a very bloody episode with significant American casualties. The Yemeni government has blamed the attack on the Al Qaeda franchise in Yemen and said some of the attackers had fought with al Qaeda in Iraq. This was the first Al Qaeda attack on an American embassy since the East Africa bombings ten years ago. On September 20, the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad was blown up by a suicide bomber probably from either Al Qaeda or one of its local Pakistani allies. While the Marriott was a target for a number of reasons—including possibly because the terrorists thought the Pakistani president might be there that night—it is also a prominent symbol of America in the capital of Pakistan and frequently has senior American officials as guests. So while we thankfully were spared an October attack on the U.S. homeland, Al Qaeda did attempt two very significant attacks on American targets in late September. Second, I also agree with Dan's observation that the transition period or the early days of a new administration may be a more lucrative target for Al Qaeda. Having played the election eve message card in 2004 when it put out an Osama bin Laden message on the eve of the vote, Al Qaeda may calculate it needs to do something different this time around. [2]Bruce Riedel is a senior fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/11/surprise\\_no\\_october\\_surprise/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/11/surprise_no_october_surprise/)
2. <http://www.brookings.edu/media/NewsReleases/2006/20061110.aspx>

### 'Between Terror and Martyrdom' (2008-11-07 01:13)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Gilles Kepel is Professor and Chair

of Middle East Studies at the Institute of Political Studies in Paris. His new book is *Beyond Terror and Martyrdom: The Future of the Middle East*.

From [1]Gilles Kepel



[2] *Beyond Terror and Martyrdom* is the English-language revised and updated version of *Terreur et Martyre: Relever le défi de civilisation*, which came out in French in the spring of 2008. That book is the third part of a trilogy that began with *Jihad* (French 2000, English 2001) and continued with *Fitna* (2004, English as *The War for Muslim Minds*)—all three published in English by Harvard University Press. The trilogy is an attempt to decipher the present state of the Middle East in its relation to the globalized world, through the lenses of its Islamist movements. *Jihad* dealt with a broader historical perspective, tracing the beginnings of radical Islamist ideology back to the mid-1960s with the seminal works of Sayyid Qutb, and questioning the rise and shortcomings of Islamist movements up to 2000. The latter two books dealt with a much shorter span: 2001 to 2004 for *Fitna*; the period from 2004 to the present for *Beyond Terror and Martyrdom*. (Click [3]here for more on the trilogy, and other books mentioned below.)

When 9/11 occurred, *Jihad* was widely mocked: if, as the author had explained, radical Islamist movements had failed politically, how were they able to organize an attack of the magnitude of the *ghazwatayn mubarakatayn* (“two blessed raids”) on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon? He surely had underestimated the “Islamist peril,” probably for politically correct reasons, and was no longer worthy of any academic standing. Some demanded that he be fired from his university job—but (hamdullah) the poor guy had tenure. This was not easy to swallow, and I tried to respond with a short and ironical travelogue, *Chronique d’une guerre d’Orient* (English as *Bad Moon Rising*, Saqi, UK, both 2002).

But none other than Ayman al-Zawahiri finally came to my rescue, with his *Fursan taht rayat an-nabi* (“Knights under the Prophet’s Banner”), where the number-one ideologue of Al Qaeda explained that 9/11 was but an attempt to reverse the failure of the 1990s, when Islamist radicals couldn’t mobilize the masses. Attacking the “faraway enemy” was the true means to show that the United States was a giant with feet of clay. The masses, too afraid to respond to the call of the Islamist radicals in Algeria, Egypt, Bosnia, Chechnya, Kashmir, etc. would now stop being afraid and mobilize against their “apostate” regimes.

But 9/11 paved the way instead to the American-led “War on Terror” and the invasion of Iraq. Bin Laden & Co. saw it as their golden opportunity for a global jihad-win-all against impious invaders of the abode of Islam, something they were sure would re-enact, on Arab land, the Afghan jihad of the 1980s against the Red Army. (That had proved in retrospect to have been the cradle of Salafi-Jihadism, the ideological construct that led to Al Qaeda. The first book in my trilogy was entitled *Jihad* as a tribute to the central place of the Afghan “jihad” in the shaping of Islamist movements post-1980s.)

*Beyond Terror and Martyrdom* focuses on two main issues: first, the rise of “martyrdom” (or suicide) opera-

tions, which I believe actually led to the political suicide of Sunni Islamist radicalism, ripe with betrayals such as the so-called Sahwa ("awakening") movement in Iraq and disputes on whether the shedding of "Muslim blood" was a major political failure; and second, the renewal of Shi'a radicalism in Iran under Ahmadinejad, who made the best possible use of the U.S. quagmire in Iraq.

Now I believe Zawahiri & Co. are not faring well, and I devote a long chapter in the book to an in-depth analysis of his cyber-proclamations; while in Iran, the radical rhetoric of Ahmadinejad, who had promised to put "oil money" on every Iranian dinner table, fell short of its populist promise. Just as Barack Obama's victory is a typical "post-Bush" phenomenon, which doesn't relate only to the sorry state of the economy but has to do with the cardinal sin at the core of the Gitmo-centred "GWOT," I expect we'll see in 2009 a "post-Ahmadinejad" political phenomenon in Iran—provided the West makes an offer to the new Iranian post-Islamist (though staunchly nationalist) elites, to reintegrate the Gulf security system.

Last, but by no means least, *Beyond Terror and Martyrdom* deals at length with issues of Muslims in Europe, which had been of particular interest to me since I published *Les Banlieues de l'Islam* ("The peripheries of Islam," in 1987, no English translation). To cut a long story short, successful politics of integration are contrasted to failed politics of multi-culturalism—a taste of French *schadenfreude* and Fox News-bashing... which you may imagine I did relish!

Writing this book involved a lot of suffering—I believed wrongly that aging would make writing easier; well, quite the contrary—but reading it in English, in Pascale Ghazaleh's great translation, is a pleasure! I wish I could write in English like that—though in the multipolar world, might there be some room left for obsolete dialects such as French or Arabic? I hope you'll enjoy reading it too, and please send me your reactions, negative, critical or positive, [4]here. I promise I'll answer the relevant ones! A bientôt sur le web!

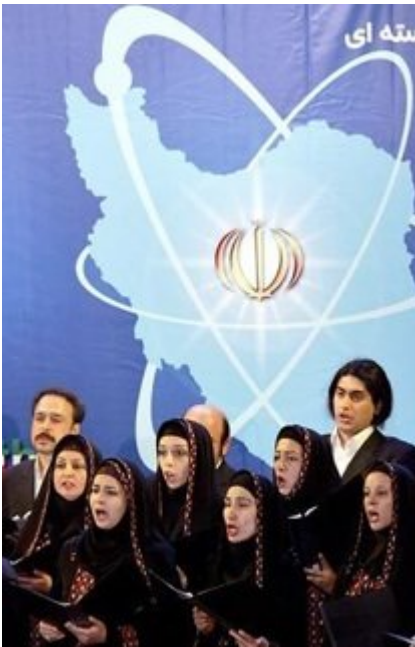
[5]Excerpt | [6]Order from Publisher | [7]Amazon

1. <http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/cherlist/kepel.php>
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5. [http://www.hup.harvard.edu/pdf/KEPB\\_EY\\_excerpt.pdf](http://www.hup.harvard.edu/pdf/KEPB_EY_excerpt.pdf)
6. [http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog/KEPB\\_EY.html](http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog/KEPB_EY.html)
7. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0674031385>

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## Iran: Obama's options (2008-11-10 02:00)

From [1]Michael Rubin



The Islamic Republic has been pursuing a nuclear program for the better part of two decades. Concerns over Iranian intentions were among the reasons cited by Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, for example, when he inaugurated Germany's "critical dialogue" in 1992. Subsequent years have been littered with failed diplomatic initiatives, most notably: Reagan's controversial outreach in 1983; critical dialogue; a broader European critical engagement; Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's apology; and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's offer to sit down with Iran if it suspended enrichment for the duration of talks, and her subsequent decision to reverse course and sign onto a generous incentive package. The constant throughout all of these initiatives has been continuation of Tehran's nuclear program. Whether under 'pragmatist' president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, 'reformist' president Mohammad Khatami, or 'principalist' (Persian: *usulgarayan*) president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, there have been differences of rhetoric, but remarkable continuity of Iran's nuclear investments.

The clock is running down, though. President Obama will need to make decisions which Presidents Bush, Clinton, and Bush deferred. After all, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has confirmed that the Islamic Republic has now installed 4,000 centrifuges in its overt enrichment plant. According to Senators Dan Coats and Chuck Robb's task force on [2]U.S. Policy toward Iranian Nuclear Development (for which I served as drafter), with just 6,000 P-1 centrifuges, fuel-grade 4.8 percent enriched uranium feed, and tails enrichment of 2.26 percent, the Islamic Republic could produce 20 kilograms of weapons-grade uranium in 16 days; i.e., in the period between IAEA inspections. That is not to say that Iran can produce a bomb in less than three weeks, but producing a crude-bomb's worth of 93.1 percent highly enriched uranium is the most difficult process in an indigenous bomb program.

Early in his administration, Obama will have to determine whether the United States can live with a nuclear weapons-capable Islamic Republic. If he decides the answer is no and if diplomatic and economic coercion fails to persuade Iran's leaders to back away from their program, this would then mean commitment to a 1998 Operation Desert Fox-type operation. Any kinetic action against Iran would bring short-term gain at tremendous long-term cost: Iranians are nationalistic and would rally around the flag. While the Islamic Republic does not need nuclear arms for its defense, any military action against the Iran's nuclear program would justify Tehran's arguments in world opinion as the regime rebuilt.

Regardless, Obama's policy positions and voting record suggest that he would never order any strike. This leaves both containment and deterrence as U.S. strategies. The problem here, though, is that across the political spectrum, U.S. officials speak of both strategies in rhetorical terms without acknowledging what

they require. In this [3]essay for the American Enterprise Institute's Middle Eastern Outlook series, I explore what would be necessary to deter or contain a nuclear-armed Islamic Republic of Iran, and the consequences of speaking of either strategy without laying the groundwork for them.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_rubin/)
2. <http://www.bipartisanpolicy.org/ht/a/GetDocumentAction/i/8448>
3. [http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.28896/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.28896/pub_detail.asp)

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Robert Satloff (2008-11-17 03:00:23)

Between accepting a nuclear-armed Iran or bombing Iran there is a third option—but it is certainly not the [1]misguided notion of giving an international stamp of approval to enrichment inside Iran, under any international guise. That precedent will almost surely lead to an explosion of enrichment initiatives, as every political competitor to Iran (and the competitor's competitor) will be keen to have everything Iran has, which is one lesson from the rush of Middle East states seeking nuclear power once the United States changed position on Bushehr. In the process, it only postpones the problem by setting the stage for a future confrontation with Iran. The third option rests in credible international pressure, which includes a progressive process of international isolation of Iran's financial, insurance, shipping, travel and trade systems, perhaps backed up by ad hoc international maritime efforts. (A key element in this is the need for Saudi Arabia to show whether it is part of the problem or part of the solution, i.e. will the Saudis use their clout to force the Chinese to choose between them or Iranians as energy partners or will we let them persist in their current have-their-cake-and-eat-it-too approach.) At the moment, there simply is not enough pain in the existing sanctions to convince Iran that there is a significant cost for its objectionable behavior. Only by ratcheting up the cost—soon—can we avoid the unpalatable binary choice. Sweetening the carrot is far less important than sharpening the stick; the former will never entice the Iranians to do what the latter won't compel them to do. [2]Robert Satloff is a member of MESH.

1. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/165648>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_satloff/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_satloff/)

Mark T. Clark (2008-11-11 17:08:04)

Michael Rubin [1]argues persuasively that President-elect Obama will have to consider serious strategic options against Iran to preclude it from obtaining nuclear weapons should he decide that a nuclear Iran is unacceptable. Obama has called for an international effort to halt Iran's drive for nuclear weapons, but Rubin shows that the recent history of diplomacy to that end shows it to have been fruitless. He then argues for strategies of containment and deterrence, which he develops more fully [2]here. In an important footnote to his study, however, he shows that during the primaries, Obama criticized Hillary Clinton for threatening to "obliterate" Iran should it ever use nuclear weapons. Obama thus cuts the legs out from under any deterrence posture the United States may have with its own nuclear arsenal. Rubin also analyzes a number of problems with trying to contain Iran, particularly in light of Obama's intention to draw down U.S. forces in the region, particularly in Iraq, and the associated problems with positioning other U.S. forces in the region. So containment may be difficult at best and impossible at worst. Where to go from here? One recent development may help pave the way. In a recent item in the news ([3]here), the Bush administration has just deployed X-Band radars to Israel along with about 120 technicians and a security force. This powerful system will help Israel gain time in detecting a missile launch up to 1,500 miles away. This positive security guarantee of the United States may subtly shift the debate away from trying to deter a nuclear Iran, to providing the kind of defense that could defeat its initially deployed nuclear arsenal. Obama opposes missile defense, at least for the United States. Will he be willing to remove the security guarantee, along with the radar, from Israel? Time is running out for any effort to halt Iran's nuclear weapons program. A fruitless attempt to restart a diplomatic effort will only give Iran the time it needs to develop a nuclear arsenal. The only task then will be to either resurrect nuclear deterrence, renege on withdrawing forces from Iraq, or support increasing missile defenses for Israel and U.S. expeditionary forces that may deploy to the region. Thanks to Michael Rubin, we now have a better idea of how tenuous our options are. [4]Mark T. Clark is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/11/iran\\_obamasoptions/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/11/iran_obamasoptions/)

2. [http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.28896/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.28896/pub_detail.asp)
3. <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,449704,00.html>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_t\\_clark/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_t_clark/)

Chuck Freilich (2008-11-18 16:01:33)

I believe that there is an additional important option which has not been [1]mentioned by the other writers above: a naval blockade. This, however, should be the outcome of a coordinated and graduated strategy aimed at ratcheting up the pressure and combined with a willingness on the part of the new administration to engage with Iran. Iran will probably reject any offers the new administration makes to improve relations in exchange for an end to the nuclear program, as it has all others. But we will only know if the attempt is made fully, explicitly, and wholeheartedly. I believe that U.S. hard-liners on Iran in particular should support a policy of engagement. The exigencies of realpolitik are such that the United States will only be able to pursue severe measures, let alone future military action, if it proves to domestic and world opinion that it has exhausted all other options. In any event, engagement must be conducted from a position of strength. Just as a policy of sticks with no carrots is doomed to failure, the opposite is true as well. Iran must be made to clearly understand the consequences of a failure to reach terms, and the timeline is short. As I explained in detail in my [2]recent article in the November issue of *Arms Control Today*, a naval blockade would only be undertaken after concerted international sanctions had failed, either because the United States was unable to gain sufficient international support for this, or because Iran remained intransigent. Preferably, the naval blockade would be multilateral, but it could be unilateral if necessary. The blockade could be comprehensive from the outset or graduated (e.g., initially limited to Iranian imports of refined petroleum and then expanding over time). A partial air and ground blockade might also be feasible. Only if this, too, failed, would there be a need to consider direct military action. Some will oppose the option of a unilateral naval blockade on the grounds that it would constitute a violation of international law and even an act of war. So be it. Illegal development of nuclear weapons also constitutes a violation of international law, as does dealing a killer blow to the international nonproliferation regime and repeatedly threatening the annihilation of a fellow member state of the United Nations. The issue is not one of niceties or international norms, but of the cold world of realpolitik. A naval blockade may be the only way of ending the Iranian threat without having to resort to direct military action. For various economic reasons, Iran would be extremely vulnerable to a blockade, and the prospects of its acquiescence to international demands are high. Its military response can also be expected to be quite limited. Iran talks a very good and scary game, but its behavior is far more cautious; even more importantly, its actual ability to respond significantly would most likely be very limited. Those who truly wish to deal with the problem but are wary of direct military action should give careful consideration to the blockade option. [3]Chuck Freilich is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/11/iran\\_obamasoptions/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/11/iran_obamasoptions/)
2. [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008\\_11/freilich](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008_11/freilich)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck\\_freilich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck_freilich/)

## Terrorism's money trail (2008-11-11 01:17)

From [1]Matthew Levitt



U.S. and international efforts to combat terrorist financing are a little understood—and often under-appreciated—aspect of the global counterterrorism campaign. With this in mind, soon after rejoining The Washington Institute after serving in the Treasury Department's [2]Office

of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, Michael Jacobson and I decided that it would be worthwhile to conduct a comprehensive study of this issue. At the Treasury Department Mike had served as senior advisor to the Assistant Secretary for intelligence and analysis; I was Deputy Assistant Secretary for intelligence and analysis.

On our return to academia, we spent well over a year researching and then writing this study. It is based on open source information, including media reports, reports by U.S. and foreign governments and international organizations, congressional testimony, and perhaps most important, our field research and interviews. During the course of our research, we interviewed some seventy-five people, ranging from U.S. and foreign government officials to officials in key international organizations such as the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, and the Financial Action Task Force, as well as academics and financial experts in the private sector. While many of the interviews took place in Washington and New York, we also spent considerable time abroad, including multiple trips to Europe and the Middle East. During one extended research trip to the Persian Gulf, we met with government officials, bankers, and industry and academic experts.

The study not only explains the threat of terrorist financing and the efforts of governments and international organizations to address it, but also assesses the effectiveness of these efforts. We offer, in addition, our thoughts as to what steps the United States could take to improve international efforts in this area. With the Obama administration clearly committed to an "all elements of national power" strategy to deal with threats to U.S. national security, effective non-kinetic tools such as this one are likely to receive more, not less, attention. We hope that this study helps inform the public debate on this important topic, which has not always received the attention it deserves. Better understanding both the threat and our response is critical to determining what role combating terrorist financing should play in our overall counterterrorism efforts and what changes should be made to our current approach to make it still more effective.

Among the issues addressed in this study are:

- Are efforts to combat terror financing an efficient or effective use of our limited resources?
- How significant a role should efforts to combat terror finance play as part of the global counterterrorism campaign?
- How have terrorist shifted their terrorist financing techniques in response to international efforts to combat it and how rapidly is the threat of terror financing evolving?
- What steps have U.S. and international partners taken to combat terrorist financing and what challenges remain?
- How effective have U.S. and international efforts to combat terror financing been? Are there specific signs of success in an area in which progress is often difficult to measure?
- What is the status of terror financing for different groups—like Al Qaeda, Hezbollah and Hamas—that operate in different environments?

Finally, we offer the incoming administration a set of practical recommendations to bolster the international regime in this critically important area.

Overall, the United States and its international partners have enjoyed considerable success in the CFT arena. In December 2005, the 9/11 Commission's Public Discourse Project (PDP) issued its final report grading U.S. government compliance with the 9/11 Commission's recommendations. The project gave the government an "A"—the report's highest mark—for its "vigorous efforts to combat terrorist financing." A



variety of anecdotes support the PDP's assessment, suggesting that the CFT efforts are making a difference, not only in constricting the environment for terrorist financing, but also by serving as a valuable intelligence tool for the government. In other words, freezing terrorist funds has proven to be an effective means of disrupting terrorist activity, while following the money has enabled investigators to uncover previously unknown links between terrorist operatives and even thwart attacks.

Combating terrorist financing, we conclude, must remain an important component of every country's counterterrorism strategy, and maintaining international focus and cooperation on this issue is essential. While the challenges are great, the potential benefits are significant. Similarly, failure to build a truly international regime to counter terrorist financing guarantees that the successes seen in this arena to date will be short-lived. And there should be no doubt that if terrorist groups are able to raise, move, store, and gain access to funds with relative ease, the threat they pose to the United States and its allies will increase dramatically.

The full study is available [3]here as a free download (pdf).

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew\\_levitt/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew_levitt/)
2. <http://www.ustreas.gov/offices/enforcement/>
3. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=302>

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## 1967 and memory (2008-11-13 04:12)

From [1]Martin Kramer



How did the outcome of 1967 change the way Arabs think about themselves and the world? It was the late [2]Malcolm Kerr, one of America's leading Arabists at the time, who perfectly summarized the consensus. (Kerr was a UCLA professor, later president of the American University of Beirut, who was killed there in 1984.) He put it thus, in a famous passage written only about four years after the 1967 war:

Since June, 1967 Arab politics have ceased to be fun. In the good old days most Arabs refused to take themselves very seriously, and this made it easier to take a relaxed view of the few who possessed intimations of some immortal mission. It was like watching Princeton play Columbia in football on a muddy afternoon. The June War was like a disastrous game against Notre Dame which Princeton impulsively added to its schedule, leaving several players crippled for life and the others so embittered that they took to fighting viciously among themselves instead of scrimmaging happily as before.

I leave aside the identification of the Arabs with Princeton. Kerr was a Princetonian, but so am I, and I would have preferred to identify the Arabs with Columbia, for all sorts of reasons. But it is the way Kerr contrasts pre-1967 with post-1967 Arab politics that is striking—and misleading. Even in 1967, Arab

politics hadn't been "fun" in a very long time: as early as the 1940s, they had become a serious and deadly game of costly wars and bloody coups. True, Kerr was writing in the aftermath of Black September in Jordan, a time when Arab politics seemed to have come completely unhinged. But the idea that 1967 put an end to the "good old days" of Arabs "scrimmaging happily" was a pure piece of nostalgic romance in the grand Arabist tradition.

Unfortunately, such nostalgia is seductive. For years, it has been at the root of a notion that persists even today: if we could somehow undo the 1967 war—if we could undo the injury inflicted in those six days—we could put the Middle East back to where it was in the "good old days." In this view, the Arabs and the world could have "fun" again if only we could erase the Arab memory of that war—by erasing its every consequence.

But the "good old days" analysis is entirely false, and not only in its distortion of Arab politics prior to 1967. It is false because it overlooks how the 1967 trauma trimmed the ideological excess of the pre-war period, and opened the way to pragmatic Arab acceptance of Israel.

That ideological excess, known as pan-Arabism or Nasserism, rested upon a prior sense of injury, in which 1948 played the major part. In that earlier war, Israel succeeded in defeating or holding off an array of Arab armies, and three quarters of a million Palestinian Arab refugees ended up in camps. The injury of 1948 was so deep that, over the following twenty years—Kerr's "good old days"—there was no peace process. The Arabs nursed their wounds and dreamed only of another round.

1948 also had a profoundly destabilizing effect on Arab politics. Three coups took place in Syria in 1949, and often thereafter; Jordan's King Abdullah was assassinated (by Palestinians) in 1951; Free Officers toppled the monarchy in Egypt in 1952. Everywhere, the 1948 regimes were faulted for their failure to strangle Israel at birth. Military strongmen seized power in the name of revolution, and promised to do better in the next round. Those "good old days" were in fact very bad days, during which Arab politics became militarized in the certainty and even desirability of another war with Israel.

In 1967, the other war came, and these regimes suffered a far more devastating defeat, delivered in a mere six days. Unlike 1948, when they had lost much of Palestine, in 1967 they lost their own sovereign territory. The shock wave, it is generally assumed, was even greater.

Yet what is telling is that the regimes didn't fall. Nasser offered his resignation, but the crowds filled the streets and demanded that he stay on—and he did. The defense minister and air force commander of Syria, Hafez Asad, held on and ousted his rival two years later, establishing himself as sole ruler. King Hussein of Jordan, who had lost half his kingdom, also survived, as did the Jordanian monarchy. The only regime that failed to withstand the shock waves of 1967 was Lebanon's, and Lebanon hadn't even joined the war. Kerr wrote that 1967 had left the Arab players "crippled for life." In the three Arab states that lost the war, the regimes survived, the leaders ruled for life, and they are now being succeeded by their sons.

What explains the fact that 1967 didn't destabilize the Arab system as 1948 did? It is true that even before 1967, these regimes had started to harden themselves. The evolution of the Arab state as a "republic of fear" dates from the decade before 1967, and this probably helped regimes weather the storm. Unlike in 1948, there weren't many refugees either—the Arab states lost territory, but the war was quick, and most of the inhabitants of the lost territory stayed in their homes.

But I believe the reason 1967 didn't destabilize the Arab order is this: Arab regimes and peoples drew together in the fear that Israel could repeat 1967 if it had to, and that it might show up one day on the outskirts of Cairo or Damascus (as it threatened to do in 1973), or come right into an Arab capital (as

it did in Beirut in 1982).

The memory of 1967 thus became the basis of an implicit understanding between the regimes and the peoples: the regimes will avert war, and in return the people will stay loyal, even docile. The regimes have upheld their end, by gradually coming to terms with Israel, and by leaving the Palestinians to fight their own fight. Pan-Arabism—which largely meant sacrificing for the Palestinians—faded away because no Arabs were prepared to risk losing a war for them. The skill of rulers in averting war has helped to secure and entrench them.

I call this understanding implicit—it doesn't have an ideological underpinning. Pragmatism rarely does. But the evidence for it is that no Arab state has entered or stumbled into war with Israel in over thirty years. The memory of the 1967 trauma has been translated into a deep-seated aversion to war, which underpins such peace and stability as the region has enjoyed. 1967 thus marks the beginning of the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict—the conflict between Israel and Arab states, which had produced a major war every decade. 1973 marks the end of the end, in which two Arab states stole back some honor and territory, precisely so they could lean back and leave Israelis and Palestinians to thrash out their own differences. This narrower Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been a sore, but its costs have been limited compared to a state-to-state war.

It is important to note that pan-Arabism did survive elsewhere in the Arab world, where its illusions continued to exact a very high cost. I refer to Baathist Iraq, which wasn't defeated in 1967, and where pan-Arabism continued to constitute one of the ideological pillars of the regime, vis-à-vis Iran and the West. There it also led to miscalculation, war, and defeat, on a truly massive scale. The Iraq wars—there have been three in the last three decades—provide a striking contrast to the relative stability in Israel's corner of the Middle East—a stability which rests, I suggest, on the Arab memory of 1967, which restructured Arab thinking in the states surrounding Israel, away from eager anticipation of war, and toward anxiously averting it.

So in regard to Arab politics, I have offered a possible revision of the usual view of 1967: perhaps its memory, far from making the Arabs angry and volatile, underpins the stability of the Arab order and regional peace. If so, then perhaps we should recall it as a year of net benefit all around—as compared, say, to 1979, the year of Iran's revolution, or 2003, the year of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. The impact of 1967 was to create a new balance, and push ideology to the margins of politics. The impact of 1979 and 2003 has been to unbalance the region and strengthen radical ideologies. 1967 ultimately produced a process that led to the finalizing of borders between states. The combined impact of 1979 and 2003 threatens to erase borders from the map.

The risk today, over forty years later, is not that the consequences of 1967 are still with us. It is that memory of 1967 is starting to fade, and its legacy is being eroded. I am struck by the subtitles of the two leading books on 1967. Michael Oren's is [3]June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East. Tom Segev's goes even further: [4]Israel, the War, and the Year that Transformed the Middle East. If only it were so. The problem is that the Middle East continues to be remade and transformed by subsequent events, whose legacy is much more damaging than the legacy of 1967.

What then happens when the Arab world is dominated by generations that no longer remember 1967 or, more importantly, no longer think Israel capable of reenacting it? What memories are replacing the memory of 1967? The 2006 summer war in Lebanon? (To rework Kerr's analogy, that was like Columbia playing Notre Dame to a draw.) Without the memory of that defeat of forty years ago, the ranks of the Islamists could swell with people who imagine victory. Without the fear of war, peoples could turn away from those rulers who have made peace—away from the implicit understanding that underpins order. Will

it be possible to build stability and peace on other memories, or other promises?

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)
2. <http://www.aub.edu.lb/themes/1999/Kerr/newsletter.html#Biography:%20text>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0345461924>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/B001FB62IW>

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Michael Young (2008-12-01 10:03:23)

Being neither of Princeton nor of Columbia, but rather a graduate of the American University of Beirut, and at the time that Malcolm Kerr was assassinated there, I feel entitled to borrow from both parties here. I can accept much of what Paul Scham [1] says, but also feel a need to throw in two major qualifiers based on my reading of developments in the Middle East. I agree with Scham that the 1967 war was really a mixed bag for Israel: It taught Arab states to worry about future wars, making them more likely than ever before to negotiate with Israel; but it also so discredited the Arab states and Arab regimes, that non-state actors began emerging who viewed 1967 as a defining moment for Arab inconsequence that needed to be transcended. Israel's policies toward the Palestinians since that time have been, in my view, disastrous if the objective of Israeli leaders is to arrive at true normalization with the region. But there are two points that I'm more skeptical about. Scham writes: "While the caricature of the [Arab Peace Initiative] solving all the Mideast's problems is just that, settlement of the [Palestinian-Israeli] conflict is in fact a precondition to solving virtually any of them." I'm not sure. Scham's argument speaks to the centrality of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the minds of Arab populations. That's partly true of course, but we need to examine more closely the causes of this. This attitude goes beyond a sense of the injustices inflicted on the Palestinians; the centrality of the Palestinians' fate is also, and I would say mainly, the result of the Arabs' alienation from their own leaderships and from domestic politics in general. In backing the Palestinians, they also make a strong statement against those governing them. That is why I feel that at the heart of the Arabs' sense of anomie is the abject failure of the Arab state. That's the essence of the problem, and while attitudes toward Palestine are often the most public manifestations of that disgust, they are not necessarily indicators of where the solution really lies. The problem is that Arab citizens are the prisoners and victims of despotic regimes that neither respect them nor afford them even the barest essentials of a political life. Citizens are permitted only to be indifferent, only to express themselves in favor of the tyrannical fathers ruling over them. In that context, I am not sure that Palestine is in and of itself at the core of the Middle East's conflicts. Certainly Arab regimes have long used Palestine to justify suffocating security establishments and to deflect their population's anger away from their own shortcomings. But I also believe that if Arab societies become more open, if states engage in democratic reform, Palestine will recede as prime shaper of Arab attitudes. Indeed, I don't feel confident that if the Palestinian-Israeli conflict were resolved, with Arab despotisms left in place, we would see deep change in the nature of Arab societies. I don't imagine that peace would lead fewer young men to join militant Islamist groups (probably the contrary would happen), nor that Arab citizens would be able to voice their opinions more easily. No one can doubt the importance of Palestine, but as the Iraqis showed in the aftermath of the 2003 war, just as the Kuwaitis did in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf war, Arab societies will turn against the Palestinians, often very unjustly, when they feel they have paid a heavy domestic price for having shown sympathy for the Palestinian cause. A second point I'm skeptical about is whether we can legitimately stick to the template of the 1990s when discussing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict—or more broadly the post-1967 period. Scham writes: "It is only by readjusting [borders and the Israeli occupation] to include the reality of full Palestinian independence that the entire region can start to move on." Again, I really do wonder. We still speak of the conflict as if the post-Oslo context were somehow relevant. It may be in some distant, intellectual way, but all the evidence suggests that Palestinian-Israeli dynamics are changing very rapidly. On both sides of the divide those unwilling to make the required concessions for peace can veto any final settlement. The current signs are that Israel, even with a center-left government, is politically incapable of making peace with the present Palestinian partner; and nothing suggests that by February, when Israelis vote once again, things will become any easier. By the same token, Hamas has no interest in peace, believing the armed struggle can deliver much more, while the Palestinian Authority is incapable of imposing a settlement on all the Palestinian factions. Things will get worse next January, when the PLO and Hamas fight over whether Mahmoud Abbas is still president. The more relevant questions are: What borders will Hamas accept and the Israelis agree to? Or, what borders will Hamas accept from a Likud-led government, and Israel agree to offer a Hamas-led Palestinian leadership? Indeed, as Hamas gains power over Palestinian society, if in fact it does, what international legitimacy will the Palestinians retain as a people meriting a return of at least a part

of their ancestral land? These are all legitimate questions that need to be answered before we can adopt Scham's hopeful phrase as fact. Yet no answers are forthcoming. To borrow from another phrase made popular in the 1980s by Israeli geographer Meron Benvenisti: We may already be past midnight on a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, at least a solution familiar to us. In that event, should we continue to stubbornly assume that such a solution is the precondition to unlocking the Middle East's problems? Or should we begin to resolve those other problems independently, particularly the problem of the illegitimate Arab state, and not hold them hostage to a conflict bound to go on and on, whatever optimists say? [2]Michael Young is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/11/1967-and-memory/#comment-1324>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_young/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_young/)

Paul L. Scham (2008-11-24 03:40:41)

While as a Columbia man I naturally bridle at the Princeton-centric and anti-Columbian analogies of Malcolm Kerr and Martin Kramer, I also disagree with both of their [1]analyses of the Middle East since 1948. Kerr had lamented in 1971 that "[s]ince June, 1967, Arab politics have ceased to be fun." Kramer quite rightly takes him to task, pointing out that the raging instability of the Arab world between 1948 and 1967 was anything but "fun," but then posits, contrariwise, that the elements of stability that have been present since at least 1973 (the last Israeli-Arab state war) reflect a stabilizing dynamic introduced by Israel's conquests in 1967. Consequently, he warns, attempts to undo 1967 by an Arab generation that remembers not Dayan, Rabin and Co. would likely destabilize the "implicit understanding that underpins order." Translation: Tamper with the 1967 borders at your peril. Even though it's clear that Kerr used "fun" with a huge measure of irony, he was making a point that Kramer rightly picked up on. For Arabists of his generation, the serial coups, counter-coups and radical ideologies from 1948-67 did seem like the Middle East that they loved, albeit writ on the larger canvas of independence and developing oil wealth. They could recognize that the many of the traditional dynamics and elites still held sway, along with a somewhat traditional (and for them attractive) way of life. Of course, for Palestinians it was in no way "fun," and Israelis never participated in the game at all. But it is clear that Kerr was thinking of neither in his flip remark. However, Kramer's view is similarly narrow. The fact that state-to-state war between Arab states and Israel has been virtually eliminated (though one could quibble about confrontations such as with Lebanon in 1982 and 2006 and with Syria in 1982 as well) means primarily that Middle Eastern states are increasingly irrelevant to their populations as an expression of their ideology and deepest feelings. Rather, I would argue that the generally accepted view of increasing instability is correct, and that the relative stability of Israeli borders since 1967 is to a considerable degree a cause of that Arab and Muslim instability. Of course the huge losses of life of 1967 (among Arabs) and 1973 (on both sides) have been avoided. And it is true that after 1973 the immense humiliation of 1967 was partially redeemed. However, the perception that the Arab leadership is perfectly willing to virtually forget about the Palestinians has *not* been accepted by their populations. That is why peace with Israel by the rest of the Arab League can only happen when a settlement bearing some resemblance to the Arab League Peace Initiative (API) takes place. Arab heads of government know that their populations will not stand for less. While the caricature of the API solving all the Mideast's problems is just that, settlement of the conflict is in fact a precondition to solving virtually any of them. This is not because of the obduracy of Arab states; rather, it is because their leaders recognize that their countries may be ungovernable if the Palestinians appear to have had an unjust settlement forced on them. Kramer worries about the fate of the Middle East entrusted to those who remember not 1967. In fact, that is irrelevant. The children of the ruling classes now ascending to leadership want peace with Israel for their own good reasons. Most of them have moved on from the conflict. But they know their populations haven't. It is the Islamist leaders who are calling for Israel's destruction who remember 1967, as do their followers, both the absolutely committed and the much larger groups of hangers-on. And it is the hangers-on who are most important, since how they swing will determine whether moderation or radicalism will be dominant in the next generation. Contrary to what Kramer implies, the former is not a precondition for Israeli-Palestinian peace; rather, it can only be a (hoped-for, but by no means certain) consequence. The latter will continue to feed on the consequences of 1967, since that is indirectly the single most important source of destabilization and radicalism today, adding fuel to the others. There is a growing school of thought in Israel today, primarily on the left, which views the Six-Day War as, in retrospect, a nearly unmitigated disaster. In my view, that is simplistic. The shock to the Arab states was, in retrospect at least, largely salutary. It took the Yom Kippur War for Israel to learn that the Egyptians, at least, had absorbed that lesson, and that led to Egyptian-Israeli peace. And the peace has held, despite the return to the 1967 border. Gradually, the same lesson was absorbed by the rest of the Arab states, and the API is the clearest manifestation of it. The good that could be wrung out of 1967 has already become part of the regional fabric. Only the evil remains, i.e., the borders and the occupation. It is only by readjusting them to include the reality of full Palestinian independence that the entire region can start to move on. While Arab politics will never revert to

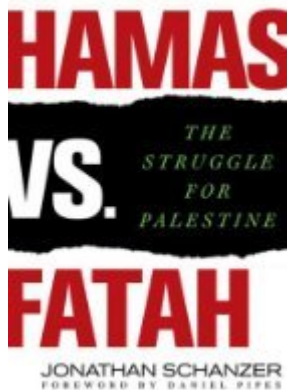
the "fun...good old days" which Kerr remembered, the memories of 1967 may eventually fade away. And that, *pace* Kramer, will be to the good. [2]Paul L. Scham is executive director of the *Gildenhorn Institute for Israel Studies at the University of Maryland at College Park* and an adjunct scholar at the *Middle East Institute in Washington*.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/11/1967-and-memory/>
2. <http://www.mideasti.org/scholars/paul-scham>

### ' **Hamas vs. Fatah** ' (2008-11-17 02:00)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Jonathan Schanzer is director of policy at the Jewish Policy Center and a former counterterrorism analyst for the Office of Intelligence and Analysis at the U.S. Department of Treasury. His new book is *Hamas vs. Fatah: The Struggle For Palestine*.

From [1]Jonathan Schanzer



[2] During the violent Hamas conquest of Gaza in the summer of 2007, when hundreds of Palestinians were killed by their own, I was struck by the weak and fleeting media attention, particularly compared to flare-ups of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict over the years. I also noted that Middle Eastern studies professors avoided the subject. With the notable exception of the *Jerusalem Post's* Khaled Abu Toameh and a few others, it seemed as if observers of the Middle East were only interested in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which is tired and well-worn ground. I quickly realized that there was an important book to be written.

The Palestinians are usually described as one united people with one goal: statehood. My book questions this. In fact, throughout the book, which tracks the histories of both Hamas and Fatah, it becomes increasingly clear that the Palestinians actually lack a coherent vision for their future. The Hamas faction seeks an Islamist polity. The Fatah faction seeks a more secular one. Opposition to Israel is perhaps the only issue upon which they truly agree. Yet, Fatah has elected to engage the Israelis (for now), while Hamas is steadfast in its refusal.

What is surprising to some readers is that the Hamas-Fatah conflict is two decades old, dating back to the outbreak of the first intifada of 1987, when the upstart Hamas organization began to challenge Yasir Arafat's Fatah faction with competing bayanat, or leaflets, on the streets of the West Bank and Gaza.

Over time, what began as a political rivalry gave way to sharp disagreements and acrimony over Fatah's engagement in peace talks with Israel during the Oslo years. Upon the prompting of Israel and the United States, Fatah met Hamas suicide bombings against Israel with Fatah crackdowns. Quietly, a

Palestinian civil war was brewing.

After the failure of the peace process in 2000 and the subsequent al-Aqsa Intifada, the Palestinians fell into complete disarray. When Yasir Arafat died in 2004, the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority (PA) all but collapsed. Clans, families and tribes controlled the streets of the West Bank and Gaza. Hamas worked assiduously to fill that vacuum.

In the Palestinian elections of January 2006, Hamas won by a large margin. Only after the final votes were tallied, Fatah refused to allow Hamas to assume control of the government. Conflict erupted between the two sides, marking a bitter standoff. After more than a year of sporadic violence and venomous public exchanges, Hamas carried out a brutal, lightning coup that crushed the PA in Gaza. In June 2007, reports emerged of Palestinians being pushed off tall buildings to their death. Some Palestinians shot rival faction members point blank in the legs to ensure permanent disabilities. Human rights groups reported unlawful imprisonments and torture in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

This unresolved conflict has very serious consequences. For one, Washington and Jerusalem lack a legitimate interlocutor. As they negotiate with Mahmoud Abbas of the Fatah faction, they only deal with the ruler of the West Bank (and it is disputable that Abbas even has control of that), and a party that lost the 2006 elections. If they negotiate with Hamas, the rulers of Gaza, they would be negotiating with a terrorist organization, which runs counter to the policies of both governments.

Perhaps a more serious policy challenge is the West Bank-Gaza Strip split. The Palestinians are now represented by two non-states and two non-governments. How can the international community regard them as one political unit?

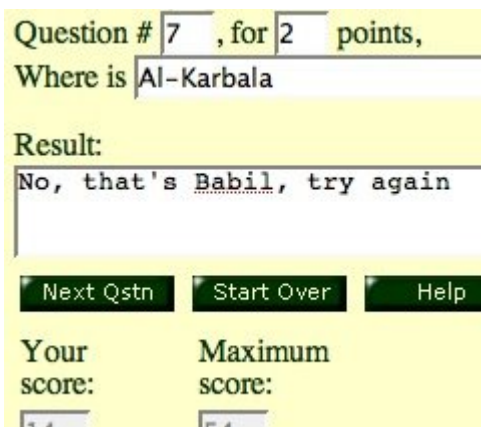
My new book suggests that it is now the internecine Palestinian conflict—not the Palestinian-Israeli conflict—that represents the first and most obvious obstacle to regional peace. Once this thorny, under-reported conflict is settled, it may be possible to resume productive talks. So long as the Palestinians are a house divided, peace will almost certainly be elusive.

[3]Order from Publisher | [4]Amazon

1. <http://www.jewishpolicycenter.org/board/jonathan-schanzer.php>
  2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51RG7yv-yuL.jpg>
  3. <http://us.macmillan.com/hamasvsfatah>
  4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0230609058>
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**Pop quiz! (2008-11-18 08:30)**

From MESH Admin



Some of the many interactive geography quizzes on the web ask visitors to [1]identify the [2]countries and [3]capitals of the Middle East. We assume MESH readers have no problem there, so we've collected links to more challenging quizzes. There's no end to learning.

- Iraq. The United States has been at war in Iraq for five years, but only [4]one in three young Americans can even find it on the map. You can find it, but can you identify all of Iraq's governates and their capital cities? There are two good versions of the governates quiz, [5]here and [6]here. And once you've aced that, move on to the [7]capitals quiz.
- Iran. This weblog has devoted much attention to Iran, the rising power. An Iranian who purports to know something about the United States can probably identify the great State of Texas on a map. So can you identify the great province of Fars? Try your hand at [8]this quiz.

And there is also much talk about how Iran's ethnic groups might be turned against the Islamic regime. Take [9]this quiz and see whether you can find them.

- Afghanistan and Yemen. U.S. forces have been in Afghanistan even longer than they have been in Iraq, and the President-elect wants to send more. Take the same rigorous test for provinces of Afghanistan, in two versions, [10]here and [11]here. And for the truly expert (or for Yemenis), see if you can navigate another hot spot in the GWOT, by identifying the governates of Yemen, [12]here.
- More fun/frustration. Forget about those simple interactive quizzes that ask you to identify leaders or flags, and try these instead. [13]Here are ten Middle Eastern countries; order them by population size. And [14]here are another ten; order them by total military expenditure. (The answers are supposedly based on the CIA World Factbook.)

1. [http://www.geography-map-games.com/geography-games-Geo-quizz-Middle-East-online-game\\_pageid6.html](http://www.geography-map-games.com/geography-games-Geo-quizz-Middle-East-online-game_pageid6.html)
2. [http://www.rethinkingschools.org/just\\_fun/games/mapgame.html](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/just_fun/games/mapgame.html)
3. [http://www.sheppardsoftware.com/Middle-east\\_Geography.htm](http://www.sheppardsoftware.com/Middle-east_Geography.htm)
4. <http://www.cnn.com/2006/EDUCATION/05/02/geog.test/index.html>
5. <http://www.lizardpoint.com/fun/geoquiz/iraquiz.html>
6. <http://www.purposegames.com/game/governorates-of-iraq-quiz>
7. <http://www.purposegames.com/game/83a677f2>
8. <http://www.lizardpoint.com/fun/geoquiz/iranquiz.html>
9. <http://www.purposegames.com/game/ethnic-groups-of-iran-quiz>
10. <http://www.lizardpoint.com/fun/geoquiz/afghanistanquiz.html>
11. <http://www.purposegames.com/game/ea76a145>
12. <http://www.purposegames.com/game/governorates-of-yemen-quiz>
13. [http://www.quia.com/rd/8300.html?AP\\_rand=987643553](http://www.quia.com/rd/8300.html?AP_rand=987643553)
14. [http://www.quia.com/rd/8315.html?AP\\_rand=1231909095](http://www.quia.com/rd/8315.html?AP_rand=1231909095)



## A Middle East envoy? (2008-11-20 14:38)

From MESH Admin



Over the past week, MESHNet, the closed-forum companion to MESH, conducted a poll of MESHNet members, asking them who would make the best Middle East envoy of the Obama administration (if it is decided to appoint one). The structure of the poll emulated an [1]earlier poll administered to a panel of Israeli experts, taking the same nine candidates and the same scoring system. MESHNet members (persons with a professional interest in the Middle East, 179 in number) were asked to rate the candidates, from "most suitable" for the job (a score of 5) to "least suitable" (a score of 1). Sixty-three MESHNet members responded to the poll question. Here are the results, comprised of the average score for each candidate:

Dennis Ross	3.350
Bill Clinton	2.904
Richard Holbrooke...	2.904
Colin Powell	2.747
Daniel Kurtzer	2.619
Condoleezza Rice	2.458
Bill Richardson	2.394
Hillary Clinton	2.336
James Baker	2.222

In parallel, MESH asked a number of its members to assess whether the appointment of a special envoy is advisable. Their nine responses appear below. (Respondents did not have prior knowledge of the poll results.)

[2] [3] Alan Dowty :: Would it be wise for the new administration to dispatch a special envoy to the Middle East? Yes, by all means; it has become standard practice, and not sending an envoy would evoke cries of despair and dismay from near and far. It has become de rigueur to create the impression that the United States is making an all-out effort to achieve settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, whether success is expected or not.

Furthermore, if only to satisfy the need to create the impression of seriousness, the envoy needs to be on the A-list—like the names proffered in the poll. A low-level appointee would, again, evoke hue and cry.

And in order for this impression to be convincing, the appointed envoy must actually be allowed to make a serious effort. Perhaps neither the envoy nor the administration really believes that chances for success are great, but the onlookers are too sophisticated to be fooled by a charade. The effort must be real.

And so long as the envoy is making a serious effort, why should the negotiation not be directed at the most tractable channel, the one where a slight possibility of success actually exists? Not the Israel-Palestinian channel; though a majority of both publics probably still favor a negotiated, two-state solution, there is presently no Palestinian negotiating partner who could credibly implement such an agreement.

But on the Syrian front, there is a glimmer of daylight. The strategic logic of a deal between Israel and Syria is such that the last six Israeli prime ministers have all given it their best shot. Maybe the time has come.

So who, among the august personalities posited, should be the *deus ex machina*? It must be someone with infinite patience, infinite optimism, and an infinitely thick skin to withstand the inevitable barbs from all sides. Are such qualities likely among the high fliers on the present list of candidates? Unfortunately, such a combination of humility and prominence is a rarity of nature.

[4] [5] Robert O. Freedman :: Obama's two predecessors took opposite positions on the question of whether or not to appoint a special envoy to the Middle East. Bill Clinton had a special envoy, Dennis Ross, who was active during the entire period of the Clinton presidency and whose book, *The Missing Peace*, recounts his experience as special envoy. By contrast, George W. Bush chose not to have a special envoy and was widely criticized, justifiably or not, for paying insufficient attention to the Middle East.

In my view, Obama should appoint a special envoy for a number of reasons.

First, Obama will have many important priorities when he first takes office. In addition to the problems facing the U.S. and world economies, which can be expected to take up much of his time, there are serious problems in Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Russia. There simply will not be sufficient presidential time to spend on helping to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict, even if the conflict were ripe for settlement, which it is not. Under these circumstances, appointing a special envoy will enable Obama to demonstrate his continued interest in the process—as opposed to Bush, whose interest was, at best, episodic—and thereby reassure the parties to the conflict that the United States is concerned about helping to try to find a solution for it.

A second advantage of a special envoy is that it will enable Obama to gather information about the positions of the various sides to the conflict. Neither the Israeli-Palestinian nor the Israeli-Syrian conflicts is at this point ripe for settlement. The Israeli elections are scheduled for February 10, and there are serious disagreements among the three major parties, Kadima, Likud and Labor, as to how to move forward. At the same time, the split between the Palestinian Authority of Mahmoud Abbas, which controls the West Bank, and Hamas which controls Gaza, is growing greater by the day, as the cancellation of unity talks in

Cairo so clearly demonstrated. Meanwhile, Syria is obfuscating as to whether it would be willing to cut ties with Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran in return for Israel giving up the Golan Heights. With none of the conflicts appearing ripe for settlement, a special envoy could serve Obama by gathering information as to the positions of the parties, and imparting it to Obama. He would then have a firm base of information from which to operate when he finally has the time to devote to the Middle East.

Perhaps most importantly, a special envoy could advise Obama on whether or not it is worth investing scarce presidential time on the Syrian-Israeli conflict, as Bill Clinton did, albeit without success. Given the Israeli elections, the special envoy might best spend his or her time, at least initially, in trying to determine whether or not Syria is willing to pay the price of peace—cutting ties with Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran—or is just using the talks with Israel to try to improve its position with the United States. Should Bashar Asad of Syria not be serious about peace, as many skeptical Americans and Israelis believe, then the United States can discover this early in the Obama presidency, allowing the special envoy to devote his or her efforts to working on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On the other hand, if Asad is indeed serious about paying the price of peace, then the geopolitical advantages to the United States of a Syrian split with Iran and its proxies would be well worth the time spent on Syria by a U.S. special envoy.

In sum, even if Obama does not have the time to immediately deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict, his appointment of a special envoy will, at the minimum, commence his administration's involvement in trying to help find a solution to it.

[6] [7] Adam Garfinkle :: As I have written before and elsewhere, the idea of appointing a special envoy to, not the "Middle East," but to the Arab-Israeli arena early in the tenure of the next administration is a good one—but not necessarily for the reasons often advanced. The reasons for appointing someone prestigious but politically shrewd do not include actually advancing the so-called peace process, and they are not based on the myth of linkage—the empirically unsupportable idea that an Arab-Israeli diplomatic settlement would have a dramatic positive bearing on other regional problems. The real reasons are these:

1. Despite whatever progress has been made in the post-Annapolis process, the situation remains unripe for a breakthrough for lack of strong and credible leadership on all sides. Yet the optic of U.S. engagement remains important for other reasons. It makes it easier politically for several important Arab states to cooperate with the United States against Iranian intrigues. Supporting the morale of moderates on all sides may prevent things from sliding backwards. It can help keep the Europeans and others from baying excessively at the diplomatic moon in hopes of miracles that don't exist. And it may have some benign overwash on the tricky process of extracting ourselves from Iraq. The optic of leaving Iraq cannot be allowed to become one of failure or regional disengagement; that's why some exiting U.S. troops should go to Bahrain or Qatar or Kuwait and not home, and it's another reason why diplomatic engagement in the Levant can be at least marginally useful. We should want to spread out the newspaper headlines.
2. The optical approach will help keep the issue off the president's own desk; he has more important things to do both at home and abroad, and he doesn't need an albatross of diplomatic futility hung around his neck so early in his tenure.
3. A special envoy can help keep up the optic of engagement while the president's new team gets chosen, nominated, enmeshed in hearings and finally confirmed—a process that can take many months thanks to the ongoing dysfunction of Congress.

4. That envoy could be a useful point-man to help smooth what could be a rough Palestinian political transition in January—in case no one else is in place to do that job.

It is crucial that any special envoy understand the real purposes of his (or her) assignment, and not go forth as if tilting at windmills. That might only make things worse, and end up burdening the president rather than freeing him (temporarily at least) from this mess. As a famous 20th-century American philosopher once put it, "These things must be done delicately."

[8] ✖ [9]Josef Joffe :: First, forget the usual suspects like Bill Clinton, Colin Powell, Madeleine Albright or the likes of James Baker and Brent Scowcroft. The only American of weight who understands the duplicities and obsessions of the Middle East is Henry Kissinger. The handicap of his age can be turned into an advantage. Tell the players to come to New York, since Henry can't shuttle as he used to in 1974. They'll behave better than in Ramallah or Jerusalem.

But is it wise to appoint an envoy? The Middle East is like Detroit and General Motors: There is no solution, but any American administration has to act as if there were, as if yet another bout of shuttling or another \$25 billion will make GM competitive with Toyota. And so with the Middle East.

First of all, the so-called core of the problem, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has never been less at center-stage than it is now. It is dwarfed by the struggle for hegemony that pits Iranian ambitions (with Hamas and Hezbollah in tow) against the United States, Israel and the Sunni regimes. This is the central strategic issue. This is where, short of war, coalitions must be harnessed and containment strategies be organized. This is where regional conflict threatens to spill into the global arena. On that enlarged stage, extending from the Levant to Tehran, the Israeli-Palestinian issue has shrunk to almost negligible dimensions, which do not require the bulk of America's attention and resources.

Moreover, there is no two-state solution at hand because neither party actually wants one. Why such a counter-intuitive judgement? Israel has learned that it cannot relinquish strategic control over the West Bank, given the sorry aftermath of unilateral withdrawal from Gaza. It is "never again," even if a deal could be struck with Mahmoud Abbas, as it could not with Hamas. No imaginable Palestinian Authority can at this point assure a no-threat West Bank; hence, Israel cannot leave.

Nor does Abu Mazen have an interest in seeing the Israelis leave. For it is the IDF that guarantees not only his political, but his physical survival. This is a heartening irony—Israel protecting a Palestinian president. But there is no Palestinian state in this surprising twist of history.

Perhaps one day, Marwan Barghouti, currently in an Israeli jail for multiple murders, could acquire the leadership status that would allow him to prevail against Hamas and rule the West Bank, perhaps even Gaza, with an iron hand. But the time scale is askew here. "Envoy time" is measured in months, the evolution toward a new and stable political order in the lands of the Palestinian Authority should be measured in years—many years.

[10] ✖ [11]Mark N. Katz :: It has been widely reported that on November 18, Obama called Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas and told him that the United States "would spare no effort to facilitate a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians." Obama, then, should definitely appoint a special envoy for the Middle East.

As previous administrations have learned, efforts to achieve peace between Israel on the one hand and the Palestinians as well as neighboring Arab states on the other are extremely difficult and time consuming. Nor is there any guarantee that these efforts will succeed—as several previous American diplomatic initiatives have shown.

Because of the time commitment needed for seriously trying to achieve an Israeli-Palestinian settlement, neither the president nor the secretary of state should get immersed in the nitty-gritty negotiations that will be required. There is simply too much other important business for both of them that will not receive sufficient attention if either (or even more unfortunately, both) become overly involved in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Nor is this a task that the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs should undertake either, as this would leave precious little time for him or her to deal with America's many other important relationships in, as well as the other problems of, this region.

In short, for there to be any hope of an American-brokered Israeli-Palestinian settlement, it will have to be undertaken by someone whose sole task it is to try to achieve one. If this effort is successful, the president can—rightly—take the credit. But if it is unsuccessful, the blame can be assigned not so much to the president as to (yes, you guessed it) the Middle East envoy.

Of course, even with a Middle East envoy working on it full-time, the attempt to achieve an Israeli-Palestinian settlement will still take up more of President Obama's time than he may now anticipate. Although his desire to facilitate a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians is noble, he may find that there is a trade-off between "sparing no effort" on this and getting much of anything else accomplished.

[12] ✖ [13]Walter Reich :: The Arab-Israeli conflict has always been at least as complex as a game of three-dimensional chess. Not only are the problems between Israel and the Palestinians excruciatingly hard to solve. So are the problems between Israel and many of the other Arab parties.

Moreover, the strains within each party—among the Israelis, among the Palestinians, and among the Arabs in general—are very great, and each of them could cause any peace deal to unravel, implode or even explode.

As a result of this, no party has reason to feel confident that a peace deal would actually hold for very long. What would Hamas do before the ink on a peace agreement has dried? What would Hezbollah do? And what would stop the Arab world as a whole from renouncing the treaty once Israel withdraws, even if it's based on the 2002 Saudi peace initiative, which was endorsed by the Arab League? During a visit to Ramallah last July, then-candidate Obama reportedly told the head of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, that "the Israelis would be crazy not to accept" the Saudi initiative," which, he told Abbas, "would give them peace with the Muslim world from Indonesia to Morocco." Would it?

And would it now that the complexity of the Arab-Israeli conflict has been escalated from the level of three-dimensional chess to an even higher level by the fact that a truculent Iran, which is totally opposed not only to peace with Israel but with that country's very existence, has, according to nuclear inspectors, finally produced enough nuclear material to make, with further purification, a nuclear bomb? What would Iran do if such a peace deal were signed?

Some argue that, despite this complexity, it's precisely because of the specter of a nuclear Iran that

a peace deal is finally possible: many Arab countries, especially the Saudis, are frightened of this, they argue, and would put muscle behind a peace deal. Moreover, they say, getting a deal, even on paper, might make it easier for the United States to leave Iraq.

Maybe so, and maybe Obama should indeed enter these dangerous waters by naming a Middle East envoy and starting negotiations actively and energetically right away. The risks might be great, but the rewards might be even greater.

Yet the challenge for Obama has grown enormously as a result of the global financial meltdown, which has complicated all of his agendas, both domestic and foreign. Can he afford to take a major, well-publicized gamble and get stuck in the familiar morass of failure? An immense amount of hope has been invested in him and his capacities to save America and the world during this period of economic crisis. Can he afford to dissipate this hope by failing in a very visible and early bid to solve a problem that, until now, has proved insoluble?

At the least, Obama should wait to find out who will win the Israeli elections in February. One candidate, Tzipi Livni, would surely support a major peace-deal initiative. Her opponent, Benjamin Netanyahu, presumably would not—though American pressure might well cause him to change his mind. But events in the Arab/Muslim world, especially in connection with Iran, a major terrorist attack, a crisis elsewhere, or a worsening global economy, could well cause Obama to put all of his plans regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict on hold.

Given these risks and uncertainties, I don't think Obama should name a peace envoy now. Certainly, he can wait until February. Meanwhile, this new American leader, who based his candidacy on the theme of change, is about to experience a lot of it, both domestically and internationally, and most of it not, alas, under his control.

[14] [15] Robert Satloff :: Candidate Obama promised he would appoint a special Middle East envoy. President Obama's decision whether to fulfill that promise depends a) on the purpose of the appointment and b) on the personality of the envoy.

Appointing an envoy makes a lot of sense if the purpose is to signal heightened, sustained and political-level interest on the part of the new Obama administration in key aspects of Arab-Israeli relations, recognizing that a breakthrough toward Israeli-Palestinian peace cannot occur until vital structural factors are put into place. These include building Arab acceptance of Israel as a Jewish state (i.e., putting flesh on the bones of the Arab peace initiative); developing Palestinian security forces as an effective instrument in the fight against terrorism, incitement and corruption; investing in the array of social/economic initiatives currently championed by Tony Blair; and extending the political legitimacy of Mahmoud Abbas past the original end of his term of office to prevent a void of Palestinian leadership and an easy political victory for Hamas.

Appointing an envoy does not make sense if the idea is to signal American urgency for achieving an early peace breakthrough, the pursuit of which is both impractical and counter-productive in the near term. Nor does it make sense if the envoy views his/her mission as the vehicle to repair America's relations with the wider Arab and Muslim "worlds," which is a burden that Israelis and Palestinians should not have to bear.

Given this analysis, the personality of a proposed envoy is important. The particular choice should

be someone endowed with patience, persistence, and a willingness to pass the baton to someone else – perhaps the president, perhaps the secretary of state, perhaps another envoy – depending on circumstances. This is not the job for someone who believes that the end of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be achieved on his/her watch or someone who views this responsibility as the path to a Nobel Prize.

More broadly, under certain circumstances, it makes sense to empower an envoy to be the lead person on both Arab-Israeli and the Iran issues, given that the Iran issue is the most significant strategic factor in Arab and Israeli thinking these days and that demands made of key regional states (i.e., Arabs ) on the Iran issue will be met in turn with demands made of America and Israel on the peace process. Efficiency suggests, therefore, that it is better for a single empowered envoy be capable of holding serious conversations on the issue with his counterparts abroad, who in most circumstances will be the same person. The danger here, however, is of feeding a negative concept of "linkage"–the idea that "if only Israel were to do x, y, z then all the problems of the Middle East would be solved." This means that anyone asked to fill this broadened envoy portfolio would have to be someone inoculated from the linkage bug, someone who understands the Middle East as it is, not as we Americans would like it to be.

[16] [17]Raymond Tanter :: Whether it is wise to appoint an envoy for the Middle East depends on the president-elect's planned focus of attention, whether he intends to have a White House-driven or cabinet-driven administration, and whether he would like to encourage or suppress differences in recommendations to the White House within and from the State Department.

If the president-elect wishes to focus on the economy from the White House, he should have a strong secretary of state, which would argue against having an envoy for the Middle East. However, if the secretary of state were to be given a substantial part of the action on international economy, a Middle East envoy would be desirable. Likewise, if it looks as if policy-driving national security events from the region merit an overarching strategy developed within the White House, he may wish to have a less prominent secretary of state, a strong national security advisor, and an envoy who reports to the White House and State. And if the president-elect wishes to encourage a process of "multiple advocacy" at State, then an envoy with direct reporting to the White House and to the secretary of state would be warranted.

Consider historical examples to illustrate these principles. During the Nixon administration, the president desired highly centralized foreign policy formulation from the White House, at the expense of State. In this regard, Nixon's national security advisor, Henry Kissinger, played the envoy role in the Middle East, as well as in virtually every other important theater.

In the Reagan administration, I was the White House liaison to Middle East envoy Ambassador Philip Habib, who had an office at State and reported regularly to President Reagan. Although Secretary of State Alexander Haig was at first not keen on sharing the action with the White House, his personal affinity for Habib and me minimized bureaucratic rivalry.

President Clinton chose resolution of Arab-Israeli disputes as the area in which he would make his foreign policy legacy, and so appointed Dennis Ross "Special Middle East Coordinator." Having Ross at the White House allowed Clinton to organize a last-ditch effort at Camp David during 2000. Although the outcome left much to be desired, it was more the responsibility of Yasser Arafat than the division of labor among Americans or the fault of any of them.

If President-elect Obama decides to appoint an envoy for the Middle East, this person should have a

writ that includes a larger region than the Arab-Israel zone, to coordinate contact groups of allies for interrelated problems, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. Such contact groups might resolve pressing issues like the future status of the Iranian dissidents in Iraq, an Awakening Council model for the Taliban in Afghanistan, and developing leverage against the Iranian regime by reaching out to its opposition in advance of higher level American negotiations with Iran. An envoy would coordinate these issues as part of a strategic architecture for a similar area of responsibility as CENTCOM.

[18] [19] Tamara Cofman Wittes :: Obama stated repeatedly during the campaign his intention to devote early and focused attention to the Middle East peace process. Since the transition period is mostly about structure and personnel, observers are naturally focused on the question of whether to appoint a special envoy for the peace process. But to my mind the question is misplaced.

In a bureaucracy, structure is power—but appointing an envoy does not necessarily convey much power or many resources to a diplomatic effort on behalf of Arab-Israeli peace. A special envoy without many staff, or one who is not situated at a senior level within (or above) the State Department bureaucracy, will not have the authority or capacity to mobilize efforts across the department, and will therefore not have as much impact as an envoy with his/her own office and a reporting line direct to the president or the secretary of state. So structure matters, and appointing an envoy does not alone produce the required structure.

Furthermore, effective peace process diplomacy is more than having the right mediator in the room with the warring parties; it must bring in key Arab governments, key U.S. military and intelligence resources, and key external stakeholders—meaning that, to be effective, a peace process envoy must be able to call on the full range of executive branch resources, from U.S. ambassadors at post to CENTCOM planners. Most crucially, an effective peace process envoy must be able to represent the president and bring the president’s personal engagement to bear at the right times.

Thus, the key question is not whether there will be a special envoy, but whether the person taking the point on Arab-Israeli affairs—whoever he may be—will carry with him the authority and credibility of the U.S. president. The local actors all have, or aspire to have, special relationships with Washington. They will not respond well to any diplomatic envoy who cannot both symbolize and operationalize a direct link to the American president. Whether the point person is a special envoy or the secretary of state is less important than whether she can speak on behalf of Obama, and whether she can bring Obama into the process at those critical moments when he needs to weigh in. So the identity of Obama’s peace processor will be crucial—much more crucial than her title.

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## Solving the Iranian dilemma (2008-11-24 04:01)

From [1]Mark T. Clark



One of the more pressing problems facing the new administration of Barack Obama will be dealing with the incipient Iranian nuclear program. During the primaries and election, Obama only said that we will need a robust international effort to stop the program. Broadly speaking, however, he seems inclined towards nuclear disarmament, opposed to nuclear deterrence, and disinclined to use conventional military force. Given the repeated failure of diplomatic efforts to halt Iran's program, it is difficult to predict the types of proposals the new administration may consider. However, at least one has been proffered.

The first of presumably many new proposals was made recently by David Albright and Andrea Scheel of the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS). In their [2]publication, Albright and Scheel fret that countries in the "conflict-prone" region of the Middle East are planning the addition of at least 12-13 new civil nuclear power reactors and that such countries may acquire, through reprocessing, enough plutonium for as many as 1,700 nuclear weapons by 2020. The authors note that many countries could pursue nuclear weapons development "[b]ecause of growing insecurity in the Middle East resulting from Iran's nuclear progress in defiance of United Nations Security Council demands..."

The authors believe that the next administration must take the lead in getting all the other Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) countries to condition the sale of nuclear reactors on the requirement that recipient states agree to greater transparency of their nuclear power programs. The NSG countries should "insist on adequate international inspections of these countries, including the adoption of the Additional Protocol, and develop mechanisms to remove spent fuel from the region." The Additional Protocol to the Safeguards Agreement, monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency, is designed to provide more intrusive inspections of a country's nuclear program.

The authors note that "[t]raditional safeguards are not adequate to detect countries conducting secret plutonium separation or enrichment efforts." Several states of the Middle East, including Algeria, Iraq, Iran, Libya and Syria, avoided detection on clandestine nuclear programs while adhering to traditional inspections by the IAEA. So at first blush, their proposals may seem to appear sensible.

Yet while the authors seem to recognize some of the underlying problems, their solution(s) simply ignore them. In this technically competent but politically naïve piece, the authors acknowledge the following: Iran's nuclear program is the impetus for the other states in the Middle East to pursue nuclear weapons, yet no

new effort to enforce existing sanctions or regimes is proposed. Iran suspended its compliance with the Protocol in 1996, and the authors have no answer to Iran's actions. To top it off, Russia—a principal NSG country—continues to construct the Bushehr reactor despite Iran's actions. Egypt announced in 2007 that it will not sign the Protocol, but Russia has not attempted to prevent its firms from bidding on a nuclear reactor at El Dabaa. In each case, the political will to build nuclear weapons or support the building of the infrastructure necessary for these weapons is simply ignored. A new "norm" that ignores the failure of more fundamental norms of nonproliferation seems unlikely to work any better.

But the authors go further. The authors exhort the incoming Obama administration to make it a key priority to persuade Israel to join in negotiating a universal treaty that bans the production of plutonium and highly enriched uranium. In the interim, they argue, the Obama administration should press Israel to suspend any production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

If it strikes the reader as odd that the authors do not recommend any actions against the recalcitrant state, Iran, but do against a state, Israel, that is not a member of the Nonproliferation Treaty, there may be a reason. As Stephen Walt argued years ago in his book, *The Origins of Alliances* (before he flip-flopped on all his work about how states behave under the influence of domestic actors), of all the states in the world, only the United States had some measure of control over Israel's behavior, some means to influence the course of their actions. The United States had no comparable influence with other states, and neither did the Soviet Union over its erstwhile allies in the Middle East. The authors want success only where it can be had, with Israel, but not where the thornier problem of political will resides, with Iran.

Solutions that push for universal norms, while ignoring political realities, will produce illogical prescriptions. The central problem of Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons remains unaddressed by the authors' proposals, and ignores the more troubling concern with Russia's irresponsible actions as a principal NSG country.

Other strategies are available, strategies that do not require force. A strategy of targeting Iranian banking practices has been shown to be an effective "sanction" on Iranian behavior, cited in a [3]recent article. Other "smart sanctions" may be available to the new administration, [4]including targeting Iran's reliance on importing gasoline.

The ISIS proposal is probably the first of many proposed "solutions" to come that address the problem of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. It won't be the last. One can hope, however, that the new administration will heed wiser counsel to address the tougher problem of dealing with Iran's drive towards nuclear weapons. In this case, wiser counsel may focus on policies that address the source of the problem, and not the symptoms.

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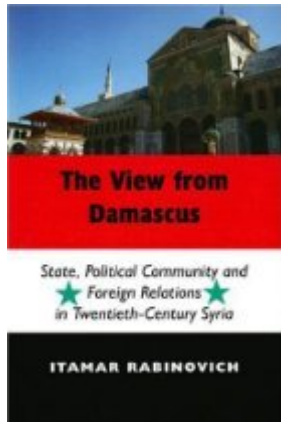
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### 'The View from Damascus' (2008-11-26 09:44)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Itamar Rabinovich was Israel's chief negotiator with Syria, and is visiting professor of public policy at the Harvard Kennedy School. His new

book is *The View from Damascus: State, Political Community and Foreign Relations in Twentieth-Century Syria*.

From [1]Itamar Rabinovich



[2] *The View from Damascus* is a collection of 21 essays and chapters that I have published over the years. The original idea of putting such a volume together came from the late Frank Cass, the London publisher. I then went over more than 30 essays and chapters with two questions in mind: Did each of them merit reproduction, thirty, twenty or ten years after original publication? And did the twenty essays that passed the test fit together as a coherent book rather than a loose collection of disparate essays and chapters dealing with the same country? The answer to the second question is inherent in the book's subtitle: "State, Political Community and Foreign Relations in Twentieth-Century Syria." The essays chosen do indeed fall neatly into these three major categories.

Syria's transformation from a "geographic term" (to use Metternich's language) into a state is an interesting and, in some respects, an unfinished tale. In the late 19th and early 20th century, the term referred to "Geographic" or "Natural" Syria (practically the Levant) and several of the essays deal with the contending concepts of the would-be Syrian entity and with the course of events that culminated in the creation of an independent Syrian state in its present boundaries. The tension between the notion and vision of a "Greater Syria" and the reality of the truncated Syrian state accounted for the latter's weakness during the early decades of its existence as well as for its irredentist claims, first and foremost over Lebanon.

The conflict over the nature of the political community that inhabits or should inhabit the Syrian state is closely related to the conflicts over its territorial definition. During most of the 20th century, Arabism was the dominant ideology in Syria, but Arabism has a Sunni-Muslim tincture and the Christian and heterodox Shiite sects that form a significant part of Syria's population refused to be marginalized. Several of the essays deal with the impact of these tensions on political ideologies and parties in Syria and with the remarkable process that catapulted the downtrodden Alawi minority to the pinnacle of power in Syria.

In coping with such themes as the role of ethnicity in Syrian's modern history and politics, the advantage of dealing with the 20th century as a whole becomes evident. It is easy to trace the line from the French policy of cultivating the minorities as a bulwark against the hostility of the Arab-Sunni majority through the attraction of Alawis to military service and to the secularism of the Baath party to political domination based on the predominance of Baathist Alawi army officers since the 1960s.

The accent of the essays dealing with foreign relations is on two themes: Syria's transformation under Hafez al-Asad from a weak state to a powerful regional actor, and the evolution of its relationship with Israel from the pure hostility of earlier decades to the mix of conflict and negotiations since 1991.

The volume's concluding essay is taken from a forthcoming monograph written for the Saban Center at Brookings and dealing with the trilateral relationship between Washington, Jerusalem and Damascus during the past eight years. It was written with an eye to the unfolding policy debate in the United States and Israel. Several scenarios and options are sketched but priority is given to one. If the Obama administration wants to resume an active role in Arab-Israeli affairs, the Syrian track has several advantages over the Palestinian one. The emphasis on that track has shifted since its heyday in the 1990s. The cutting-edge issue is the prospect of detaching Syria from Iran, thereby transforming the geopolitical landscape in the region. The problem is that Syria is likely to play a familiar game and seek to straddle the line. Whether Washington and Jerusalem will find the effective negotiating strategies which eluded them so often in the past, remains an open question.

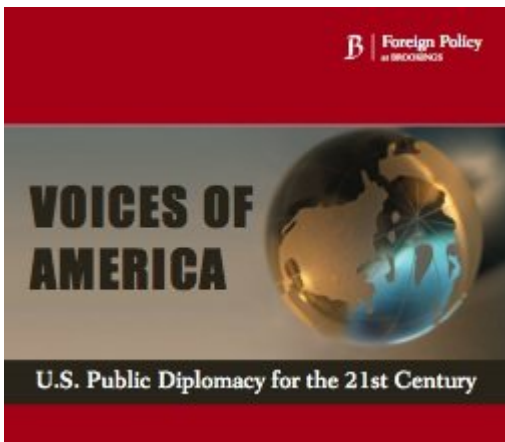
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## 2.12 December

### Missing the mission of public diplomacy (2008-12-02 01:23)

From [1]Robert Satloff



There are many sound, intelligent and practical ideas in Kristin Lord's [2]new Brookings report on reforming U.S. public diplomacy, titled "Voices of America." These include cross-cutting suggestions for effective public-private partnerships in public diplomacy; bureaucratic improvements, such as appointing deputy assistant secretaries in all regional bureaus at State with specific PD responsibility; and a review of how our international broadcasting could more effectively be integrated into our global public diplomacy effort. The "big idea" in the report is twofold: don't create a major new government institution (a rejuvenated USIA or, my own preferred option, a Cabinet-level Department of International Cooperation) but instead establish a new more modest and streamlined public-private entity called USA-World Trust that can nimbly do PD at arm's length from the federal government. In making this proposal, Brookings joins a list of other think-tanks and other semi-official agencies calling for some form of new quasi-government/quasi-private agency to solve the PD riddle.

All this is interesting and useful... but regrettably unsatisfying. The tactics are there; what is missing

is mission, purpose and strategy.

In the post-9/11 era, the purpose of public diplomacy is not some amorphous desire to have America better understood or even the more pointed objective of winning the support of international public opinion for U.S. foreign policy. Yes, that is all part of it but there is so much more. Indeed, there is a unique public diplomacy mission of our age, just as there was a unique public diplomacy mission of the Cold War era. Today, that mission is how to identify, nurture and support mainstream Muslims in the ideological and political contest against radical Islamism and how to win backing for such efforts from nations and peoples in non-Muslim societies around the world. Everything that is new and special about America's public diplomacy effort should be targeted toward that goal.

Alas, there is none of this in the Brookings report—no discussion of radical Islamism (or any of its terminological variants); no discussion of the ideological contest that undergirds the "war on terror;" no discussion of the role that mainstream Muslims play on the front lines of this battle; and no discussion of the vital role that innovative public diplomacy can play in helping our allies defeat these enemies of peace and freedom.

That is a shame. A lot of brainpower went into this report, and many of its conclusions, if implemented, would improve the machinery of our public diplomacy effort. But this is, at its core, a report whose animating idea is that America's public diplomacy problem in the world is largely of our own making. It took the Bush Administration seven years before, as [3]enunciated by Undersecretary Jim Glassman, it recognized that public diplomacy is mainly about "them" (empowering mainstream Muslims to compete with and defeat radical Islamists) and not about "us" (harnessing our best researchers, pollsters, and marketeers to improve the American brand). We have suffered too much to go backwards. This report, while avoiding the worst PD excesses of the early Bush years, is at best a lateral step at a time when we need to be moving forward on what is surely one of the most critical issues of our era.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

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Kristin Lord (2008-12-10 03:09:31)

Amidst some praise for the new Brookings report, [1] *Voices of America: U.S. Public Diplomacy for the 21st Century*, Rob Satloff [2] argues that the document is all tactics, no mission—and that the mission should be to counter radical Islamism. Satloff will not be surprised that I, the report's author, disagree with him. But he may be surprised about why. In fact, I concur with Satloff's core premise: that supporting Muslims who wish to counter radical Islamism, and especially its violent expression, should be a vital part of U.S. foreign policy. This view is consistent with the strategy laid out in the report and the tactics and organization are there to support it. Moreover, like Satloff, I view the spread of radical Islamist ideologies as part of a broader struggle within the Muslim world, a struggle that will be settled largely by Muslims themselves. That said, I do reject the notion that countering radical ideologies should be the exclusive focus of U.S. public diplomacy or that, as Satloff argues, "Everything that is new and special about America's public diplomacy effort should be targeted to that goal." To quote from *Voices of America*,

The changes advocated in this report will aid our nation's fight against terrorists and their vicious ideologies. Yet this fight is not our only challenge. We also must build international coalitions to address climate change, confront nuclear proliferation, encourage the wavering to choose democracy and freedom, and condemn the territorial invasion of the weak by the strong.

In other words, U.S. foreign policy must respond to a wide range of opportunities and a wide range of threats. Public diplomacy, an instrument of statecraft akin to military force or economic influence, should be applied to serve

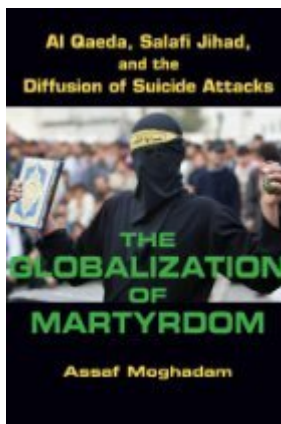
that full range of strategic and tactical ends. As important as it may be, countering radical ideologies is just one of them. Of course, as Satloff rightly suggests, the goals of public diplomacy should be defined and prioritized in a strategy. Thus, the Brookings report calls for an annual and interagency public diplomacy strategy, per the bipartisan Smith-Thornberry Amendment in the 2009 Defense Authorization Bill (H.R. 5658), that is closely aligned with the national security strategy. To quote the report, that strategy "should include, but should not be limited to, countering terrorism and the extremist ideologies that nourish and sustain terrorist networks." The report does not lay out a national security strategy for the United States. Instead, it confines itself to analyzing the evolving global conditions in which public diplomacy must operate, the strategic ends it can serve, and the many tactical forms it can take. It recommends a framework for thinking about public diplomacy, how to marry it to a broader foreign policy strategy, how to tap the expertise and dynamism of the private and non-profit sectors, and how to create a national architecture for public diplomacy that is flexible enough to respond to global change. Just as public diplomacy should advance a wide range of objectives, a wide range of instruments should be used to combat radical Islamist extremists. Military force, financial sanctions, restrictions on movement, and many other tools should also be used, in a coordinated and directed fashion, to counter this very real threat. In short, public diplomacy should not be synonymous with the so-called "war of ideas" (by this or any other name) and the "war of ideas" should not be synonymous with public diplomacy. The concepts intersect, but they are far from identical. As a final point, Satloff argues that the core premise of the report is that "America's public diplomacy problem in the world is largely of our own making." That statement is both an inaccurate reflection of the report's philosophy and an overstatement of America's power to shape the world around us. The true premise of the report is that the world is evolving in ways that will only make public diplomacy more important and that the United States must adapt to this change. America is well equipped to rise to this challenge, with deep wells of resources to draw on. *Voices of America* recommends concrete steps to tap those resources, inside our government, across our society, and around the world. Though I respectfully disagree with Dr. Satloff, I welcome his critique. U.S. public diplomacy will improve if more thoughtful people like Satloff engage in the debate. In public diplomacy, such dialogue is still far too uncommon and the link to broader national security debates is still far too weak. [3]Kristin Lord is a fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies Program and the Saban Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings Institution.

1. [http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2008/11\\_public\\_diplomacy\\_lord.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2008/11_public_diplomacy_lord.aspx)
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/12/missing-the-mission-of-public-diplomacy/>
3. <http://www.brookings.edu/experts/lordk.aspx>

### 'The Globalization of Martyrdom' (2008-12-05 07:05)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Assaf Moghadam is a research fellow at the Combating Terrorism Center at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, and a member of MESH. His new book is *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*.

From [1]Assaf Moghadam



[2] The Globalization of Martyrdom is the product of a more than decade-long,

intensive interest I have taken in studying suicide terrorism.

In this book, I argue that two distinct patterns of suicide terrorism have evolved. The vast majority of studies on suicide terrorism to date have focused on the traditional pattern of "localized" suicide attacks carried out by such groups as Hezbollah, the LTTE ("Tamil Tigers"), Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Fatah, and the PKK—the groups responsible for the bulk of suicide attacks during the 1980s and 1990s. Although these groups continue to be fervent enemies of Israel, Sri Lanka, and Turkey, and most continue to plot violent attacks against their foes, most suicide attacks today are perpetrated by other groups, targeting different countries. Especially since 9/11, suicide missions by Al Qaeda, its affiliates, and other Salafi-Jihadist groups have risen exponentially, far outnumbering the attacks conducted by the previously dominant groups. They also target far more countries than have other groups before, and their attacks are more deadly. For these reasons, suicide attacks by Al Qaeda and its associated movements are the new epicenter of this deadly phenomenon and form a new pattern of "globalized" suicide attacks.

I argue that existing explanations of suicide attacks, most notably the notions that suicide terrorism are the result of [3]foreign occupation or [4]organizational outbidding, [5]fail to account for the global proliferation of this tactic. I believe that the reason for the spread of suicide attacks instead lies in the evolution of Al Qaeda into a global terrorist actor and in the growing appeal of its guiding ideology, the Salafi Jihad. *The Globalization of Martyrdom* describes in detail how both Al Qaeda and Salafi-Jihadist ideology place utmost importance on the two core elements of the globalization of suicide attacks: the element of suicide operations, and the globalization of terrorist activity.

As I write in the opening passages of the book, my interest in this particularly sinister tactic began in the mid-1990s, when I witnessed the devastating consequences of one of the first early campaigns of suicide terrorism as a college student in Jerusalem. My early fascination with this tactic led me to write my masters' thesis on Palestinian suicide terrorism, and later a doctoral dissertation examining the global proliferation of this modus operandi. Based on my dissertation, *The Globalization of Martyrdom* provides a history of suicide missions and their precursors from the biblical Samson to the murder of Benazir Bhutto; a description of the importance of suicide attacks for Al Qaeda and other Salafi-Jihadist groups; and detailed case studies of suicide attacks in modern theaters ranging from Afghanistan, Algeria, Chechnya, and Iraq to Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and half a dozen other countries. My findings are based in part on an analysis of a dataset of nearly 1,300 suicide attacks between 1981 and April 2007. (I recently updated that data set to 1,857 suicide attacks which I analyze in an article forthcoming in *International Security*.)

*The Globalization of Martyrdom* highlights the importance of ideology—an issue neglected in nearly all existing studies of suicide attacks. Examining the wills, farewell videos, and other reports about suicide attackers, I found that many of the suicide bombers echo Salafi-Jihadist doctrines. They adopt the general worldview offered by this ideology; the same diagnosis about the reasons for Islam's relative decline; the belief that Islam is attacked by an evil coalition; and the argument that their personal participation in martyrdom operations is the ultimate proof of their religious devotion. They have internalized Al Qaeda's and its Salafi-Jihadist allies' broad conception of the enemy as being composed not only of Westerners in general, Christians, and Jews, but also of those Muslims whose beliefs and practices do not meet the standards set by Salafi-Jihadists. They also buy into the Salafi-Jihadist belief that martyrdom is the ultimate form of waging jihad.

In my conclusion, I suggest that while a strategy to counter suicide terrorism clearly consists of several important components, challenging Salafi-Jihadist ideology is among the more important and overlooked elements. It is incumbent particularly upon Muslims to challenge a threat that places them at even higher risk than it places Western countries, since it is an indisputable fact that Salafi-Jihadist terrorism kills Muslims in far greater numbers than it kills Westerners. The Salafi Jihad suffers from a fundamental contradiction:

on the one hand, it claims to act for the benefit of Islam; but on the other hand, Muslims suffer the consequences of Salafi-Jihadist ideology and terrorism more than any other group. Muslims should expose this fundamental hypocrisy as often and as forcefully as possible.

[6]Order from Publisher | [7]Amazon

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/assaf\\_moghadam/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/assaf_moghadam/)
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51WrVslMTmL.jpg>
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6. [http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/title\\_pages/9623.html](http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/title_pages/9623.html)
7. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0801890551>

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## MESH at one (2008-12-11 18:25)

From [1]Stephen Peter Rosen and [2]Martin Kramer



Last weekend marked the first anniversary of Middle East Strategy at Harvard (MESH), which we launched on December 5, 2007. Over the past year, MESH has provided a platform for expert discussions on a wide range of issues by an impressive array of authorities. The site has acquired a devoted readership in the United States and abroad, especially in Washington and the academy, and it benefits from incoming links from many other websites. There have been many spirited debates, all conducted by experts in their fields, and our unique format of keeping exchanges within a single thread of comments has created a user-friendly archive of enduring value. Our Middle East Papers [3]series has won praise, and we have had some valuable exchanges in the closed forum, [4]MESHNet.

In the next few weeks, we will be reviewing our model and considering improvements. We invite readers' comments on what we might do better. These will not be published, so write frankly and provide us with constructive feedback.

The mainstay of MESH is our members, who initiate blog postings and sustain discussions. They are listed on the right sidebar, and this is the moment to thank them for keeping MESH fresh and interesting. In addition, MESH benefits from other contributions, by experts invited to comment on posts, and by authors invited to launch their new books on the site. The following list is comprised of all persons—members and others—who contributed posts or comments in our first year. We are grateful to the many outstanding experts who have used this platform to articulate ideas. We take it as a vote of confidence in MESH, and in the high level of discussion and debate we have maintained to date.

Jonathan Adelman  
Fouad Ajami  
Farhana Ali  
Jon Alterman



Tony Badran  
Shmuel Bar  
Isaac Ben-Israel  
Louis René Beres  
Mia Bloom  
John R. Bradley  
Rex Brynen  
Daniel Byman  
J. Scott Carpenter  
Steven Caton  
Mark T. Clark  
Victor Comras  
Steven A. Cook  
Alan Dowty  
Michele Dunne  
John L. Esposito  
Andrew Exum  
Nabil Fahmy  
W. Taylor Fain  
Hillel Fradkin  
Lawrence Freedman  
Robert O. Freedman  
Aaron Friedberg  
Chuck Freilich  
Adam Garfinkle  
James K. Glassman  
Timur Goksel  
Richard N. Haass  
Bernard Haykel  
Thomas Hegghammer  
Charles Hill  
Michael Horowitz  
Blake Hounshell  
Raymond Ibrahim  
Efraim Inbar  
Martin Indyk  
Meir Javedanfar  
Bruce Jentleson  
Josef Joffe  
Efraim Karsh  
Mark N. Katz  
Nibras Kazimi  
Gilles Kepel  
Mehdi Khalaji  
Mark T. Kimmitt  
Martin Kramer  
Daniel C. Kurtzer  
Walter Laqueur  
Michael A. Ledeen  
Matthew Levitt

Bernard Lewis  
Robert J. Lieber  
James Lindsay  
Thomas W. Lippman  
Kristin Lord  
Gal Luft  
Edward Luttwak  
Ze'ev Maghen  
Kanan Makiya  
Michael Mandelbaum  
Peter R. Mansoor  
William McCants  
Steven Metz  
Aaron David Miller  
Assaf Moghadam  
Marwan Muasher  
Malik Mufti  
Joshua Muravchik  
Jacqueline Newmyer  
Joseph S. Nye, Jr.  
Marc J. O'Reilly  
Lindsey O'Rourke  
Reuven Paz  
Vivien Pertusot  
Itamar Rabinovich  
Michael Radu  
Magnus Ranstorp  
Walter Reich  
Michael Reynolds  
Peter W. Rodman  
Stephen Peter Rosen  
Bruce Riedel  
Barry Rubin  
Michael Rubin  
Amnon Rubinstein  
James R. Russell  
Philip Carl Salzman  
Priya Satia  
Robert Satloff  
Paul L. Scham  
Jonathan Schanzer  
David Schenker  
Michael Scheuer  
Yoram Schweitzer  
Ofira Seliktar  
Emad Shahin  
Harvey Sicherman  
Peter Sluglett  
Lee Smith  
Asher Susser

Raymond Tanter  
Monica Duffy Toft  
Reidar Visser  
Ruth Wedgewood  
Tamara Cofman Wittes  
Steven A. Yetiv  
Michael Young  
Robert Zelnick  
Eyal Zisser

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)
  2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)
  3. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/papers/>
  4. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/meshnet/>
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## Death wish of Al Qaeda (2008-12-15 09:04)

From [1]Walter Reich



What's the meaning of the offer last week by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and four other Guantánamo detainees to plead guilty to the charge that they coordinated the attacks of 9/11 that murdered nearly 3,000 Americans?

That meaning is revealed by the fact that they withdrew their offer as soon as they learned that procedural problems—and probably the timetable of the presidential transition—could interfere with their immediate executions.

The plea offer—and its withdrawal—should help us understand what drives Mohammed and his colleagues. And it should help the Obama administration understand what to do about the Guantánamo detainees.

What drives Mohammed and his co-defendants, now that they're in captivity, is what drove Al Qaeda when it flew planes into the World Trade Center: the effort to achieve a spectacular show of martyrdom. But who is their primary audience now that they're in Guantánamo?

Clearly, that audience is not made up of Westerners. To be sure, were these detainees to make impassioned speeches before their executions proclaiming their joy in dying in response to the victimization of Muslims, a few in the West might admire their dedication to their cause. For most in America and Europe, though, that dedication would be outweighed by the mass murders for which they claimed responsibility.

More likely, the detainees' offer to plead guilty was aimed at a Muslim audience. It was aimed, first of all, at an audience of hard-core Al Qaeda members, for whom the achievement of a death-wish would be

seen as a commitment to martyrdom that they should emulate. And it was aimed at the rest of the Muslim world in the hope that it would highlight the Al Qaeda's grievances and enlist recruits to the Islamist jihad against the Western oppressors.

In pursuing this strategy, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and his co-defendants were trying to use Guantánamo, as the World Trade Center was used, as a symbol of the hated America—an America that could be damaged by turning American power against itself. In the case of the World Trade Center, American power consisted of prominent buildings that symbolized the financial might of a corrupt America, which were destroyed spectacularly by flying Western-made planes into them. In the case of Guantánamo, American power consists of detention facilities that symbolize the legal system of a corrupt America, which would be destroyed by forcing that system to turn its inmates into martyrs.

And in pursuing this strategy, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed was following Al Qaeda's playbook to the letter. He was using whatever stage is available to publicize his cause, to demonstrate his commitment, and to provide a big show. His hope was that the show would be spread virally on television, in newspapers and on the Internet to an audience of believers and potential believers in the Muslim world, bucking up the convictions of the believers and recruiting, to the believing camp, many more.

So what is to be done?

Clearly, what's needed in response to terrorists is the legal pursuit of legal means in the service of legal ends. The plans of the incoming Obama administration, which seem to include the transfer of inmates to U.S. prisons, may eliminate the Guantánamo stigma from America's legal response to the terrorism aimed at it.

But what's needed no less is a careful consideration of the consequences, for Al Qaeda and its sympathizers, of executions that would be interpreted as glorious outcomes of glorious martyrdom operations. The Bush administration has sought the death penalty for convicted mass-murdering terrorists. It would be the better part of wisdom for an Obama administration to favor, instead, life in prison.

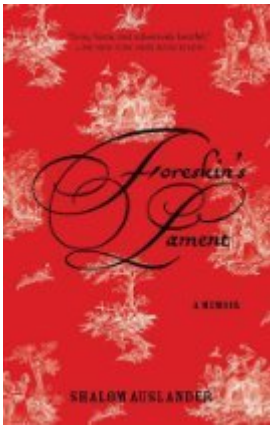
1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_reich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_reich/)

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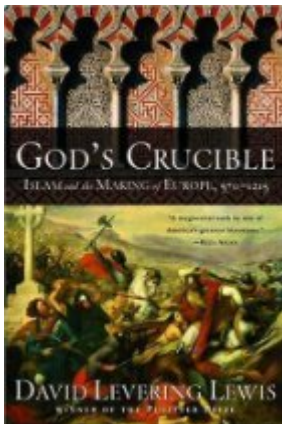
### Holiday reading 2008 (2008-12-17 10:32)



With the holidays fast approaching, MESH has asked its members to recommend books you might give as a gift or read by the fire. (For more information on a book, or to place an order with Amazon through the MESH bookstore, click on the book title or cover.)

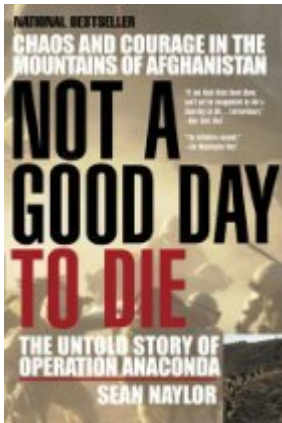


[1] [2]Jon Alterman :: For those who despair reading still more about the Middle East but who find it frivolous to read something that has nothing to do with Semites at all, Shalom Auslander's [3]Foreskin's Lament is the answer. Auslander's book is a hilarious romp through his adolescence in an Orthodox Jewish community in Monsey, New York. Shoplifting, sexual aids, and premarital sex all make unlikely appearances in this book. The battle running through the book is the way in which the author's deep religiosity plays off against his rather lax observance. Auslander believes fervently in a God who is endlessly tormenting him and punishing him for his excesses, and he just as fervently feels he should tell God to stick it. Auslander's eye for hypocrisy, his impatience with religious pieties, and his underlying outrageousness make this book laugh-out-loud funny, page after page. One can only hope the names in this book were changed to protect the innocent.



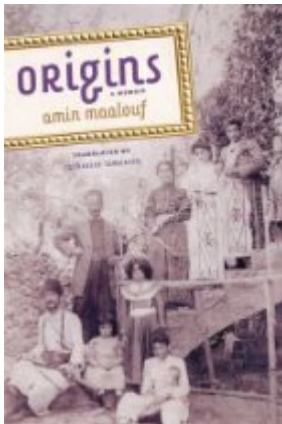
[4] [5]Daniel Byman :: [6]God's Crucible: Islam and the Making of Europe, 570-1215, by David Levering Lewis, is a quirky and wide-ranging book, covering the period of Islam's rise and spread. Unlike most histories of this period, Lewis is superb not only at detailing the struggles within the Arab world and Muslim community, but also at placing Islam's rise in context: we learn about imperial politics and dynamics that weakened Byzantium and the Sassanid empires and allowed the new religion to flourish and about Islam's competition with parts of Christian Europe (in particular the Franks). Much of the book focuses on Spain, where Islam flourished as Muslims and Christians traded with, taught, and warred against each other.

Lewis' writing is colorful yet clear, and he is an excellent storyteller. Scholars may note that there are large parts of the story that he doesn't cover or mentions only briefly (Byzantium, in my view, gets short shrift, particularly in the centuries after Islam's birth), but such gaps are inevitable for a book that covers such a vast period and region.



[7] [8]Mark T. Clark :: Sean Naylor's [9]Not a Good Day to Die: The Untold Story of Operation Anaconda is a good book for the holidays. Naylor, a war correspondent for the Army Times, narrates the U.S. military operation in March 2002 against the Taliban and remnants of Al Qaeda in the Shahikot Valley in Afghanistan. It was the largest military operation in Afghanistan after the action against the Taliban and Al Qaeda at Tora Bora.

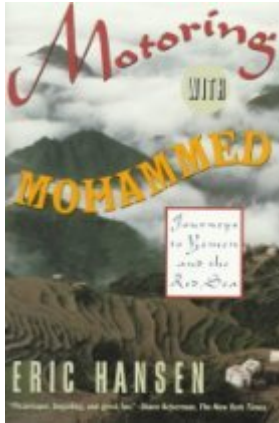
The well-written book is riveting for many reasons. First, it helps the reader understand the kinds of challenges the United States faces in fighting in Afghanistan; second, it shows some of the problems the United States has encountered while trying to avoid the mistakes of the Soviet Union; third, it reveals some early problems with Rumsfeld's transformation plans; fourth, Naylor's account demonstrates the difficulties of coordinating such a large operation with conventional and special operations forces in conjunction with CIA operatives and indigenous fighters. And fifth, it promises to help the reader anticipate some of the concerns we may have when the Obama administration shifts U.S. focus away from Iraq and towards the renewed conflict in Afghanistan.



[10] [11]Steven A. Cook :: I recommend Amin Maalouf's wonderful book about his family, [12]Origins. The first 75-125 pages are a bit of a slog, but once over that hump, Maalouf's work hums along as he traces the arc of his family's history from Lebanon to the United States to Cuba to France and back to Cuba. Largely because Maalouf is a writer of historical fiction, the book captures all the complexities of identity without the post-modernist jargon that often clouds the issue.

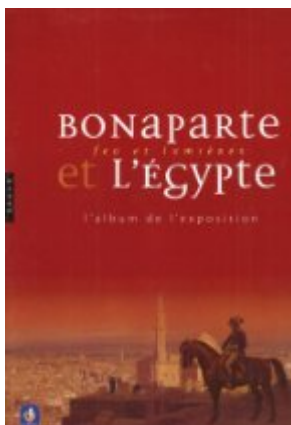
One of the most poignant moments early on in the book is Maalouf's discovery of a trunk filled with, among other items, his grandfather's correspondence. Maalouf's meticulous, yet also vaguely frantic efforts to organize the contents of the trunk represent the ambivalence of the assimilated émigré. He is content in the Parisian world of letters, but there is an inextricable pull to the ancestral village in the

mountains that hang over Beirut. The scene launches Maalouf on a journey to understand not only his grandfather's life, but also to comprehend the powerful nature of that force that connects him and his relatives to this place. The device for this meditation on identity and one's place in the globalizing world is the tension between the lives of Boutros, Maalouf's grandfather, and his brother Gebrayel who ventured from Lebanon in the late 19th century bound for New York City and ultimately Havana.



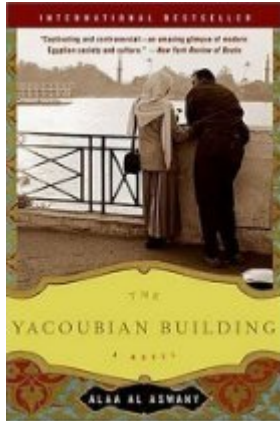
[13] [14]Mark N. Katz :: I love travel narratives, and since this is a recommendation for holiday reading, I'd like to call attention to one of my favorite Middle East travel narratives: Eric Hansen's [15]Motoring with Mohammed: Journeys to Yemen and the Red Sea. Yemen is frequently in the news, and the news from there never seems to be good. Yet as visitors to Yemen (including myself) have discovered, there is much that is friendly and attractive about this country that is little known not only to Westerners, but also to other Arabs.

In this book, Hansen conveys a strong sense of the country's rugged beauty and individualism. Though many outside Yemen fear the rise of radical Islam there, Hansen's descriptions of two widespread Yemeni customs—chewing qat (a mildly narcotic leaf) and carrying arms—suggest that this is not a country that Al Qaeda or other puritanical Islamist movements will find easy to dominate. Hansen, though, also discusses Yemen's many problems—which have largely grown worse since his book was published. More than anything else, *Motoring with Mohammed* provides a clear, understandable introduction to a country whose politics so often appear to be neither clear nor understandable.



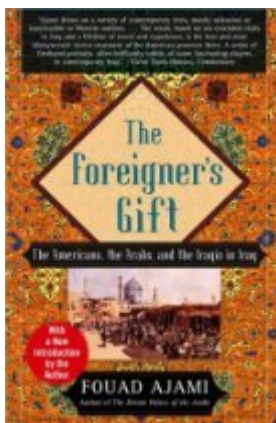
[16] [17]Martin Kramer :: The Institut du monde arabe in Paris is hosting a splendid show on Bonaparte in Egypt through March 19. I saw it, and couldn't resist the sumptuously illustrated catalogue, [18]Bonaparte et l'Égypte: feu et lumières. It's the next best thing to being there,

and a perfect souvenir or gift if you do get there over the holidays. Not only are all the exhibits shown and explained, but there are background essays by leading experts, including Henry Laurens on Egypt and the French Enlightenment, André Raymond on Mamluk Egypt, Abdul-Karim Rafeq on Bonaparte's Syrian expedition, and more. Despite its title, the exhibition covers Franco-Egyptian relations right up to the digging of the Suez Canal. There's lots to captivate, from a panoramic painting of the Battle of the Pyramids to a special bookcase designed to hold the *Description de l'Égypte*, on loan from the National Assembly. Safe to predict that two hundred years hence, our descendants won't be celebrating the cultural legacy of the invasion of Iraq. That's what makes the French great—even (and all too often) in defeat.



[19] [20]Walter Laqueur :: Read [21]The Yacoubian Building, a fascinating, astonishingly outspoken bestseller about the life of the dwellers of a well known building in Central Cairo dealing with the radicalization of Egyptian youth, the fate of the old elite, homosexuality, corruption and a great many other topics. The novel, written by a Chicago-trained Egyptian dentist, inspired a movie by the same name, as well as a television series (I liked the movie even better than the book).

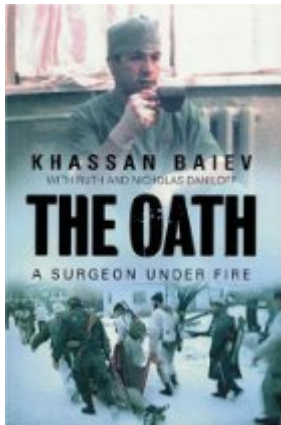
Also to be looked at (even if your Hebrew is a little rusty) is David Kroyanker's [22]new book about the (Jerusalem) German Colony. The author, architect and historian of architecture and Jerusalem, has dealt earlier on with half a dozen other sections of Jerusalem. This book, heavily illustrated and well researched, covers the history of this part of Jerusalem since the first Templars arrived from southwest Germany in mid-19th century. About every other house gets a write-up or illustration. Both a coffee table book and a serious study of wide interest.



[23] [24]Michael Mandelbaum :: [25]The Foreigner's Gift by Fouad Ajami, the most insightful book on the American encounter with Iraq, has three cardinal virtues. First, it takes



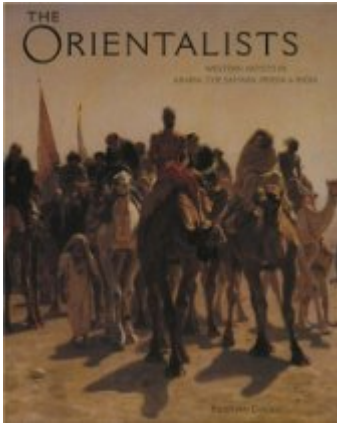
the measure of the people of Iraq as no other book has done, because unlike almost all other Iraq books, this one is written by a native speaker of Arabic with a deep familiarity with the history and culture of the Middle East, who visited the country frequently and traveled widely in it after 2003. Second, as the book's subtitle—The Americans, the Arabs, and the Iraqis in Iraq—indicates, the book deals in depth with the third party to the post-2003 events, describing how the rest of the Arab world worked to thwart the plans and crush the hopes of the other two. Third, the book is elegantly, often lyrically written. Anyone interested in the Middle East will find *The Foreigner's Gift* a pleasure to read even as he or she will come to understand better both the frustrations and tragedies since 2003 and the more recent hopes for better days in Iraq.



[26] [27]Michael Reynolds :: The best books for the holidays are ones that are accessible to a general reader yet manage to inform and open new vistas. My recommendation, the Chechen doctor Khassan Baiev's memoir of life and war in Chechnya, [28]*The Oath: A Surgeon Under Fire* is more than just accessible, informative, and stimulating. It is one of the most powerful stories I have read, and was written by one of the most extraordinary men I have ever met.

The book's title refers to Baiev's determination during the wars of Chechnya to fulfill his Hippocratic obligation to treat all wounded and sick, Chechen fighters and Russian servicemen alike. Baiev's loyalty to his profession's code led both sides eventually to identify him as a traitor and seek retribution, forcing Baiev to flee Chechnya in 2000. Fortunately, he was able to find asylum in the United States, where he put his story to paper.

Baiev's description of the laceration of Chechen society by war, radical Islamism, and crime in the years between 1994 and 2000 is exceptional in its intimacy, but the book offers more than a recounting of conflict in Chechnya. Through the story of his childhood and life in the former Soviet Union, Baiev allows the reader to see the Chechens, who more commonly are either celebrated cartoonishly as die hard opponents of Russian imperialism or pilloried wholesale as terrorists and gangsters, as people. Baiev's witness of human savagery unsettles at the core, yet his own example of courage inspires and offers hope.



[29] [30] Tamara Cofman Wittes :: [31] *Orientalists: Western Artists in Arabia, the Sahara, Persia and India*, by Kristian Davies, is beautifully produced, with many full-color plates and wonderful details of some great Orientalist paintings. But more importantly, Davies helps us understand how and why Western artists became fascinated with these "exotic" parts of the world, through a narrative that is mercifully free of academic aridity and political jaundice. His fresh approach resonates with his pure aesthetic enjoyment of the subject, and his delight at peeking into the worlds (the real world, and the ones in the artists' minds) that the paintings portray.

1. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1594483337>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon\\_alterman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon_alterman/)
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1594483337>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0393333566>
5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel\\_byman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel_byman/)
6. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0393333566>
7. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0425207870>
8. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_t\\_clark/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_t_clark/)
9. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0425207870>
10. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0374227322>
11. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven\\_a\\_cook/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven_a_cook/)
12. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0374227322>
13. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/067973855X>
14. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_n\\_katz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_n_katz/)
15. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/067973855X>
16. [http://www.amazon.fr/Bonaparte-1Egypte-lumi%C3%A8res-Jean-Marcel-Humbert/dp/2754103023/ref=pd\\_rhf\\_p\\_t\\_1](http://www.amazon.fr/Bonaparte-1Egypte-lumi%C3%A8res-Jean-Marcel-Humbert/dp/2754103023/ref=pd_rhf_p_t_1)
17. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)
18. [http://www.amazon.fr/Bonaparte-1Egypte-lumi%C3%A8res-Jean-Marcel-Humbert/dp/2754103023/ref=pd\\_rhf\\_p\\_t\\_1](http://www.amazon.fr/Bonaparte-1Egypte-lumi%C3%A8res-Jean-Marcel-Humbert/dp/2754103023/ref=pd_rhf_p_t_1)
19. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0060878134>
20. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_laqueur/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_laqueur/)
21. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0060878134>
22. [http://www.getit.co.il/BN\\_Direct/43574/](http://www.getit.co.il/BN_Direct/43574/)
23. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0743236688>
24. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_mandelbaum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_mandelbaum/)
25. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0743236688>
26. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0802714048>
27. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_reynolds/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_reynolds/)
28. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0802714048>
29. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0975978306>
30. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara\\_cofman\\_wittes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara_cofman_wittes/)
31. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0975978306>

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## War in Gaza: no upside for Egypt (2008-12-28 08:04)

From [1]Steven A. Cook



The events in Gaza over this weekend present a number of internal and external challenges for the Egyptian government, again raising questions about Cairo's capacity to deal effectively with regional crises. Needless to say, the Israeli Air Force's offensive against Hamas coming soon after Israel's Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni rebuffed Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's pleas for restraint in Gaza, reminds Egyptians of their manifest weakness. It also plays right into the hands of the Egyptian opposition, whether it is the Muslim Brotherhood, neo-Nasserists, or the nationalist left, who all believe that Cairo's alliance with Washington has brought Egypt to its knees, unable to oppose effectively Israeli policies in the region no matter how predatory. Israel's attacks in Gaza will inevitably radicalize Egypt's political discourse in much the same way they did after the July 2006 war in Lebanon, which placed Mubarak on the defensive.

In an effort to insulate itself from the domestic criticism sure to come and the inevitable calls to take some sort of punitive action against Israel, the Egyptians almost immediately summoned Shalom Cohen, Jerusalem's ambassador in Cairo, for a dressing down with Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit. In addition, in order to avoid the public relations disaster they experienced when Hamas breached Egypt's border with Gaza last January, the Egyptians swung open the Rafah crossing to facilitate evacuation of the wounded. Still, these actions are unlikely to mollify Mubarak's many domestic critics, especially since Aboul Gheit—at the same time he was seething about Israeli murder in Gaza—was implicitly laying a good deal of the blame for the outbreak of hostilities on Hamas, who resisted Egyptian entreaties to resume a dialogue with Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah.

Beyond the domestic difficulties that are likely to result from Israel's airstrikes, a weakened Hamas is likely going to be more difficult for Egypt's General Intelligence chief, General Omar Suleiman, to corral. The June 18 ceasefire was predicated in part on Hamas' ability to prevent other militant factions like Islamic Jihad and the Fatah-affiliated Al Aqsa Martyrs brigade from launching rockets on Israel. When the dust settles in Gaza, however, Suleiman and his emissaries are likely to find a significantly altered political environment in which Hamas is unable to impose its will on others or is even amenable to any efforts to reestablish the ceasefire. In other words, the Egyptians are going to be confronted with turmoil, lawlessness, and the increased possibility of factional violence in Gaza.

Although the Egyptians generally distrust and dislike Hamas, Israel's airstrikes present absolutely zero upside for Cairo. Even if Mubarak had the creative capacity to turn crises into opportunities, it is hard to imagine what the opportunity might look like. Cairo worries that chaos in Gaza threatens the stability of Sinai where Palestinian and Egyptian militants could link up and, in turn, could threaten the cold, yet peaceful relations with Israel. What would happen should an attack on Israel occur from Sinai? How would

the Israelis respond? Of more immediate concern, however, is Israel's less than implicit desire to dump Gaza onto Egypt. The last thing that the Egyptians want is responsibility for the 1.5 million Palestinians and the myriad problems of the Strip. Yet, if the Israelis choose to wash their hands of Gaza, the Egyptians actually have few resources to resist. They could, of course, threaten to abrogate the peace treaty, but returning to a state of war with Israel is hardly in Egypt's interest.

The broader regional implications for Egypt are clear. Israel's airstrikes have produced widespread outrage in the Arab world and provide opportunity for actors like Iran to play Arab politics. It is only a matter of time before Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad will use Israel's attacks on Gaza to advance his own popularity (second only to Hezbollah's Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah) and Tehran's influence in the region. To the extent that Ahmedinejad can weave a narrative that those at peace with Israel and/or allied with the United States are harming the interests of the Palestinians and thus the Islamic world, Egypt's regional influence is likely to continue to recede.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven\\_a\\_cook/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven_a_cook/)

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Joshua Muravchik (2008-12-31 16:08:22)

One theme of Steven Cook's [1]post, repeated at several points, is that by fighting its enemies Israel will only make things worse because it will "radicalize" the region. This is a refrain heard whenever Israel acts forcefully in self-defense. So I repeat my question. Is robust action by Israel more provocative than weakness or acquiescence? [2]Joshua Muravchik is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/12/war-in-gaza-no-upside-for-egypt/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/joshua\\_muravchik/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/joshua_muravchik/)

Joshua Muravchik (2008-12-29 18:05:30)

Steven Cook [1]writes: "Israel's airstrikes have produced widespread outrage in the Arab world and provide opportunity for actors like Iran to play Arab politics. It is only a matter of time before Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad will use Israel's attacks on Gaza to advance his own popularity (second only to Hezbollah's Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah) and Tehran's influence in the region." The Arab world is in a permanent state of outrage against Israel (and the United States, for that matter), which spikes whenever Israel raises a hand to defend itself. A broad review of 20th-century history suggests that democracies are more likely to be provocative by showing weakness and acquiescence (World Wars One and Two, Korea, Persian Gulf 1990) than by acting belligerent, i.e., being forceful in self-defense. In Israel's recent history, withdrawals from Lebanon and Gaza proved highly provocative, strengthening radicals. If Steven Cook believes that forceful self-defense by Israel is more provocative than weakness and acquiescence would be, I would like to see him spell out the argument and offer some proofs or evidence. [2]Joshua Muravchik is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/12/war-in-gaza-no-upside-for-egypt/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/joshua\\_muravchik/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/joshua_muravchik/)

Nabil Fahmy (2008-12-28 15:18:48)

Steven Cook [1]is correct in his basic conclusion that the present situation in Gaza is tenuous and of very serious concern for Egypt. He however misses a number of major and fundamental points because he focuses on the tactical consequences and ramifications rather than the strategic ones. The cycle of violence serves no one in the long run. It feeds the incessant Israeli feeling that they are always threatened and the false assumption that they benefit from using tactical force rather than negotiating strategically for peace with the Palestinians. Amongst the Palestinians it will breed more frustration and calls for revenge, and in the long term strengthen those who oppose negotiating peace even if some may feel weakened in the short term. All the Arab and International peace makers such as the United States and the Quartet see their efforts discredited in the eyes of the public as the violence continues, as they stand helpless and very little progress is achieved in negotiating permanent settlement issues. Egypt is of course uncomfortable with present developments, but it has been consistent in its policies. The Israeli occupation must end; nothing less will

provide Israel with security. The cycle of violence serves no one. It will not secure the Palestinian-Israeli border or bring the Palestinians closer to their independent state. Nevertheless, once the dead are buried and the dust settles, the Israelis and Palestinians will once again search for Egypt. While its border proximity can create delicate problems, it also ensures it a continuing role, especially on issues of security and supply of basic needs. It has also proven to be the only constant partner in the peace process that has not backed off in face of crisis or conflicts and the only one talking to all the parties. Serious disagreements with Israel exist on the negotiations with the PA, and with Hamas on its position regarding a two-state solution. However, Israel understands the peace with Egypt ensures it no more wars, and cannot afford to risk that even if it is playing a precarious game now; and Gazans understand that Egypt is their lifeline. [2]*Nabil Fahmy was Egyptian ambassador to the United States from 1999 to 2008, and is a former political adviser to the foreign minister of Egypt.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/12/war-in-gaza-no-upside-for-egypt/>
2. <http://www.udel.edu/global/agenda/2002/fahmybio.html>

Steven A. Cook (2008-12-30 12:28:14)

I have no idea why Josh Muravchik is [1]taking issue with [2]my observation that instability and conflict in the Gaza Strip provide opportunity for Iran to play Arab politics. It's fairly obvious to most observers of Middle East politics, though perhaps not to Josh. Of course, Israel has a right to defend itself. I don't believe that my post implied otherwise. [3]*Steven A. Cook is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/12/war-in-gaza-no-upside-for-egypt/#comment-1389>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/12/war-in-gaza-no-upside-for-egypt/>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven\\_a\\_cook/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven_a_cook/)

## Samuel P. Huntington, 1927-2008 (2008-12-28 09:26)

From MESH Admin



The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power. The problem for Islam is not the CIA or the U.S. Department of Defense. It is the West, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the universality of their culture and believe that their superior, if declining, power

imposes on them the obligation to extend that culture throughout the world. These are the basic ingredients that fuel conflict between Islam and the West.

—Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996)

Sam Huntington died this past Wednesday (December 24) in a nursing facility near his home on Martha's Vineyard. Among his many achievements and activities, he directed the (Weatherhead) Center for International Affairs from 1978 to 1989, and founded Harvard's John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, which he directed from 1989 to 1999. The Weatherhead Center has issued a [1]statement comprised of an obituary, selected quotes from his work, first reactions to his passing by Harvard faculty members, and his c.v. An [2]obituary also appears in the Harvard Gazette.

1. [http://www.hno.harvard.edu/gazette/2009/02.05/pdfs/SPH\\_Press\\_Information.pdf](http://www.hno.harvard.edu/gazette/2009/02.05/pdfs/SPH_Press_Information.pdf)

2. <http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2009/02.05/99-huntington.html>

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## Gaza conflict, U.S. objectives (2008-12-28 09:45)

From [1]Robert Satloff



The Gaza conflict was born the day Hamas took control of the Strip; the clock started ticking the day the "calm" began six months ago. Unlike all of Israel's other neighbors, save Hezbollah, Hamas is an existential adversary of Israel, not a competitor for some slice of territory or for the affection of Washington. This current round of fighting might not be determinative but it certainly provides the international community—led by the United States—with an opportunity to achieve certain objectives that are necessary to a successful outcome of eventual peace diplomacy. These include:

- Reaffirming the internationally recognized conditions for engagement with Hamas. It is essential that, apart from vital humanitarian goods, the conflict not provide a back-door opening for third-parties to whittle down the conditions for engagement with Hamas—conditions, one should recall, that parallel the conditions that governed U.S. engagement with the PLO twenty years ago.
- Tightening the international sanctions regime on Hamas. Here, the most important objective should be to secure an end to financial and other support provided by some states, either directly or through non-profit organizations, that finds its way into Hamas coffers. There is no reason why Arab or Muslim states, for example, should be exempt from recognizing the Quartet conditions on Hamas engagement, though for some reason they seem to consider themselves apart from this international consensus.



- Strengthening the Palestinian Authority. The best long-term hope for reasserting legitimate government in Gaza is through a successful PA, an authority that provides security and well-being to its citizens and their neighbors. This means that the United States should take the lead in improving and enhancing the "train and equip" mission for PA security forces, speed up the Blair agenda of economic and administrative reform and, perhaps most of all in the near term, ensure that the expected desire of some donors to assist the people of Gaza in the wake of the current fighting goes to PA institutions, not to Hamas or NGOs that survive on Hamas' good graces.

It is unlikely that the current fighting will end Hamas control of Gaza, but—if handled properly on the diplomatic front—it could begin a new countdown to that day.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_satloff/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_satloff/)

### Tacit bargaining, Gaza-style (2008-12-28 15:40)

From [1]Alan Dowty



Operation Oferet Yetsukah ("Cast Lead," on the model of "Cast Iron") has reportedly been planned for months, in anticipation of the breakdown or non-renewal of the tahdi'a ("lull," not "truce") between Hamas and Israel. Drawing upon the lessons of the Lebanese fiasco of 2006 and the conclusions of the Winograd Commission, it apparently achieved tactical surprise, hitting almost simultaneously some 150 targets in the Hamas chain of command, from training camps to executive offices. Several top Hamas officials, and inevitably many civilians, are among the several hundred casualties as the operation continues through a second day.

Reservists have been mobilized but it is not clear that anything more than limited ground assaults are planned. With the Mediterranean at their back, Hamas forces could not melt away as did Hezbollah in Lebanon. But the limited aims of this campaign may not require extended ground operations.

Since Hamas took over the area in June 2007, Israel's basic strategy has been to squeeze Gaza as tightly as possible in order to weaken and eventually uproot Hamas rule. Key to this strategy was economic blockade, allowing in enough supplies for subsistence but little more, and indeed the Gaza economy is prostrate. Consequently what Hamas expected from the "lull" was relief from the blockade, but so long as rocket attacks continued, even at the pace of two-three per week, Israel refused to allow any substantial increase in supplies. And Hamas would not end the Qassam launchings entirely as long as the flow of goods was blocked. Deadlock was thus built into the tahdi'a from the outset, and with its end each side is determined to renew it only on more favorable terms.

The aims of Operation Cast Lead are therefore not just to weaken Hamas, but more immediately to force it to actually end all rocket attacks in the framework of any renewed suspension of hostilities. As Israeli

Defense Minister Ehud Barak says, Israel intends "to totally change the rules of the game." This is a classic case of what Thomas Schelling long ago defined as "tacit bargaining": the conduct of negotiation by various measures up to and including armed force. In this "negotiation" Israel enjoys the advantage of another situation defined and enshrined by the strategic theorists: "escalation dominance." While Israel will pay a considerable political price in the international arena—and even more in the region—it has taken the military confrontation to a level where Hamas has few cards on the table.

Hamas rockets, some of them Katyushas with a range of up to 40 kilometers, now reach well beyond Sderot and Ashkelon up to the outskirts of Ashdod and Beer-Sheva. In the short term, Israel will not be able to stop this barrage, and Hamas is estimated to have up to 1,000 rockets available. In addition, Khaled Meshal has called for a third intifada and the renewal of suicide attacks inside Israel. It is likely, as usual in this part of the world, that things will get worse before they get better. But in the end, the Hamas decision to risk a shooting war with Israel will probably prove to be a losing proposition.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)

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### On Samuel Huntington (2008-12-29 10:33)

From [1]Josef Joffe



The author writes this appreciation of Samuel Huntington with some trepidation. When he first met Sam as a graduate student at Harvard in 1969, he gave up after two lectures in his course "Political Order in Changing Societies." He was driven away by Sam's halting, diffident delivery. Also, remember that "cool," which Sam was not, was the order of the day, as life oscillated between the Great Strike at Harvard, Saturday Night Live, and the widespread, almost ritualized use of grass and acid.

Having unburdened himself of his shameful defection from Sam's classroom, the author can all the more happily praise him as one of the greatest, nay, the greatest, political scientist of the second half of the 20th century. All the accolades his colleagues and the "Baby Sams" (his students who went off to establish themselves as "Huntingtonians" in America's great universities) have bestowed on him are absolutely right, possibly even understatements.

Go to the [2]obituary on Harvard's website; it is all true: "most influential political scientists of the last 50 years," "every one of his books had an impact," "they are part of our vocabulary," "one of the giants of political science...." Let's add to the hyperbole. He was the greatest of a generation of greats, which comes along maybe once a century. These figures were Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Thomas



Schelling, Kenneth Waltz, Barrington Moore, and Stanley Hoffmann, all born in the 1920s, all graduates of Harvard and Yale, Chicago and Columbia, all university teachers at an early age. Sam was 18 when he graduated from Yale, 23 when he started teaching at Harvard. (Add Karl W. Deutsch, born 1912 in Prague and trained there before he came to Harvard.)

"I do not think we will see his like [Huntington's] again," writes Princeton's Aaron Friedberg in an e-mail. This is true, but for reasons which transcend the luminous figure of Sam. His (and his ilk's) political science is no longer "science" in an age where more and more is written about less and less, where careers are grounded on miniscule specialization, where science qua "numbers crunching" or model-building reigns supreme. In this world, the rules of "real" science make for both timidity and risk-aversion in the formulation of questions and the execution of the answers.

After defection from Sam's class, it took this author another 20 years to re-establish regular contact with him—when he followed an invitation to become the Beton Michael Kaneb Professor of National Security for a year in 1990-91. This is when he met Nancy, who proved once and for all: Any man who marries a woman like Nancy can't be all bad. This woman of Armenian ancestry was the best a Jewish mother could be: solicitous, loving, smart, funny, but without any of the other qualities that have made Jewish mothers the butt of countless psychoanalytical jokes.

Whosoever loved Sam, loved and loves Nancy—this is the secret why hardened academics today grieve and extol so copiously.

It is easy to admire Sam for his fabulous intellectual output across the full spectrum of political science. It is easy to hold up each and every book of his and place it in the pantheon amidst shouts of "influential," "definitive," or "path-breaking." Just look at *Soldier and the State* which has gone through 15 printings and was at the center of a symposium at West Point last year.

Who can claim that his own book was translated into 39 languages, as was *The Clash*? What has made it, or the *Third Wave*, or *Political Order* into milestones is not their unassailability. Indeed, it is a sheer intellectual pleasure to "deconstruct" the pro-authoritarian bias of *Political Order* today. Or to pick apart the *Clash*, as thousands of lesser minds have already done.

But who will embark on projects of this kind of sweep, breath and depth? Or write as elegantly as Sam has done?

That's over in American academia, as is that fabulous confluence between America's rise to world power and the influx of some of Europe's greatest minds, courtesy of Adolf Hitler. Never before has there been such a perfect match between the demand for and the supply of great talent. One hates to think what would happen to a young Sam today. He might still graduate from Yale at age 18, but would he have become a Harvard professor at age 23? With that independence of mind, that contrarian spirit, that relentless search for conventional notions to be slain? Would a young Sam still be able to ask the Big Questions? And sin against so many idols demanding fealty to contemporary standards of correctness?

Let me close by quoting one of the "Baby Sams," Stephen Rosen: Sam "was loved by those who knew him well because he combined a fierce loyalty to his principles and friends with a happy eagerness to be confronted with sharp opposition to his own views." How many are left at Harvard, Stanford et al. whom we might honor with such an accolade? This is why his friends and students feel a loss that will grate forever.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef\\_joffe/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef_joffe/)
  2. <http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2009/02.05/99-huntington.html>
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## What went wrong in Iraq? (2008-12-30 12:33)

From [1]Daniel Byman



As the Iraq war moved from crisis to calamity in 2003 and 2004, it became clear to all observers that the occupation was deeply flawed. But what, exactly, was the problem? For many people, particularly in the academic world, the occupation was doomed because the invasion itself was illegitimate and ill-considered and the conditions in Iraq made a successful occupation almost inconceivable. Many of those in the policy world, on the other hand, pointed to a (long) list of policy mistakes that, apart or together, led to the development of an insurgency in Iraq and later a full-blown civil war. All these mistakes, they contend, were avoidable and represented poor judgment rather than problems inherent to occupying Iraq. In short, the development of an insurgency in Iraq represents a classic "structure vs. policy" debate, with both sides pointing the Iraq debacle to bolster their argument.

As someone who wrote in the immediate post-war period on challenges facing the United States in Iraq, I had tried to anticipate many of the problems that coalition forces would face. Although I'm pleased with many of the judgments I made, I clearly missed some problems and underestimated others.

An [2]article I just published in *Security Studies* tries to get at the interplay between structural and policy issues and explore where things went wrong. As many would argue, several U.S. policy mistakes, in particular the deployment of relatively few troops, a lack of political or military planning for the occupation, disbanding the Iraqi military, the failure to establish a government in waiting, and overly aggressive de-Baathification, greatly exacerbated rather than ameliorated the various structural problems. Yet I contend that some of these mistaken decisions, if not done, would also have produced potentially dangerous results that could have facilitated unrest, albeit from different actors in Iraq who, under the new policy, found themselves losers in the division of spoils.

But more fundamentally, structure and policy choices interacted at all levels to explain the Iraq failure. The unavoidable conditions that coalition forces encountered in Iraq—a divided society devastated by years of war, sanctions, and misrule—and the political context in the United States made the challenge for successful policy execution difficult. This structure constrained and delimited the options open to U.S. policymakers but, even within those narrow limits, the United States made many bad choices that further diminished the chances of success.

A particularly important series of policy mistakes occurred well in advance of the buildup to war itself. The orientation of the U.S. armed forces away from counterinsurgency, the failure to establish a political settlement before invasion, and other controllable policy choices in the prewar period all led to enormous difficulties during the occupation itself. Thus, by the time of the invasion, these policy choices had become almost like structural constraints, and the failures had a snowballing effect, making policy corrections far more difficult.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel\\_byman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel_byman/)
  2. [http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2008/10\\_iraq\\_byman.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2008/10_iraq_byman.aspx)
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### Situation map, Gaza crisis (2008-12-31 14:30)

From MESH Admin



[1] This map, released today by [2]UNOSAT, presents reported attacks by Israel and Hamas from December 25 to 31, within and surrounding the Gaza Strip. "Damage locations have been taken exclusively from open media sources. Many recorded damage sites shown are approximate and may not represent all known incident locations." Click on the thumbnail to open the map.

1. [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps\\_Sa.nsf/1uFullMap/7558D83374C6C56E8525753000678B01/\\$File/map.jpg](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Sa.nsf/1uFullMap/7558D83374C6C56E8525753000678B01/$File/map.jpg)
  2. [http://unosat.web.cern.ch/unosat/asp/prod\\_free.asp?id=120](http://unosat.web.cern.ch/unosat/asp/prod_free.asp?id=120)
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# Chapter 3

## 2009

### 3.1 January

#### Israel's strike on Gaza: a primer (2009-01-02 12:36)

From [1]Robert O. Freedman

THIS PHOTO IS CURRENTLY UNAVAILABLE.



The Israeli-Hamas ceasefire, signed on June 9, 2008, had long been a porous one. While Hamas, for the most part, until November 2008 did not fire its own rockets at Israel, it permitted other groups, such as the Iranian-supported Islamic Jihad, to do so. These limited rocket attacks, while clear violations of the ceasefire agreement, did not precipitate major Israeli responses, other than periodic limited closures of the border crossings into Gaza, through which Israel supplied food, fuel and other humanitarian aid to Gaza. Whether Israel should have allowed any humanitarian aid into Gaza in the face of the rocket fire is a very open question: Israel was in fact in a state of war with Hamas, an organization pledged to destroy it, and the rockets fired at Israel simply underlined Hamas' long term objective by demonstrating its "resistance" to the Jewish State. Under these circumstances, a full border closure might have brought home to the people of Gaza, the majority of whom voted for Hamas in the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections, the costs of supporting Hamas.

In any case, fighting between Israel and Hamas intensified in November when Israel found and destroyed a tunnel between Gaza and Israel which the Israeli military thought would be used to kidnap another Israeli soldier, much as Gilad Shalit had been kidnapped in 2006. Ironically, the kidnap attempt was not aimed primarily at Israel, but at the Palestinian rival of Hamas, the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority on the West Bank headed by Mahmoud Abbas. The kidnap attempt appeared timed to occur as Hamas and Fatah were jockeying for position before the start of what proved to be abortive Palestinian unity talks in Cairo. Had Hamas been successful in capturing another Israeli soldier, it would have shown that Hamas was demonstrating greater "resistance" against Israel than Fatah, which had been engaged in fruitless peace

talks with Israel.

Following the Israeli attack on the tunnel, the number of rockets fired at Israel from Gaza escalated, reaching a new high after Hamas announced it would not extend the ceasefire unless Israel fully opened the border crossings and stopped arresting members of Hamas living on the West Bank—the latter demand not included in the original ceasefire agreement. When Israel refused to agree to the new Hamas demands, Hamas further escalated its firing of rockets, hoping, apparently, to force Israel to accept the new ceasefire terms in return for restoring quiet to southern Israel. Hamas may have also believed that Israel's ruling Kadima party desperately needed a ceasefire so as to remove the issue of the rocket firing from the ongoing Israeli election campaign. It had been Kadima that had undertaken the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, and presumably it did not want to remind the Israeli electorate that the withdrawal had resulted in the firing of rockets from Gaza into Israel.

If this was indeed the thinking of Hamas, it was gravely mistaken. Kadima leader Tzipi Livni, as early as November, had called for strong military action against Hamas because of the rocket firing, and she also stated at the time that she was prepared to eliminate the Hamas threat against Israel once and for all. Meanwhile, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, of the Labor party, was taking a more dovish position, resisting the use of force. In initially opposing an attack on Gaza, Barak may have hoped to win votes from the dovish spectrum of the Israeli electorate consisting of the Meretz party and the parties that had broken away from Labor because they were dissatisfied with his leadership. On the other end of the Israeli political spectrum, the right of center Likud party, led by Binyamin Netanyahu, was attacking Barak for his judgement in unilaterally withdrawing from Lebanon in May 2000—a step which had led not to peace, as Barak had hoped, but to rocket fire into Israel from Lebanon, the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers, and finally the Israel-Hezbollah war of 2006 from which Israel did not emerge victorious. In addition, of course, Netanyahu berated the Kadima party for its unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, which, as in the case of Lebanon, did not bring peace, but rather rocket firing into Israel in its wake.

Given these circumstances, with Netanyahu's Likud party leading in the pre-election polls, Livni's calls for more action against Hamas grew more difficult for Kadima's lame-duck leader, Ehud Olmert, to resist. For his part, Barak saw his Labor party dropping precipitously in the polls, as his dovish position was not resonating among Israeli voters. The end result of the Israeli deliberations—a major air assault against Hamas bases, missile factories, and arms smuggling tunnels in Gaza—was a compromise between those who wanted a full-scale military assault on Gaza and those, most likely including Olmert, who had been badly burned politically by the 2006 war, and who continued to counsel restraint. The Israeli military action was an effort to show Hamas that not only would the Israeli political leadership not be intimidated by the Hamas rocket attacks into weakening its position on the ceasefire terms, but that Israel too could use force—considerably more force than Hamas was using—and that if Hamas had hoped to use rocket fire to get better ceasefire terms, it was badly mistaken. The military action was also a signal to Hamas that if it still wanted a truce—a very big if—then all rocket fire would have to be halted.

Prior to examining the alternatives available to Hamas after the Israeli military operation, I will now turn to an analysis of the possible repercussions of the Israeli military action in the Middle East, because this will affect how Hamas will respond.

### Repercussions

In analyzing the possible effects of the Israeli military operation throughout the Middle East, one has to consider several different Arab and Middle Eastern states which are players in the Arab-Israeli conflict. These include: Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah organization which currently controls the Palestinian Authority on the West Bank; Egypt and Jordan, the two Arab states that have peace treaties with Israel;

Syria; Iran; and Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states.

- Mahmoud Abbas. With Palestinians being killed by the Israeli attacks, Abbas has no choice but to publicly condemn them, although he has also been critical of Hamas for not agreeing to extend the ceasefire. It should also be noted that many members of Abbas' Fatah organization have bitter memories of their colleagues in Gaza being murdered by Hamas thugs—some tossed off the rooftops of multi-storied buildings in Gaza—during the Hamas seizure of power in Gaza in June 2006. Consequently, many will greet the Israeli drubbing of Hamas in Gaza with great satisfaction. While there are likely to be riots by Hamas sympathizers on the West Bank, the test of Abbas' newly strengthened security forces will be how successful they are in containing the rioters. Since Abbas has been systematically cracking down on Hamas operatives in the West Bank since June 2007 (as has Israel) it is not clear how much strength Hamas retains in the region, and the ability of Abbas' forces to quell the rioters will go a long way toward answering this question.

While Abbas has broken off peace talks with Israel in the name of Palestinian solidarity—he has to be concerned about a sympathy vote for Hamas in the forthcoming Palestinian Legislative Council elections (if they are held, as tentatively scheduled, in April 2009)—nonetheless if Hamas is badly weakened politically as well as militarily in Gaza by the Israeli attacks (a very big if), then Abbas will gain politically in what has become a zero-sum-game struggle between Hamas and Fatah for leadership of the Palestinian movement.

- Egypt and Jordan. As the two countries which have signed peace treaties with Israel, both Egypt and Jordan face similar problems in responding to the Israeli military operations in Gaza.

The main opposition force, which is represented in parliament in both countries, is the Moslem Brotherhood (in Jordan it takes the name "The Islamic Action Front"), and Hamas itself is an offshoot of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. Thus the Palestinian issue has been used by Muslim Brotherhood organizations in both countries to accuse both Mubarak of Egypt and King Abdullah II of Jordan of not being tough enough against Israel.

Yet while both Mubarak and King Abdullah II must be sensitive to the public opinion in their countries, which the Muslim Brotherhood is trying to stir up against them, they are also aware that the United States, their main supplier of economic aid ( \$2.2 billion for Egypt and \$500 million for Jordan on an annual basis), has been strongly backing Israel during the crisis. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has gone so far as to say: "The United States strongly condemns the repeated rocket and mortar attacks against Israel and holds Hamas responsible for breaking the ceasefire and for the renewal of violence in Gaza. The ceasefire should be restored immediately." Consequently, assuming the Israeli military operations are concluded in a relatively short amount of time, it is doubtful whether either Egypt or Jordan would break diplomatic relations with Israel or even recall their ambassadors as they did during the Al-Aqsa Intifada. Indeed, a defeat for Hamas would politically benefit both Arab leaders.

- Syria. The first response of Syria to the Israeli attack on Gaza was to freeze the current low-level peace talks which Syria has been carrying on with Israel under the mediation of Turkey. As the home of one of the most militant branches of Hamas, led by Khalid Mash'al who has just called for a new Palestinian intifada against Israel, Syria has long championed the organization as Damascus has sought to exercise influence over the Palestinian movement. Yet the Syrians have to be careful how they behave during the crisis if they want to preserve the possibility of a peace process with Israel—and the link to improved relations with the United States which they hope to emerge from it. It should be remembered in this context that the initial post-Madrid conference talks between Israel and Syria collapsed in 1996 when Syria not only did not condemn the Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel that took place in February-March 1996, but Syrian state radio actually justified them. If Syria chooses to support Hamas during the current conflict in a

major way, it may well jeopardize peace talks with the next Israeli leader, be it Livni or Netanyahu. While Syrian leader Bashar Assad may assume that neither Livni nor Netanyahu puts peace with Syria high on their priority lists, strong Syrian support for Hamas may also call into question Syria's relations with the incoming Obama administration.

- Iran. Iran, like Syria, faces a choice in responding to the Israeli airstrikes. It could urge its ally, the Lebanese-based Hezbollah, to fire rockets into Israel in support of Hamas. Such an action might be problematic, however, for three reasons.

1. There is the question as to whether Hezbollah would wish to jeopardize its rapidly improving political position in Lebanon by launching rocket attacks against Israel, since Israel has threatened to retaliate against all of Lebanon if Hezbollah launches rocket attacks, not just the southern part as it did in 2006, because Hezbollah is now part of the Lebanese government.
2. Such a call by Iran might hasten an Israeli airstrike against Iran's nuclear installations, a development which Iranian leaders, despite their bluster, have sought to avoid.
3. An action of this type would make it far more difficult for Iran to have an improved relationship with the incoming Obama administration, assuming, of course, the Iranian leadership wants such a rapprochement. Consequently, Iran may limit itself to spinning the Israeli attack, much as it has done with the Israeli siege on Gaza, by claiming that the Arab world has not done enough to aid the besieged Palestinians because the leaders of the Sunni Arab world are the lackeys of the United States.

- Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. In the minds of the leaders of Saudi Arabia and the other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (Kuwait, The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman), the main threat in their region is not Israel but Iran. Consequently, if Iranian-allied Hamas suffers a military defeat at the hands of Israel, particularly in a brief conflict before the passions of the so-called "Arab street" are fully ignited, the leaders of the GCC states will not be unhappy. Indeed, for similar reasons they gave tacit support to Israel at first in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, turning against Israel only when the war was prolonged and heavy civilian casualties occurred. If the Israeli military action is relatively limited in time, it is unlikely that the Saudis and the other Gulf states will take strong diplomatic action against Israel, such as removing the Arab Peace Plan from the diplomatic negotiating table.

## The Future

In looking to the aftermath of the Israeli military action, there are several possibilities and they both depend on how Hamas reacts to the Israeli attacks. First, if Hamas follows through on its threat to restart suicide bombings and continues to launch rocket attacks of Israel, then additional airstrikes against Hamas can be expected, along with additional "targeted assassinations" of Hamas leaders, and possibly a full-scale military invasion as well. If, on the other hand, the Hamas leadership decides that the airstrikes and the real threat of an Israeli ground invasion may jeopardize its hold on Gaza before it has consolidated its power there, then it may agree, if only tacitly, to another ceasefire by stopping its rocket attacks on the expectation that Israel would reciprocate by stopping its attacks, in an agreement possibly mediated by Turkey. Were this to occur, Israel would certainly emerge as the victor in the conflict with Hamas, Iran and Syria the losers.

Consequently, one might expect that Iran, and possibly Syria, will urge Hamas to continue its "resistance" against Israel, much as Hezbollah did in 2006, and wait for pressure from the "Arab street," Europe, Russia, the United Nations, and possibly (if the fighting last sufficiently long) the United States to salvage the situation. Whether Hamas will be in a position to do so, however, remains to be seen, and its fate may resemble more the PLO which was besieged in Beirut in 1982 and forced into exile, than Hezbollah in 2006.

In looking at the impact of the Israeli military action on the February 10 Israeli elections, there are also several possibilities. Since Livni had openly been calling for strong military action against Hamas, and that action was in fact taken, it is likely that Livni's Kadima party will have an improved position in the polls and in the election, now little more than a month away. This will be the case especially if Hamas agrees to the tacit truce, as mentioned above. Similarly, if the military action proves successful, Barak may cement his position as the indispensable Defense Minister, no matter who wins the election.

On the other hand, if rockets continue to fly into Israel from Gaza, Livni may be blamed, along with Barak, for their inability to stop the missiles. Under these circumstances, Livni and Barak may well urge a full-scale invasion of Gaza. Assuming that the Israeli Army is now better prepared for ground combat than it was in the 2006 war with Hezbollah, and Hamas does not have the weaponry possessed by Hezbollah in 2006, and the invasion is preceded by heavy artillery barrages as well as continued air strikes, a softened-up Hamas may not be a major threat to the IDF, no matter how many tunnels it may have dug. Once Gaza is recaptured, and any surviving Hamas cadres imprisoned, the Gaza Strip can be turned over to Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah organization, and then genuine peace talks, now covering both the West Bank and Gaza, can take place. Whether such an optimistic scenario will actually take place, however, remains an open question.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)

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### On the ground in Gaza (2009-01-03 15:48)

From [1]Barry Rubin



Israel didn't want to attack the Gaza Strip from the ground or from the air. Hamas, which had long broken the ceasefire, canceled it altogether. Then it began large-scale attacks on Israel. This is a war of defense. And it is being conducted just 30 miles from Tel Aviv, Israel's main city.

According to the just-released Israeli government statement on the offensive:

The objective of this stage is to destroy the terrorist infrastructure of the Hamas in the area of operation, while taking control of some of rocket launching area used by the Hamas, in order to greatly reduce the quantity of rockets fired at Israel and Israeli civilians.



The operation will... strike a direct and hard blow against the Hamas while increasing the deterrent strength of the Israel Defense Forces, in order to bring about an improved and more stable security situation for residents of southern Israel over the long term.

Even as the 2006 war was continuing, the Israel Defense Forces were evaluating the mistakes made in Lebanon—helicopters needed better short-range munitions, improved air-ground coordination, care in using tanks unsupported by infantry, and so on.

But contrary to the insistence of armchair strategists now, it would not be easy to seize control of all the Gaza Strip and govern it for an extended period of time. Hamas is not going to go away. International support for Israel is limited. Fatah and the Palestinian Authority will not react strongly to try to take Gaza back for itself. There are about one million people in the Gaza Strip and Hamas will make every attempt to ensure there are civilian casualties—and pretend there are even more.

So "total victory" is not easy, if it is even possible. The irony is that Israeli policy is based on the idea that there is no military solution to these issues. But since there is no diplomatic solution either, force must be used to protect Israel and its citizens.

It should be remembered that Israel withdrew completely from the Gaza Strip, dismantled all settlements, and wished the Palestinians good luck. The Palestinian Authority (PA) was not up to the challenge. It could and would not change its corrupt and incompetent ways. U.S. policy insisted that Hamas be allowed to run in the elections, even though it did not meet the standard of accepting the 1993 Israel-PLO agreement. Hamas won.

But Hamas invoked the radical Islamist policy of "one man, one vote, one time." It staged a coup and kicked out its PA and Fatah rivals. Rather than focusing on economic development or even maintaining peace to build up its own power, Hamas pursued its strategy of permanent war against Israel.

Children's programs taught the kiddies that they should grow up to be suicide bombers and kill Jews. Hamas soldiers, or their junior allies, fired rockets and mortars at Israel. And of course Hamas staged a cross-border raid and kidnapped an Israeli soldier.

In spite of this, many in the West think Israel has some kind of choice in this matter, that diplomacy was an option, that Hamas could be reasoned with. Those people have clearly never heard a Hamas leader speak or read anything on the group's Arabic-language websites. In a real sense, Hamas is more extreme than Osama bin Laden, who periodically offers his enemy the chance to repent. Hamas's goal is genocidal.

This has nothing to do with being dovish or hawkish, left or right. For those who are the biggest peaceniks—and this is true in Israel—know that Hamas must be defeated if Israel is ever to make peace with the PA. Even the PA knows it, and that's what they say in private, no matter what they say in public.

The offensive is only going to last so long. It would be nice to believe that Hamas will be overthrown, less extreme Palestinians will take over, or Israel will just sit in the Gaza Strip for months or even years to come without any major problem. These are not real options.

Hamas wants nothing more than to be able to organize an underground to launch daily attacks on Israeli patrols going through the center of refugee camps. It should be remembered that, for better or worse, it was the Israeli military—not the politicians—who wanted to withdraw from the Gaza Strip for tactical

reasons. It was easier to hold a defensive line in strength than to play into Hamas's strong points by trying to control all the territory.

Clearly, this didn't take into account the rockets but it is easy to think that if Israeli forces had been in the Gaza Strip every day since the withdrawal, Israeli casualties would have been a lot higher while Fatah and Hamas would be fighting side to side against Israel, and international diplomacy would have been far more hostile to Israel.

No one should have any illusions that this conflict is going to go away. The peace process era, 1993-2000, taught us that Iran, Syria, Hamas, Hezbollah, and radical Islamist groups meant what they said. They will never accept peace with Israel. Israel will be involved in a struggle with these extremist groups for decades.

Yet that does not mean Israel cannot—and does not—prevail. It prevails by maintaining good lives for its citizens, developing its economy, and raising living standards, progressing in technology and science and medicine.

In this context, Israel will not listen to those many who counsel it to commit suicide, but it also has no illusions of a victory, of a war that will end all wars. And in a real sense that is Israel's true strength: it is not naïve about either concessions or force. If you have realistic expectations, if you aren't disappointed, then you never give up.

Often, nowadays, it seems as if all history is being rewritten when it comes to Israel. In World War Two, allied air forces carpet-bombed cities even though there were no military bases in civilian areas. In France alone, tens of thousands of civilians were killed by allied bombs that fell on their intended targets.

Even the Nazis didn't put ammunition dumps in houses and use human shields. And up until now the blame for doing so would fall on those who deliberately and cynically sought to create civilian casualties in order to gain support for themselves. Up until now, a country whose neighbor fired across the border at its people and even staged cross-border raids had the right of self-defense. Up until now, there has been a capability of understanding which group is inciting hatred, trying to turn children into robotic terrorists, calling for the extermination of another people, and committing aggression.

Many people, many journalists, many governments, and even many intellectuals still understand the most basic principles of right and wrong as well as of the real world. Unfortunately, too many don't or at least don't when Israel is the target.

Finally, it is of the greatest importance to understand that this is not an issue of Gaza or of Israel alone. The great issue of our era, of our remaining lifetimes, is the battle between radical Islamism—whether using the tactic of terrorism or not—and the rest of the world. To isolate this question as merely something about Israel is to misunderstand everything important about the world today.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry_rubin/)

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### Israel's ghosts (2009-01-06 09:25)

From [1]Daniel Byman



The Israeli assault on Gaza is about more than ending the latest spate of rocket attacks from Gaza or even forcing Hamas to the negotiating table to renew the ceasefire it foolishly ended. Israeli is also trying to exorcise several ghosts in its fight against terrorism, some from the past and some it fears in the future.

Israel's 2006 debacle in Lebanon is the most recent specter haunting Israel. In the summer of 2006, the Lebanese terrorist and guerrilla group Hezbollah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers and killed several others, sparking a massive air assault and, eventually, a ground invasion of southern Lebanon. Although Lebanon itself suffered tremendously, the war was widely perceived as an Israeli defeat. As is the case with Gaza today, Israel's attacks did not stop Hezbollah rockets. Many Hezbollah fighters died facing the Israelis, but their effective resistance led the movement to be lionized throughout the Muslim world. Beyond Lebanon, the continuing civilian suffering over time discredited moderate Arab leaders who criticized Hezbollah for initiating the violence.

Israel is also haunted by Hamas' subsequent seizure of power in Gaza after Israel's unilateral withdrawal from there in 2005. Many Israelis hoped that when they truly left Gaza, Hamas and other militant groups would eventually give up the fight. Continued rocket attacks, as well as belligerent rhetoric, convinced many Israelis that Hamas was inherently hostile: it was not fighting for its own state, but rather simply sought to destroy Israel. In addition, the unilateral nature of the withdrawal bolstered the credibility of Hamas and other rejectionists, who pointed out that their violence had achieved far more than all the conciliatory gestures of Palestinian moderates.

A third Israeli fear concerns the West Bank, where the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority holds sway. Although many Israeli leaders see President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad as well-intentioned, they also view them as weak. Security-minded Israelis fear that Hamas might take over the West Bank eventually, brushing aside Abbas and other moderates as Hamas did in Gaza in 2007. And while short-range rockets launched from Gaza cannot reach deep into Israel's residential and commercial heart, almost all Israel's major cities, its international airport, and other nerve-centers are near the West Bank. The recent Hamas rocketing of major cities like Beersheva and Ashdod are thus seen as a taste of the future should Hamas become stronger on the West Bank. Even short-range, inaccurate Katyusha rockets in the West Bank would devastate Israel, forcing more Israelis to live in fear and destroying investment and tourism.

All these concerns come together in Israel's current operations in Gaza. Israel seeks to teach Hamas a lesson by deliberately carrying out a highly destructive and lethal series of strikes. Part of Israel's lesson from its war in Lebanon in 2006 and its withdrawals from Gaza in 2005 and before that in Lebanon in 2000 was that it did not hit back hard enough when provoked. Israel seeks to restore fear in its deterrent capabilities.

Yet just as Israel considers these past blunders and future fears, it should also learn from them. Lebanon in 2006 should have taught Israel that perceptions matter as much as military reality in this type of war. If the world and most Palestinians come away convinced that Hamas won, then Hamas will simply recruit more, and its overall stature will increase. In addition, a perceived Hamas victory would further weaken the stature of moderates like Abbas and Fayyad, who look feckless as Israeli bombs kill Palestinians. This could ultimately lead to exactly the result that Israelis fear most: a Hamas take-over in the West Bank.

Furthermore, Israel should recognize that time is not on the country's side and that extending its retaliation will work against it. In the short-term, the daily devastation fosters the impression that Israel is being deliberately cruel even though Israel's cause is legitimate. As the coverage of civilian deaths in Gaza grows, the pain Israelis suffers under Hamas rocket attacks is quickly forgotten.

In the long-term, more Israelis must recognize that the country needs a robust peace process. Israel has tried destroying terrorist groups through direct action, and it has tried turning its back in unilateral withdrawals. Neither has worked. Simply restoring Israel's deterrence capability does little to help restore Palestinian moderates and thus ensure that the West Bank does not become a Hamas hotbed. Israel needs a negotiated settlement and should use the diplomatic energy created by the latest crisis to press for one.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel\\_byman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel_byman/)

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Philip Carl Salzman (2009-01-21 10:03:18)

In the eyes of the "international community," Israel may never fight back against aggressors. While condemnation is never heard against Arab invasions and terrorist campaigns against Israel, whenever Israel strikes back the "international community" demands it cease, giving commitments for guarding the peace which are never fulfilled. So the options available for Israel are either "weak and failing victim" or "cruel conqueror." I would suggest that the latter is preferable, and that surrounding adversaries will be more reticent in attacking the "cruel conqueror" than the "weak and failing victim." Conquering attackers is the most robust peace process. "Israel has tried destroying terrorist groups through direct action" and has succeeded in the West Bank. Negotiation is only feasible if there are sincere and capable Palestinian negotiating partners; but there are none. Deterrence capability is the prerequisite for any negotiation, and so is patience in the current absence of Palestinian negotiating partners. Perhaps Israel might have to look to actors beyond Palestine as potential negotiating partners. [1] *Philip Carl Salzman is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)

## Hiding terrorist activity (2009-01-06 15:18)

From [1]Matthew Levitt



Even under geographic siege and financial sanction, Hamas was still able to smuggle some 80 tons of explosives, roadside bombs and longer-range rockets into Gaza over the course of the past ceasefire. Were it not for that success, Hamas would not have been able to continue firing rockets at southern Israeli communities, let alone effectively control Gaza. Denied access to regular trade routes and international banking, Hamas developed alternative mechanisms such as an extensive network of smuggling tunnels, taxes and custom fees, and increases reliance on charitable front organizations.

But Hamas is not the only terrorist group proactively looking for ways to evade international sanction. Today, the Treasury Department [2]designated the Waad Project (logo pictured) as a terrorist entity, describing it as a Hezbollah-run construction firm. According to information released by the Treasury Department, the Waad Project built underground weapons storage facilities and other military infrastructure for Hezbollah in Lebanon. Its website directed viewers to telephone numbers for those wishing to donate aid to Hezbollah, [3]Jihad al-Bina, and the [4]Martyrs Association, the latter two both previously designated as terrorist entities for providing material support to Hezbollah. The Waad Project has tried to hide its affiliation with Hezbollah, employing deceptive means to seek funding projects from international development organizations, according to Treasury.

This should not surprise. As my colleague Michael Jacobson and I wrote in our [5]recent study "The Money Trail," terrorist front groups often respond to the exposure of their activities by attempting to distance themselves from the alleged illegal activity and engage in otherwise legitimate endeavors to paint themselves in a more benign light. Against international efforts to combat terrorism, in which much of the information used to designate individuals and organizations as terrorist entities remains classified, such legitimization campaigns take on even greater importance and utility.

Hezbollah, for example, employed deceptive means to seek funding for projects from international development organizations for its construction arm, Jihad al-Bina. According to the Treasury Department, "In cases when intended solicitation targets were thought to object to the group's relationship with Hezbollah and the Iranian government, the organization employed deceptive practices, applying in the name of proxies not publicly linked to Hezbollah." Similarly, in September 2006 the Treasury Department designated two Hezbollah-controlled financial institutions as terrorist entities, Bayt al-Mal and the Yousser Company for Finance and Investment. Bayt al-Mal served as a bank, creditor, and investment arm for Hezbollah, according to Treasury, and used the Yousser Company to secure loans and finance business deals for the group's companies. And in November 2006, the Italian press reported that a ship said to be carrying refrigerators to Lebanon was impounded in Cyprus after it was found to contain eighteen trucks with mobile anti-aircraft radars and other vehicle-mounted monitoring equipment.

Given that its proxies Hezbollah and Hamas engage in deceptive financial practices to fund their illicit activities, it should not surprise that Iran itself engages in similar deception to conceal the nature of its sponsorship of terrorist groups. Iran has used Bank Saderat as a preferred means of transferring funds to terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah, Hamas, PIJ, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command. The Treasury Department revealed one case in which Iran sent \$50 million to a Hezbollah-controlled organization between 2001 and 2006.

In terms of the current fighting in Gaza, dealing with Iran's parallel support of Hamas—be it through smuggling tunnels, "charitable" front organizations, or otherwise—will have to be a central focus of any international ceasefire plan.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew\\_levitt/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew_levitt/)
2. <http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/hp1341.htm>
3. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2571>
4. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2643>
5. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=302>

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### Updated Gaza situation map (2009-01-06 15:49)

From MESH Admin



[1] This updated map, released today by UNOSAT, presents reported military operations and attacks by Israel and Hamas from December 25 to January 5, within and surrounding the Gaza Strip. Click on thumbnail to view the map.

1. [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps\\_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/00E0C33616E8F15A8525753500732877/\\$File/map.jpg](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Sa.nsf/luFullMap/00E0C33616E8F15A8525753500732877/$File/map.jpg)

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### Obama and Israel: problems ahead? (2009-01-21 10:28)

From [1]Robert O. Freedman



As President Barack Obama settles into the White House, there are two immediate issues facing the Israeli-U.S. relationship. The first relates to U.S. policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict in the aftermath of the fighting in Gaza and concerns possible official contacts between the United States and the Palestinian terrorist organization Hamas. The second issue concerns Iran and involves two basic questions: (1) How much time will Obama allot to "creative engagement" with Iran, and (2) will Obama, unlike George W. Bush, give Israel the "green light" to attack Iran's nuclear installations to prevent Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons?

Gaza and Hamas. Several foreign newspapers, normally not friendly toward Israel, have run stories stating that "unnamed members of the Obama Administration" are actively discussing the possibility of talks with Hamas, in order that the United States could rebuild its position in the Arab world after eight years of the

pro-Israel Bush administration, and the devastation caused by the U.S.-backed Israeli military attack on Gaza.

Should Obama initiate talks with Hamas, it would be a massive reversal of a U.S. policy going back more than three decades which stated that the United States would not talk to Palestinian terrorist organizations until they renounced terrorism and formally recognized Israel. Indeed, the Reagan administration refused to talk to Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Organization, until, in November 1988, the PLO formally recognized Israel's right to exist and renounced terrorism. For its part, Hamas, despite a divided leadership between Gaza and Syria, continues to employ terrorism, both in the form of suicide bombings aimed at Israeli civilians and by firing missiles at Israeli cities. Hamas also continues to deny Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state, proclaiming, very openly, its goal of destroying Israel and making the area between the Mediterranean an

However, how likely is it that the Obama administration would, in fact, speak with Hamas before it recognized Israel and renounced terrorism? In her mid-January 2009 confirmation hearings for the Cabinet position of Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton explicitly stated that the United States would not deal with Hamas until it changed its policies on terrorism and on recognizing Israel. In his inauguration speech, Obama himself stated emphatically that the United States would defeat those "who use terror and slaughter innocents"—a clear description of Hamas. In addition, if the Obama administration, following these statements, reversed its position on Hamas, Obama would not only massively hurt his credibility among large sectors of the U.S. public at a time when he is trying to preserve his political capital to reform the U.S. economy, he would also badly damage U.S. relations with Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian leader pledged to peace with Israel, and would also raise questions in the minds of the leaders of Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, all allies of the United States who oppose Hamas—and Iran, which backs Hamas.

If, however, as a result of its losses in the war with Israel, Hamas decides to reunite with Mahmoud Abbas's PLO in a Palestinian national unity government, which restores Abbas's control of Gaza, then one could perhaps expect U.S. interaction with the new Palestinian government, even if it contained Hamas representatives.

The Iran question. In a major change from the Bush administration, Obama has decided to "creatively engage" Iran in an effort to get it to halt its nuclear enrichment efforts. As Hillary Clinton stated in her confirmation hearings, the United States would follow "tough and principled diplomacy with the appropriate Iranian leader at the time and place of our choosing," in an effort to convince Iran to abandon its "dangerous behavior" and become a "constructive regional actor."

There are a number of questions raised by the new policy. First, given the enmity of Iran's leaders toward the United States, will the Iranians really want to engage the United States? Indeed, Iranian President Ahmadinejad has made a change in Iran's position toward the United States conditional on the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from the Middle East, something which the United States is highly unlikely to do. Second, even if the Iranians choose to talk with the United States—and it should be remembered that the Ayatollah Khamenei, and not Ahmadinejad is Iran's top leader—how can the Obama administration be sure that the Iranian goal is not simply to string out the talks until Iranian scientists succeed in weaponizing Iran's nuclear program and put nuclear warheads on Iran's medium-range missiles that can reach Israel? Third, if and when the Obama administration decides that Iran is not serious about negotiations, will the United States be willing to use force to stop Iran's nuclear program? Finally, if the Obama Administration is not willing to use force—despite Hillary Clinton's assertion that "all options are still on the table"—will Obama act to facilitate an Israeli attack on Iran?

Even the pro-Israel Bush administration refused to help Israel undertake an attack, denying it the bunker-

busting bombs it had requested, and denying Israel permission to overfly Iraq on the way to Iran. These are the questions that Israel, and its supporters in the United States, will watch closely as the Obama administration conducts its policy toward Iran.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)

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### Waiting for the dust to settle over Gaza (2009-01-24 12:11)

From [1]Alan Dowty



There seems to be a general sense that the Gaza war is over. The shooting has stopped, at least for the most part, at least for now. The pundits, not excluding this one, are lining up to declaim. But in some respects all this is a bit premature; the outcome is not yet totally clear. This is not over yet.

Consider the perspective of the simple central question: has Israel achieved the aims for which its campaign was presumably waged? There is the obvious problem that these aims were stated in various and even conflicting ways, but leave that aside for the moment. What would an interim assessment say about what Israel has gained or not gained?

- Stopping the rockets. For the moment the hail of rockets on Israel's bordering areas—now extending to Beer-Sheva and Ashkelon—has ceased, and it can reasonably be claimed that a measure of deterrence has been established. (It might be pointed out that the much-criticized 2006 war on Hezbollah also achieved this.) Hamas will probably be much more hesitant to provoke another such response in the near future.
- Shutting down weapons smuggling. This is where the dust has not settled, and it will be critical to history's judgment about whether the campaign was a success for Israel, or a victory for Hamas. The campaign ended only after Israel had obtained important agreements and assurances on precisely this issue from the United States, Europe, and above all from Egypt. But it remains to be seen whether the border with Egypt will be sealed to illicit traffic in arms; on the basis of past experience and the latest reports, one is permitted to be skeptical. The task is doable; nations that have shut down thousands of miles of international frontiers could surely cope with an eight-mile corridor. But some doubt the seriousness of Egypt in addressing the flow of weapons that come through Egyptian ports and territory. We will see.
- Weakening Hamas. This, too, remains to be seen. Obviously Hamas is significantly weakened militarily in Gaza, at least for now. We do not yet know if it is significantly weakened politically there, despite loud claims on both sides of the issue. Time will tell. We do know that Hamas appears to have been strengthened politically elsewhere and most critically in the West Bank, where the Palestinian



Authority has been significantly undercut. By all accounts, it would be extremely foolish to encourage the holding of new West Bank elections anytime soon.

- Overthrowing Hamas. There is already the predictable refrain from some on the Israeli right: we didn't go far enough. Critics claim that having invested so much in blood, treasure, and international standing, Israel again failed to complete the job by totally humiliating Hamas or by ejecting it from power. Total humiliation of a movement that defines simple survival as a victory is highly problematic, but "regime change" in Gaza, by military means, was and is a phantasm. It could be achieved only by total Israel reoccupation of Gaza, which few advocated, even among the most pedigreed hawks. No regime installed in Gaza by Israel would be tenable.

So the jury is still out. Much depends on whether the weapons trade can in fact be stifled, and the Egyptian-Gaza border re-established. To achieve this end, Israel may have to concede more than it would like on the issue of an open flow of legitimate goods across the border crossings—given the centrality of a partial blockade to the long-term aim of weakening Hamas economically and thus politically. But limiting the rearming of Hamas should, and probably will, have priority.

The long-term strategy for fostering the re-emergence of a credible Palestinian peace partner will have to revolve around the strengthening of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. This idea is featured in the Likud platform (not that other parties oppose it)—and this fact will probably be of increased relevance after the Israeli election on February 10.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)

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Joshua Muravchik (2009-01-24 20:24:43)

Thanks to Alan Dowty for getting the speculation ball [1]rolling. My crystal ball is always extremely cloudy, but I am cautiously hopeful on two counts. If Israel has succeeded in stopping the rocket fire, then it has won. Having gone this far, Israel will have no choice but to take more drastic action—up to reoccupation—if the fire resumes. The range of the missiles grows, and the country cannot simply endure this endless barrage. Militarily, Hamas showed nothing, so I am inclined to doubt it will provoke another round. As for the tunnels, I doubt that the smuggling will be stopped. There are simply too many players involved: Egypt, the United States, Europe. This diffusion of responsibility guarantees failure. But so what? If Hamas reloads its weapons but dares not fire them, how serious is that? The other part of my optimism is that Hamas has been weakened. Never mind the quotes in today's dailies. Never mind the feeling of the moment. Hamas has above all one thing to offer the people: that it will fight to the end to win Palestine from river to sea. If, having brought down this much destruction, Hamas is reduced to smuggling weapons it dares not fire, then it is broken. As for overthrowing Hamas, I am not optimistic. You can't beat something with nothing. And Fatah today is next to nothing. [2]*Joshua Muravchik is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/01/waiting-for-the-dust-to-settle-over-gaza/>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/joshua\\_muravchik/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/joshua_muravchik/)

Chuck Freilich (2009-01-26 02:53:46)

I am in agreement with Alan Dowty's balanced [1]analysis. As with everything else in the Middle East, there is no simple black or white answer to what really happened. I believe that Israel, by showing the cost of ongoing rocket fire, has restored some measure of deterrence, but given Hamas's fundamental nature as an organization, that it will be short-lived, a year or two if we are really lucky. Hamas does not care about the suffering of the Gazan population, except in a utilitarian way in as much as it reflects on its own standing. Indeed, pain and destruction are an integral part of its overall and long-term strategy. So given the heavy price, they will probably play it carefully for a limited period, waiting for the opportune timing and for memories to fade a bit, before initiating the next round. I believe the international "role" in preventing smuggling is little more than a political cover that Israel needed to declare victory. The French navy will not succeed in preventing smuggling that the Israeli navy has not been able to prevent, and

the tunnels will be rebuilt in short order. Even when Israel was in full control of the Philadelphi Corridor it was unable to uncover them all, so let's be realistic, Hamas will be back in the smuggling game very soon. Actually, it already is. There are two crucial points which were not raised in Dowty's piece or Muravchik's response: the Iranian dimension of the recent round and its impact on the future of the "peace process" which President Obama intends to prosecute "aggressively." Operation Cast Lead is the first round with an Iranian proxy in many years that Israel can view as having been effectively waged and having ended positively—not a clear-cut victory, but a good one given the circumstances. This will give the Iranians some pause, somewhat stem the rising tide of their successes, but will not fundamentally change the situation. They will undoubtedly draw the right (wrong) conclusions and Hamas will soon be armed with missiles capable of hitting Tel Aviv. The big issue remains the nuclear program, and this continues unabated and unaffected by the recent round. If it was almost impossible to see how the peace process could have been promoted before recent events, the problem is even greater now and casts serious doubts on President Obama's well-meaning if presumably futile intentions. At the same time, wars and major operations do shake things up and sometimes allow for previously unattainable movement. The immediate threat to Abu Mazen's ongoing presidency (which officially ended in early January) has been removed by events, and he may be able to stick around for a while longer. As things stand today, Hamas would probably win presidential elections and the likelihood of a Netanyahu led government following the upcoming elections also does not bode well for greater flexibility on the Israeli side. So the focus should be on capacity-building in the West Bank, which is underway in recent months, and maybe on settlements. Anything beyond that is probably expecting too much. Personally, I would like to see Israel end the embargo on Gaza; it has not succeeded and has only damaged Israel's stature. There is no point sticking to a position, justified though it may be, if it does not work and Israel will in all likelihood have to go in again in the not-distant future, at which time world opinion will remain important. [2]Chuck Freilich is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/01/waiting-for-the-dust-to-settle-over-gaza/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck\\_freilich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck_freilich/)

### Gaza war shrinks the moderates (2009-01-25 13:02)

From [1]Daniel Byman



I am writing from Jerusalem and talking to Israelis and Palestinians about the recent war in Gaza. Much of the discussion on the Israeli side understandably focuses on the restoration of Israeli deterrence and the possibility that the war lead Hamas to end its rocket attacks on Israel and crack down on other groups that try to strike on their own.

On the Palestinian side, however, the discussion focuses not only on the devastation of the war, but also on politics. In particular, Palestinians I talk to are concerned about the strength of the Palestinian moderates associated with the Palestinian Authority. Prime Minister Salam Fayyad in particular had made some progress by restoring a modicum of law and order to parts of the West Bank. The war, however, left the moderates in a familiar trap: if they sided with Hamas, they strengthened their greatest rival and bolstered an opponent to serious peace talks (as well as horrified the Israelis). Yet siding with Israel or even staying neutral inevitably painted them as collaborators.

Many Palestinians now seem to believe that Mahmoud Abbas and others tacitly supported Israel's attacks, and with it the devastation of Gaza and the killings of hundreds of Palestinian civilians. This in turn makes it harder for the moderates to make tough political concessions to the Israelis in peace talks and weakens their long-term chances for winning the political battle with Hamas among Palestinians.

For Israel, the absence of rocket attacks may make the political damage to the already-weak moderates worthwhile. But the further decline of the moderates is still one cost that should go into the overall equation when judging the war. Indeed, the strategy of U.S. peacemakers is often to bolster the moderates at the expense of extremists: doing so will be even harder now.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel\\_byman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel_byman/)

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Rex Brynen (2009-01-25 18:30:02)

Leaving aside all the other issues that surrounded the recent fighting—the need to deter rocket attacks against Israel, the punishing restrictions imposed by Israel on the movement of goods in and out of the Gaza Strip, the humanitarian crisis, and the conduct of the war by both Hamas and the IDF—the effects of the operation on intra-Palestinian politics have been, as Daniel Byman [1]notes, substantial. First, he is absolutely right in noting the severe collateral damage done to the Palestinian Authority and Fatah by the recent conflict in Gaza. During the crisis President Abbas looked ineffectual at best, and collaborationist at worst. Many West Bankers with little sympathy for Hamas were profoundly disturbed by images of Palestinian Authority (PA) security forces suppressing solidarity rallies during the war, or by the obvious irrelevancy of the PA as events unfolded in Gaza. Second, the already conflictual relationship between Fatah and Hamas has been further poisoned. Before the fighting, there were many in the ranks of both organizations who, while holding very different views, were well aware of the damage that Palestinian disunity was doing the Palestinian cause, and who therefore hoped that the gap might one day be bridged. Today, I suspect, there are rather fewer with such attitudes. Hamas activists in Gaza believe, rightly or wrongly, that Fatah personnel provided the IDF with targeting information during the fighting. I wouldn't be surprised if some did, and it was certainly the case that the occasional senior Fatah official seemed to be urging the IDF on in anonymous comments to the media. As a result, there has been an intensified campaign of violence and intimidation by Hamas against Fatah cadres in Gaza, including detentions, torture, knee-cappings, and summary executions. What was already a Palestinian civil war of sorts has become much worse. It is true that Hamas has signaled its willingness to see PA personnel return to the border crossings, if this would facilitate their reopening. However, it is currently insisting on PA personnel from Gaza—in other words, those who are personally vulnerable to Hamas intimidation. In both the media and within diplomatic circles, much has been made of the forthcoming competition to rebuild Gaza, and who might gain the most from it. Would reconstruction funds channeled through the PA help to strengthen it at Hamas' s expense? To be frank, I'm doubtful that the PA can either use those funds effectively in Gaza given Hamas control over the machinery of government there. I'm also doubtful that Israel will permit the volume of goods to move into (and out of) Gaza that would be necessary to rebuild what has been destroyed, and to restart what had become a moribund economy under previous restrictions. For its part, Hamas will attempt to take credit for any reconstruction efforts, and may get a financial infusion from Iran to help it ameliorate the political and social impact of the war. Given the continued Israeli restrictions of goods bound for Gaza, neither will help it much. Indeed, I think the whole debate over "who wins" from possible reconstruction misses the point. Gazans are a politically sophisticated lot, and are unlikely to be heavily swayed by Fatah, Hamas, or the international community brandishing promises of reconstruction assistance. Early indications are that the military campaign has hurt Hamas's political standing in Gaza: while most Palestinians would regard armed resistance to Israel as legitimate, and Gazans were seething at the Israeli "siege," many also feel that it was reckless in the extreme of Hamas to announce it would not renew the cease-fire and instead launch barrages of rockets into southern Israel, thereby provoking the Israeli assault. They won't forgive it lightly for this. Of course, Gazans might be prepared to forgive the movement a little (although not entirely) if the border opens, and the economy recovers. This, as well as the continued detention of Gilad Shalit, is precisely why Israel won't fully open the border, which is why we won't see real economic recovery. Quite apart from the reputational blow that it has suffered in the recent confrontation, Fatah is in any case in no position to make significant political gains at Hamas's expense given its continuing failure to undertake significant internal reforms. The Fatah's 6th Congress has been postponed once again. At this rate, the senior leadership will all die of old age before it is ever held. Finally, to

get back to Daniel's main point, there is no clear strategy on the part of anyone to deal with Hamas: not on the part of Israel, the US, or the PA. Sure, tactics abound—hit Hamas hard so they are deterred (Israel), isolate them until they weaken (the United States), or wait until external parties or circumstances somehow restore Fatah to its rightful place as the leading Palestinian group (Fatah). None of these really devote much thought, however, to how we best lay the groundwork now for a meaningful peace process in the future—a task that will be further complicated if the Israeli political system tilts to the right in the forthcoming elections. [2]*Rex Brynen is professor of political science at McGill University.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/01/gaza-war-shrinks-the-moderates/>
2. <http://www.mcgill.ca/politicalscience/faculty/brynen/>

## Did Hamas really win in Gaza? (2009-01-25 14:21)

From [1]Mark N. Katz



With the fighting over in Gaza (at least for now), many see Hamas emerging as the victor in the same way that Hezbollah did in the war it fought with Israel in the summer of 2006. But did Hamas really win? Is it better off now than before the fighting began?

Just like Hezbollah in 2006, Hamas has survived its January 2009 conflict with Israel. Also like Hezbollah, Hamas has retained—and perhaps even increased—its control over its core constituency. In another similarity with Hezbollah in 2006, the 2009 conflict with Israel has increased Hamas's status throughout the Arab and Muslim world. Also like before, criticism in the West and elsewhere has focused on the damage caused by Israel, and not the damage done to it.

Further, Hamas can probably still launch missile attacks on Israel just like Hezbollah can. Finally, Hamas has reportedly begun to rebuild the Israeli-damaged tunnels it uses to smuggle weapons from Egypt into Gaza.

But just how impressive are these achievements? Like Hezbollah, Hamas survived an Israeli onslaught. But also like Hezbollah, Hamas was unable to prevent or stop Israel from causing enormous damage to its supporters as well as the population it claims to protect. It is true that the conflict has increased the stature of Hamas in the West Bank. But this was something that was already occurring anyway through the incompetence and corruption of Fatah, which has made Hamas look better to many Palestinians.

Like Hezbollah in 2006, Hamas has won enormous sympathy and support in Arab and other Muslim countries. But if anything, Hamas has received even less support from their governments than Hezbollah did. America's Muslim allies have not broken relations with Washington (as many did in 1967) or sent men and materiel to help their Palestinian brothers fight Israel. Even anti-American forces have kept their distance from Hamas. While expressing solidarity, Hezbollah has not launched a missile onslaught from Lebanon that might have forced Israel to divert its attention away from Gaza. Indeed, Hezbollah was quick to disclaim responsibility for the few missiles that were fired into Israel from Lebanon. As for Syria: while encouraging Hamas to resist, Damascus has done little to help it do so.

Tehran has actually become frightened over the genuine anger toward Israel that has welled up among

Iranians. As Azadeh Moaveni's Washington Post Outlook [2]piece of January 25 noted, "Early this month, Khamenei appeared on national television to temper his previous declaration encouraging martyrdom on behalf of the Palestinians. He thanked the young people who had offered to go die in Gaza but said that 'our hands are tied in this arena.' Khamenei didn't really want anyone's hands to be untied, however; the whole Gaza incident was meant to distract Iranians, not to jeopardize Iran's role in the region."

However impressive the volume of outrage expressed in the Arab and Muslim world over Gaza, the Palestinians living there—and Hamas itself—may well have been more impressed by the fact that they received no meaningful support from these quarters in their struggle.

Also like Hezbollah, Hamas could not take much comfort from European criticism of Israel, as this did not result in effective action to halt Israeli military activity—much less any material support for the Arab side. Most importantly, whatever strains the 2006 and 2009 conflicts may have put on the Israeli-American relationship, U.S. support for Israel clearly remains strong. While criticism of Israel and sympathy for the Palestinians may be growing in the United States, this has not led to sympathy or support for Hamas. Nor is it likely to.

Finally, it should be pointed out that a large part of the reason why Hezbollah was perceived as victorious in 2006 is that it was the Israelis themselves who, in their disappointment at not having destroyed it, declared Hezbollah to have been the winner. Yet while Hezbollah's political strength within Lebanon certainly increased as a result of the 2006 conflict, it is noteworthy that Hezbollah has been extremely careful not to provoke another Israeli attack since then.

It remains to be seen whether Hamas will follow Hezbollah's example in refraining from firing missiles into Israel after such an intense conflict with the Jewish state. If it does, then Hamas's behavior might more reasonably be described as prudent rather than victorious. If, instead, it resumes missile attacks, Hamas risks not only triggering another Israeli intervention in Gaza, but also being blamed by Gazans for having needlessly brought them more pain without any gain. And this would open the door for another Palestinian movement to displace Hamas through taking advantage of Hamas's mistakes (just as Hamas did with Fatah). Hamas cannot afford a "victory" such as this.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_n\\_katz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_n_katz/)
2. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/23/AR2009012302325\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/23/AR2009012302325_pf.html)

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Malik Mufti (2009-01-30 12:30:21)

There appears to be a consensus that on the Palestinian side, the latest round of fighting has enhanced Hamas's stature, at least temporarily. The more important question is whether it can articulate a longer-term strategy that is viewed by the Palestinian people as being more effective than that of the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority. Here, Hamas [1]may be approaching a crossroads—between the rejectionist stance that has predominated so far, and a newer approach that envisions a definitive abandonment of armed struggle in return for statehood within the 1967 borders. On the Israeli side, the political leadership appears trapped between a realization that the status quo vis-à-vis the Palestinians is no longer sustainable, and an inability or unwillingness to do anything about it. The current government's stated commitment to a viable two-state solution has so far proven as devoid of substance as the opposition's assurances that the occupation can in fact somehow be sustained. In the meantime the settlements keep growing—by another 69 % last year, according to a recent [2]report—and the televised images of Palestinian suffering keep stoking Muslim wrath across the globe. Those who believe that the intensification of anti-Israeli sentiment in Turkey is due primarily to the efforts of the current government there, for example, fundamentally misread the situation. It is the other way around: Erdoğan is reflecting public opinion, and Turkish public opinion in turn is growing increasingly in synch with a Muslim world inflamed by the sight of largely defenseless Palestinians being subjected to the destructive

power of the Israeli military. One ray of hope: the United States now has a president who, according to his recent [3]interview with Al-Arabiya, recognizes the "interrelated" character of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the U.S. engagement with the broader Muslim world, and consequently believes that "the moment is ripe" for a Palestinian-Israeli settlement and that "the most important thing is for the United States to get engaged right away." [4]Malik Mufti is a member of MESH.

1. <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gBxZpc4Gmze7u0MfbQXJDaZ0iAhQD960M7MG0>
2. <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JPArticle/ShowFull&cid=1233050189893>
3. <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2009/01/27/65087.html#004>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/malik\\_mufti/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/malik_mufti/)

Jon Alterman (2009-01-26 06:20:12)

Israel's military superiority over non-state actors such as Hamas and Hezbollah has never been in question, and Hamas seems to have performed far worse in this last engagement than Hezbollah did in 2006. Israel's military learned many lessons from its performance in 2006, and some Israeli military officials may see this as an opportunity to exorcise the demons of a lackluster performance that degrades Israel's deterrent power. Israel's problem, however, is not that those fighting it doubt the IDF's capacity to wreak destruction. It is, instead, that Israel has often been unable to apply military force in such a way that it creates desired political outcomes. Early reporting may be misleading, but there seem to be few signs that any alternative to Hamas is emerging in Gaza, and even fewer that Mahmoud Abbas and his allies are expanding their control there. To the contrary, Israel's assault on Gaza revealed Abbas to have feet of clay. The entire Arab world saw this battle not as Israel against Hamas, but instead as Israel against Palestinians. In that battle, Abbas did not emerge as a defender of Palestinian interests or a leader of the putative Palestinian nation. He was, instead, a bystander when the Palestinian people were crying for leadership. When the final accounting is done on this war, Abbas—whom some in the Israeli government see as a potential peace partner—may emerge as the most significant casualty. Hamas and Israel have fallen into a spiral in which Israel's application of overwhelming force does not cause Hamas to surrender, but instead makes even random acts of Hamas violence seem like heroic defiance. Israelis can wound Hamas on the battlefield, but only Palestinians can turn away from the movement and starve it of the support it needs to survive. Troublingly for Israel, the chief lesson it should have learned from Lebanon in 2006 appears not to have been learned: that body counts of adversaries are a poor measure of success. Political outcomes are a much better one, and in this instance, early indicators are quite negative. [1]Jon Alterman is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon\\_alterman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon_alterman/)

David Schenker (2009-01-28 06:14:09)

There's no doubt that the IDF can win military battles against Hamas. Less clear is whether Israel can win the political war. Regrettably, the preliminary signs from this round of fighting don't look good. Despite a poor military showing—Hamas has reportedly launched a probe into its military performance—on several fronts the organization appears to have emerged from this war in an improved political position. Regionally, Hamas has burnished its image. Internationally, the French and others appear to be moving away from the Quartet prerequisites for engagement. So Hamas is edging closer to international recognition. If [1]reports in the *Jerusalem Post* are true, Hamas may also be the verge of vindicating its "resistance" tactics à la Hezbollah 2006. According to the *Post* story, Israel has offered to free 1,000 Hamas prisoners and open Rafah crossing in exchange for Gilad Shalit. Should this agreement come to fruition, it will be celebrated as a great victory for Hamas. The organization appears to have provoked the crisis in order to open Rafah and end "the siege." The purported arrangement sounds eerily similar to the Kuntar deal last year. In 2006, Hezbollah kidnapped two IDF soldiers for the expressed purpose of engineering Kuntar's release. Developments so far look quite favorable for Hamas. But it's not a forgone conclusion they will continue in this direction. Robust Egyptian counter-tunnel activities and international technical support on tunnel detection in the Sinai would constitute a real blow to Hamas in Gaza. Perhaps most important, however, is how the rebuilding of Gaza transpires. If Hamas is directly provided with Arab state funding and becomes solely responsible for the reconstruction, the organization could greatly improve its standing among its "constituents" and further erode support for Fatah among Palestinians. Given Palestinian political dynamics, it would be naive to think that Hamas could somehow be excluded from the project. Nevertheless, steps should be taken to minimize if not prevent Hamas from politically capitalizing on the reconstruction effort like Hezbollah has done in Lebanon. [2]David Schenker is a member of MESH.

1. <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1232643750209&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david\\_schenker/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david_schenker/)

Barry Rubin (2009-01-29 06:44:22)

The problem with David Schenker's [1]take is that he seems to be basing the most likely outcome on five "maybes": If Hamas completely revamps its tactics, if the crossings are opened unconditionally, if it gets a ridiculously good deal on the release of one Israeli hostage, if France and other countries start dealing with Hamas, and if Arab states want to funnel aid through Hamas. None of these things has happened. They might but they are not likely. So, Martin Kramer's [2]analysis is accurate. We can re-examine it based on David's checklist if things do start to change. Martin could have also listed some other factors like the open break with Hamas by many Arab states and a relatively critical media response, among other factors. Finally, it is important to remember that historically about 20 percent of Palestinians supported Hamas. This rose somewhat due to disgust with Fatah, and in the election—this is very rough but gives a sense—about 25 percent of voters were actually Hamas supporters and another 25 percent protest voters (seeing Hamas as more honest, tougher fighters, etc). The first question is whether that latter half will now rethink their views; the second question is whether it matters in Gaza, which is a dictatorship. Still, this could have a bigger effect on the West Bank than people think. Again, though, one should never overestimate the practical effect of public opinion in Arab politics. [3]Barry Rubin is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/01/did-hamas-really-win-in-gaza/#comment-1583>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/01/did-hamas-really-win-in-gaza/#comment-1584>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry_rubin/)

Martin Kramer (2009-01-28 08:14:33)

Another way to approach this is to ask whether Hamas has achieved the objectives for which it escalated the crisis, by its refusal to extend the cease-fire. Musa Abu Marzuq, number two in the Damascus office, [1]explained the primary Hamas objective in a very straightforward way: "The *tahdiyeh* had become 'a ceasefire [in exchange for another] ceasefire,' with no connection either to the crossings and [the goods] transported through them, or to the siege. Terminating it was [thus] a logical move." So Hamas gambled, escalated, and now finds itself, once again, in a "cease-fire for a cease-fire." Israel's primary objective was to compel a cease-fire by means of deterrence alone, without opening the crossings, thus serving its long-term strategy of containing and undercutting Hamas. This it has achieved, so far. When Israel launched its operation, Hamas announced a secondary objective: to inflict significant military casualties on the Israelis. For this purpose, it had built up a network of fortifications supposedly on the Lebanon model, which it promised to turn into a "graveyard" for Israeli forces. The military wing [2]announced that "the Zionist enemy will see surprises and will regret carrying out such an operation and will pay a heavy price. Our militants are waiting with patience to confront the soldiers face to face." This too never happened. The Hamas line quickly folded, its "fighters" shed their uniforms and melted into the civilian population. That Hamas failed to fight did surprise many Israeli soldiers, who had expected more. But there was no battle anywhere, and Israel suffered only 10 military fatalities, half of them from friendly fire. Hamas has taken to claiming that Israel has hidden its military casualties, and has thrown out various numbers—a rather precise measure of what it had hoped and failed to achieve. There is something perverse in the notion that Hamas "won" by merely surviving. Robert Malley has [3]said that "for Hamas, it was about showing that they could stay in place without giving way, and from this point of view it has achieved its main objective." This was *not* its "main objective" by any stretch of the imagination. Rashid Khalidi has [4]written that "like Hizbullah in Lebanon in 2006, all [Hamas] has to do in order to proclaim victory is remain standing." But Hamas had a specific objective—lifting the "siege"—which was altogether different from the objective of Hezbollah. This objective Hamas manifestly failed to achieve. It also failed to achieve the secondary objective it shared with Hezbollah: inflicting Israeli military casualties. It defies logic to declare the mere survival of Hamas to be a triumph, given that Hamas openly declared a much larger objective, and Israel never made the military destruction of Hamas an objective. War is only the pursuit of politics by other means, and anything could happen going forward. Israel could forfeit its war gains by inept diplomacy—something for which there is ample Israeli precedent. Hamas could parley its setback into a diplomatic gain—something for which there is ample Arab precedent. But I think there is little doubt that at the end of the war, Israel had achieved many of its stated objectives, and Hamas had not. A final point, on the comparison of Hamas to Hezbollah. It is always a mistake to lump these two movements together. Hezbollah's "Islamic Resistance" deserves the name. For years, it confronted Israel militarily in southern Lebanon, and fought battles of maneuver and assaulted Israel's fortified lines. Its cadres received serious Iranian training, and while they didn't win a straight fight with the IDF in 2006, they were battle-hardened, fought hard, and inflicted casualties. The "resistance" of Hamas has always been a fiction. Hamas's so-called "military wing" developed in circumstances of occupation, and it specialized

exclusively in the suicide belt and the Qassam rocket, both terrorist weapons which it directed almost exclusively at civilians. The videos of masked Hamas "fighters" in elaborate jihad-chic costumes, brandishing guns and jumping through hoops of fire, were cheap posturing. Hamas doesn't have a cadre of battle-hardened fighters; one Israeli soldier aptly [5]described those who did pop up in Gaza as "villagers with guns." If the "siege" of Gaza is significantly eased or lifted (which I still think is unlikely), it won't be because Palestinian "resistance" forced Israel's hand. It will be because Palestinian suffering has weighed on the conscience of others. That's a very old story, and there's nothing new or "heroic" about it. Those who've promised to liberate Jerusalem and Palestine by arms are (again) begging the world for sacks of flour. [6]*Martin Kramer is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP217709>
2. <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1052318.html>
3. <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5h8GyE5M9zx8J0tql7QMEHNshRcAQ>
4. [http://www.lrb.co.uk/web/15/01/2009/mult04\\_.html](http://www.lrb.co.uk/web/15/01/2009/mult04_.html)
5. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123200780663885189.html>
6. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)

### Broken aid system to Palestinians (2009-01-30 16:13)

From [1]Matthew Levitt



In the wake of the Gaza war, finding ways to provide much needed humanitarian support to the residents of Gaza—without inadvertently empowering Hamas—is of paramount concern. Unfortunately, problems remain with two of the primary vehicles the U.S. government intends to use to provide newly pledged aid, namely the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Today, the U.S. government [2]announced that President Barack Obama has authorized the use of \$20.3 million from the U.S. Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) Fund "to address critical post-conflict humanitarian needs in Gaza." According to the State Department press release, of the \$20.3 million in new ERMA funds, \$13.5 million will go to UNRWA, \$6 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and \$800,000 to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Beyond the contributions to UNRWA, ICRC and OCHA, State's press release noted, USAID "has provided more than \$3.7 million for emergency assistance to Gaza."

These may in fact represent the most appropriate of the available options to get humanitarian aid to the residents of Gaza, but in the cases of both UNRWA and USAID recent history highlights areas of particular concern.

UNRWA. The State Department noted that today's new contribution to UNRWA augments the \$85 million the United States contributed in December 2008 toward UNRWA's 2009 appeals. UNRWA, State noted, "is the largest provider of humanitarian aid in Gaza, providing 70 percent of the population with emergency food assistance, essential healthcare, and primary education. We are working to develop a longer-term re-



construction/development effort with international partners.”

While State hopes to use UNRWA as part of the post-Gaza war solution, a [3]new study by [4]James G. Lindsay, an Aufzien Fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the former legal advisor and general counsel to UNRWA, details how the agency remains a big part of the problem. A twenty-year veteran of the Department of Justice’s Criminal Division, Lindsay spent seven years with UNRWA and nine with the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in Sinai. He is uniquely qualified to comment on UNRWA from the inside.

Fixing UNRWA: Repairing the UN’s Troubled System of Aid to Palestinian Refugees is a must-read and covers a broad range of issues. Of immediate concern, however, especially to those striving to find a way to address the acute humanitarian needs of Gazans without strengthening or inadvertently funding Hamas, is the question of UNRWA’s patent failure to live up to its legal responsibilities under the [5]Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to “take all possible measures” to prevent U.S. contributions from going to “furnish assistance to any refugee who is receiving military training as a member of the so-called Palestine Liberation Army or any other guerilla type organization or who has engaged in any act of terrorism.”

The most immediate concern, related to today’s pledge and Hamas’s continued control of Gaza, is the fact that UNRWA does not sufficiently vet its employees in the West Bank and Gaza (in contrast to UNRWA staffing in Jordan and Syria, where both countries employ vetting processes for prospective area staff members applying to work within their borders). The problems are many, including this one, as noted by Lindsay:

UNRWA’s 29,000 area staff members are overwhelmingly composed of agency registered Palestinian refugees—an oft-criticized arrangement. There are several obvious downsides to UNRWA using staff members drawn from the beneficiary population. At worst, such staff may be more concerned about beneficiaries’ objectives than UNRWA’s. They can also be manipulated more easily than staff who are not beneficiaries, whether by argument or threat, to distort the agency’s objectives.

These are not hypothetical concerns. Back in October 2004, then-Commissioner-General of UNRWA Peter Hansen unapologetically admitted to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) that the UN employs members of Hamas. “Oh, I am sure that there are Hamas members on the UNRWA payroll,” Hansen stated, “and I don’t see that as a crime.” According to Hansen, “Hamas as a political organization does not mean that every member is a militant, and we do not do political vetting and exclude people from one persuasion as against another.” In his comments to CBC, Hansen also insisted that UNWRA staff members, “whatever their political persuasion,” are required to “behave in accordance with UN standards and norms for neutrality.”

But as I [6]wrote at the time, this does not always appears to be the case:

Building on Peter Hansen’s statement that the behavior of all UNRWA employees must conform with “UN standards and norms for neutrality,” the United States should work with the UN to develop, apply, and monitor a set of professional standards to ensure that UN offices, equipment, and personnel are not exploited for terrorist purposes. A logical starting point would be to ask employees to sign an antiterror pledge such as the “Certificate Regarding Terrorist Financing” already required by all recipients of U.S. Agency for International Development funding. As a member of the Quartet, the UN has a special obligation to uphold the commitment outlined in

the Roadmap to dismantle terrorist capabilities and infrastructure. In an effort to insulate good works from terrorist infiltration and exploitation, Washington should stand ready to help the UN live up to this obligation by funding an "Office of Professional Standards" for the UNRWA and similar agencies.

USAID. According to the USAID website, the agency "plays a vital role in promoting U.S. national security, foreign policy, and the War on Terrorism." Toward these goals—and considering that several agency-approved aid recipients have been linked to terrorist groups in recent years—USAID's proposed partner-vetting system (PVS) was a welcome and overdue development. Unfortunately, it remains unimplemented.

An aid organization by nature and design, USAID is focused more on dispersing aid than on vetting the partner and sub-partner organizations through which that aid is distributed on the ground. As a result, its otherwise laudable record is tainted by a series of awards to entities with established ties to terrorist groups, including Hamas-controlled zakat (charity) committees and the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG).

For example, [7]documents made public in the prosecution of the Holy Land Foundation and several of its leaders—ultimately convicted on all counts related to their providing material support for Hamas—reveal that as recently as December 2002, USAID "cleared" several charity committees to receive funding despite information publicly tying them to Hamas. These included the main committees in the West Bank towns of Jenin, Qalqilya, Hebron, Tulkarem, and Nablus, as well as the al-Tadhoman committee, also in Nablus. But a year earlier, in a November 2001 memorandum sent to the Treasury Department, the FBI had cited detailed information documenting Hamas links among the first five of these committees. Documents seized from Palestinian offices by Israeli forces in March 2002 and made public shortly thereafter revealed further links.

In March 2007, then-USAID administrator Randall Tobias was called before Congress to explain why the agency had provided more than \$140,000 to the Hamas-controlled Islamic University of Gaza. In response, he described the "very thorough vetting process that takes place." But despite State Department assertions that the USAID vetting process is thorough, several deficiencies explain how funding mistakes still occur.

In its most significant shortcoming, USAID often ran trace requests on individuals and organizations without sufficient identifier information such as date and place of birth (DPOB) or government-issued identification numbers. According to a 2006 Government Accountability Office (GAO) [8]report, "until June 2006, the [Tel Aviv] mission did not routinely collect detailed identifying information on individuals, such as [DPOB], or verify that information." At the embassy in Tel Aviv, several interoffice memoranda documenting trace requests concluded that "no derogatory information was uncovered" despite acknowledging—in bold font—that "these trace requests are less than comprehensive." The memoranda (made public in the Holy Land case) added that "without additional information on individuals (DPOB, ID number, full name) our reviews will be less than complete." Despite this disclaimer, the individuals and organizations in question were approved to receive USAID awards.

A random probability sampling conducted by GAO revealed that 94 percent of all memoranda "characterized the vetting based on only the four-part name as less than comprehensive." USAID did not even establish procedures to verify the accuracy of individual's names, such as requiring some official identification document.

Moreover, in March 2006, the USAID mission in Tel Aviv eliminated a requirement to periodically reevaluate aid recipients after initial clearance. Terrorist associations often develop gradually, however, and this procedural change made it impossible for USAID to identify late-emerging links on its own. According

to the 2006 GAO report, officials in the Tel Aviv mission claimed that "new information in 2005 showed possible links to terrorists, including Hamas, for six organizations that previously had been cleared." Indeed, it should come as no surprise that terrorist elements might deliberately seek to penetrate previously cleared organizations.

In addition, USAID's dollar-threshold policy leaves some recipients subject to no vetting at all. From 2001 to 2003, the threshold was \$25,000—grantees awarded anything less than that sum were not vetted. In July 2003, the Tel Aviv mission raised the threshold to \$100,000, in part because it feared that vetting requirements hampered its ability to deliver urgently needed humanitarian aid. As a result, according to the GAO report, no vetting was conducted on foreign organizations and individuals tied to thirty-four contracts totaling some \$2.1 million between August 2003 and February 2006. The threshold was changed back to \$25,000 in March 2006.

The GAO report also revealed that foreign service nationals—local, non-American embassy employees—had access to unsecured vetting data and, in at least one case, developed the database for recording and tracking vetting results. The database had several flaws, including important fields left blank or filled with inappropriate information.

As I [9]wrote in August 2007, the proposed partner-vetting system is necessary to remedy flaws such as those found in Tel Aviv. It would require applicants for USAID funding to submit identifying information on principal officers and other employees. As recent failures make clear, effective screening is impossible without sufficient identifier information. But even with sufficient information, meaningful traces must be run not only against the full range of publicly available information—clearly not done with the IUG and Hamas charity committees—but also against classified intelligence and law enforcement databases. Improved information sharing between USAID and security agencies will be critical for this to succeed. U.S. law, including Executive Order 13224 and existing statutory requirements for USAID vetting, demands the implementation of a reliable system.

Aid organizations may protest the extra administrative burden, but the critical need to provide humanitarian aid in conflict zones must be balanced with the inherent risk that terrorist groups will try to benefit from that aid. A truly robust system of vetting USAID partners is vital to promoting U.S. foreign policy and facilitating continued U.S. aid in places such as the West Bank and Gaza. The proposed PVS deserves public and private sector support and should be fully implemented as quickly as possible.

Unfortunately, while USAID first published the proposed rule for the PVS in July 2007, and a final rule was [10]just published in the Federal Register on January 2, 2009, the proposed vetting system is still being vigorously opposed within USAID and other parts of the U.S. interagency. President Obama, however, will have the opportunity to rectify USAID's vetting shortcomings. As the [11]final notice in the Federal Register notes, "The decision as to whether to implement PVS will be made by the incoming Obama Administration." The final rule is scheduled to go into effect February 2, 2009.

Both UNRWA and USAID do important work, and in the current environment are especially important players. That they both need significant improvement should be reason for increased focus and attention, not despair. There is no better place to start than with the implementation of the new USAID Partner Vetting System and the many detailed policy prescriptions offered in James Lindsay's [12]excellent study on UNRWA.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew\\_levitt/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew_levitt/)
2. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/01/115587.htm>
3. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=306>

4. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC10.php?CID=55>
  5. <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/faa.pdf>
  6. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2171>
  7. [http://nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/HLF/stdept\\_islunivgaza.pdf](http://nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/HLF/stdept_islunivgaza.pdf)
  8. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-06-1062R>
  9. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2653>
  10. <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/E8-31131.htm>
  11. <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/E8-31131.htm>
  12. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=306>
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## 3.2 February

### Iraqi elections checklist (2009-02-01 15:08)

From [1]J. Scott Carpenter



Iraq's provincial elections took place yesterday without much fanfare and, thankfully, not much violence either. According to news reports, the complexity of the system, the size of the ballot and voter apathy drove voter turnout down. Still, these historic elections, in which 7.5 million Iraqis participated, will set the tone for Iraq's democratic development and prepare the way for parliamentary elections later in the year. As news and results trickle out of Iraq's Independent High Election Commission (IHEC) over the coming days and weeks ahead, here are ten quick things to watch for:

1. Did Sistani's injunction that everyone should vote go unheeded? If it turns out to be true that turnout nationally was only 50 percent then the Ayatollah's influence over electoral politics may be on the wane.
2. Did the big, established parties benefit at the expense of new lists? High turnout tends to benefit large, well organized political parties. That it seems to have been fairly low should bode well for lists like Prime Minister Maliki's which was going head to head with al-Hakim's ISCI.
3. Did religious parties lose out? What about the Sadrists? No party in the elections ran with the slogan "Islam is the Solution" since voters were much more interested in who could actually provide services at the local level. As the Hamas experience indicates, however, election rhetoric and policy actions are different things. The Sadrists ran as independents on two separate lists. Under this electoral system, this should kill them.
4. Will there be outright majorities elected to the provincial councils? The provincial councils vary in size based on population from 25 to 57. The electoral system should not produce many clear winners

- meaning even after the results are tabulated coalitions at the local level will have to form and will likely take time doing it.
5. What will the elections mean to the idea of a new regional government in the south? If Hakim's ISCI does poorly, its goal of establishing a regional government in the south analogous to the Kurdish Regional Government in the north will be seriously in question.
  6. What will the results mean for the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA)? The results of these elections will give a strong indication of whether the SOFA negotiated with the United States will pass in this summer's national referendum. If the governmental parties do well, the referendum should be expected to pass easily.
  7. What will be the impact of election on the level of violence in Iraq? Elections don't always contribute to stability. Expect a large number of disputes to be lodged with the IHEC. It is unlikely but not impossible that disputes will descend into violence. Once elected, however, members of the councils will provide targets for would-be insurgents.
  8. Will the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) lose out to the Son of Iraq? Turnout in the whole of Iraq is reportedly low but in the Western provinces turnout is reportedly high. Because the Sons of Iraq ran a fragmented campaign and too many candidates, the IIP could end up doing quite well.
  9. How strong are governors likely to be? Governors are not elected directly in post-Saddam's Iraq. The Provincial Council elects him (or her). They need not elect someone from within their number. Who the governor will be will likely be the first decision taken by most councils. This, combined with coalition government, will make for inefficient governance.
  10. How will women do in these elections? The low turnout coupled with the complexity of the electoral system will likely mean women will do very poorly.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j\\_scott\\_carpenter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j_scott_carpenter/)

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## Behind the blow-out at Davos (2009-02-02 12:40)

From [1]Michael Reynolds



Origins of cooperation. For the past two decades, cooperative relations between Turkey and Israel had been one of the constants of international relations in the Middle East. While it would be incorrect to describe those ties as equivalent to an alliance, they were close and multi-faceted. Turkey recognized Israel in 1949, the first Muslim majority state to do so, but it was at the beginning of the 1990s that the two countries began to develop close ties. Bringing them together was a shared opposition to Syria and, to a lesser extent, Iran. Turkish-Israeli cooperation against Syria replicated a common geopolitical pattern whereby two non-contiguous states align against their common neighbor. Syria's support for the Kurdistan Workers Party (the PKK) and its military struggle against Turkish control of eastern Anatolia made Ankara eager to cooperate with Israel to contain Syria.

Although outside observers often overstated the degree of hostility between the Turkish Republic and Islamic Republic of Iran by extrapolating straight from their irreconcilable ideologies, a mutual interest in blocking Iran's export of Islamic revolution and influence did also serve to bring Turkey and Israel together. The two shared a general antipathy to revisionist radicalism of any sort and were both (relatively) comfortable with the status-quo in the Middle East.

The fact that they enjoyed close ties to the United States facilitated their cooperation; indeed, their bilateral ties cannot be understood in isolation from their ties with America. Their pro-American orientation was reinforced by their identification with liberal democracy and even lent their relationship a broader "civilizational" sheen. Finally, their cooperation was complementary in very practical ways in a number of areas, ranging from the military-security field to planned projects to bring natural gas and water to Israel.

Beginnings of estrangement. Recent years, however, have seen a definite deterioration in Turkish-Israeli ties. Several reasons explain this, but perhaps the most fundamental lies in the post-9/11 shift in United States' policy under George Bush from support of the status quo in the Middle East to revision of it through the toppling of multiple regimes in the Middle East, starting with Saddam Hussein's. Although no one in Washington even imagined targeting the Turkish Republic in the project to remake the "Greater Middle East"—to the contrary, American policy makers saw the goal of creating more secular, democratic, and thus pro-American regimes as one complementary to Turkish interests—Turkish opinion across the board was profoundly skeptical of American motives and fearful of American plans.

Not a few Turks, including those in think tanks and the military, believed that the ultimate target of Operation Iraqi Freedom was not Middle Eastern despotism but the Turkish Republic. Once the United States was in Iraq, it would proceed to incite and agitate Kurdish groups inside Turkey. Then, in the name of democracy, it would detach Turkey's eastern provinces to form a Kurdish state. By breaking the Middle East up into a greater number of smaller, more pliable, states, the United States could maintain its hegemony over the Middle East more easily. Because Israel, in turn, would be a prime beneficiary of this fracturing of Middle Eastern states, it was seen as complicit in this project.

It is an utterly fantastic, not to mention paranoid, reading of U.S. (and Israeli) policies and capabilities. But it is a worldview embedded in the institutions of the Turkish Republic, from the schools to the Turkish military. These institutions did not spring forth whole-cloth following the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. Rather, they were forged in the long struggle to prevent the empire's break-up and division. That struggle ultimately was successful to the extent that the new republic managed to retain control of Anatolia despite the intentions of the Great Powers to partition it, most notably in the Sykes-Picot (Sazonov) agreement of 1916 and the Treaty of Sevres of 1920.

The Turkish Republic, in other words, was the direct response to the problem of Ottoman decline. Indeed, the republic's founding elites embraced secularism and Turkish nationalism—the two main pillars of republican ideology—not because of their intrinsic appeal but rather because they saw them as essential to arrest the process of break-up and partition. Secularism was needed to ensure the technological progress and economic growth that a strong state required, and nationalism was needed to maintain unity, bind the people to the state, and immunize society against dissension that more powerful states always looked to exploit.

The belief that outside forces are steadily and consciously working to undermine Turkey and divide it is thus almost hard-wired in Turkish institutions. The U.S. invasion of Iraq activated these circuits of suspicion. Pentagon national security strategy papers that spoke of maintaining America's global hegemony through the suppression of peer competitors, maps in U.S. military journals showing a partitioned Turkey,

a surge in PKK attacks inside Turkey, the U.S. military's disinterest in cracking down on the PKK in Iraq, and reports of PKK acquisition of American arms, among other things, served to confirm the suspicions of many Turks that the United States was a new predatory "Great Power." Far from being a trustworthy ally, the United States began to loom as the single greatest threat to the unity of their country.

Suspicion also fell upon Israel, primarily because it was the country in the region closest to the United States, but also because it was known to have cultivated ties to the Kurds of Iraq in the past and is presumed to have an interest in the break-up of Iraq and Iran. The result, in short, has been a steady deterioration in Turkish trust toward the United States and, by extension, to Israel.

Some pin the blame for this breakdown in trust on the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), and trace it to the AKP's origins in Turkey's Islamist movement. The reality is that the causes for distrust are both broader and deeper than the AKP or Turkey's Islamist movement. It is worth noting that the AKP's secularist-nationalist opponents commonly portray the party and its leaders, including Turkish President Abdullah Gül and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, as tools of American foreign policy, products of an American project to cultivate "moderate Islam." Perhaps inevitably, they have even published books identifying Erdoğan and Gül as key actors in Zionist conspiracies against Turkey.

Ankara's growing unease with American behavior and intentions coincided with and stimulated a growing conviction that Turkey should engage its neighbors and play a more active role in its neighborhood, including the Middle East. Engagement would raise Turkey's profile and provide it a hedge in case of any clash with the United States. Ankara's pursuit of closer ties to Syria and Iran, however, in turn began to erode American and Israeli confidence in Turkey. Following Syria's cessation of support for the PKK in 1999, Turkey's relations with its southern neighbor shifted from confrontational to conciliatory. Although Ankara contends that building relations with Syria and Iran will allow Turkey to play a valuable role as mediator, Ankara's rapprochement with Damascus and dealings with Tehran have unsettled American and Israeli policymakers concerned with isolating Syria and Iran. Tehran's demonstrated willingness to attack PKK-affiliate bases inside Iraq, however, highlighted Washington's passivity on Turkey's predominant security concern and further sullied America's reputation as a reliable ally.

As part of the effort to play a more active role in the Middle East, Erdoğan and his government have been noticeably sympathetic toward Hamas, condemning the assassinations of Hamas leaders, defending Hamas's legitimacy as the elected representatives of the Palestinians, and receiving Hamas emissaries in Ankara. Defenders of this policy argue that by engaging Hamas, Turkey will ultimately be able to moderate it. Turkey will then be able to use its unique position as a Muslim country with long-standing ties to Israel to help broker a final resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Critics of Ankara's policy contend that lending even moral support to Hamas only encourages it to stick to its avowed aim of destroying Israel, and they question what motivates Erdoğan and his government in their support of Hamas: Is it really a desire to play a more responsible role in the Middle East? Or is the reflection of religiously rooted sympathy for Hamas and antipathy toward Israel? Or is it a cunning populist politician's instinct for what mobilizes his electoral base and delivers votes? Erdoğan's failure to criticize Hamas beyond issuing stock phrases abjuring the use of force, combined with his emphatic condemnation of Israeli actions and religiously inflected language, suggest to some that the latter two motives are predominant.

The Turkish public's sympathy for the Palestinians is long-standing, but it was never ardent. In the past two to three years, however, that sympathy has grown in inverse proportion to a decline in Israel's reputation. Israel's massive retaliation against Lebanon during its war with Hezbollah in 2006 gravely damaged Israel's image across all sectors of the Turkish public. Turkish citizens watched during that

summer as the Israeli armed forces pounded not just Hezbollah but targets throughout Lebanon, seemingly at will. Israel's declaration that it held Lebanon responsible for Hezbollah's provocations (Hezbollah being part of the Lebanon's government) underscored that Israel's punishment was willful and deliberate.

Israel's use of overwhelming force against Gaza in its most recent campaign against Hamas further tarnished Israel's reputation, as it generated images again of the gratuitous use of violence, this time against a Muslim people who were effectively defenseless. These images, along with those of American "shock and awe" in Iraq, Abu Ghraib, and more recent operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere have all combined to reinforce the suggestion that the greatest threat to Turkey and regional peace and stability come from the United States and Israel.

Responding to Operation Cast Lead, Erdoğan employed exceptionally loaded language to condemn Israel's operations in Gaza, describing them as "savagery," "a crime against humanity," and deserving of divine retribution. The Turkish Ministry of Education directed that schoolchildren should observe a minute of silence for the victims of Israeli arms in Gaza. These actions caused Turkey's tiny Jewish community to feel besieged. Israeli officials responded with veiled hints that Jewish American organizations might withdraw their support for Turkish efforts to block passage through the U.S. Congress of a resolution recognizing an Armenian genocide.

Clash at Davos. The most spectacular episode in the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations took place this past week, when on January 29 Erdoğan and Israeli President Shimon Peres sat on a panel to discuss Gaza and Middle East peace at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Also sitting in on the panel were the UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon and the head of the Arab League, Amr Musa. (See the video clip [2]here or at the end of this post.)

The panel was charged with tension from the beginning as first Moon, Erdoğan, and then Musa all directed criticism toward Israel. An exasperated Peres then ratcheted emotions up further, lecturing to Erdoğan in a dismissive tone at moments and shouting toward the end. His rambling presentation made the case for Israel poorly, the low-point being his citation of Husni Mubarak's approval, as if the Egyptian president were a disinterested and impeccable moral authority. Peres came across alternately some times as condescending and at other times bewildered as to how some could find fault with Israel's use of force.

When Peres finished, Erdoğan insisted on getting in the last word. Ignoring the request of the moderator David Ignatius to speak no more than a minute, he proceeded to lash into Peres, declaring that his shouting betrayed a guilty conscience and imputing to him expertise in killing children at beaches, before going on to cite the Torah's prohibition against murder and throwing in criticisms of Israel from Israelis for good measure. Not content with blasting Peres, he declared that those audience members who applauded Peres too were guilty of a "crime against humanity." Offended by Ignatius' insistence that he stop speaking and let the panel conclude, Erdoğan stormed off.

The public exchange of such harsh and emotional words between leaders of two states that enjoy ostensibly close relations was extraordinary, perhaps unique in modern diplomatic history. Yet Erdoğan in a later press conference was wholly unrepentant, declaring that he was neither an effete "mon cher" diplomat, nor some "tribal leader" to be belittled but the Prime Minister of the Turkish Republic and had defended Turkey's honor. Although afterwards Peres allegedly called Erdoğan in an attempt to smooth over the incident, it is difficult to see how the damage to Turkish-Israeli relations can be contained.

The fact that several thousand cheering supporters greeted Erdoğan upon his return to Istanbul is itself not very telling; Erdoğan is a charismatic politician and can easily rally that many on any given issue. More indicative is that columnists from a wide spectrum of newspapers and political positions have



expressed their support for the frankness of Erdoğan's message, if not his style of delivering it.

If, as many now predict, the U.S. Congress this spring does pass a resolution recognizing an Armenian genocide, the effect will not be to spur Turks to critically examine late Ottoman history. To the contrary, the Turkish public will interpret the resolution as nothing more than a cheap insult against the whole of Turkey delivered by an imperious America and facilitated by vindictive supporters of Israel. Because the issue commands considerable emotional resonance across all sectors of Turkish society, the possibility that Congress might pass the resolution right before Turkey's municipal elections on March 29 could hand Erdoğan an irresistible opportunity to demagogue the issue. For one, playing up the issue would reinforce his contention that Turkey's honor is under assault and that he is the man to defend it, thereby immunizing him against criticism that his habit of indulging in inflammatory drama has harmed Turkey's image and interests. But more significant is that the issue would force even his hard-core opponents to rally behind him in a show of defiant national unity. The damage to Turkish-American and Turkish-Israeli relations could be considerable.

Salvaging the wreckage. If Turkish and Israeli policymakers are to salvage anything from Davos, they will have to start by acknowledging the uncomfortable reality that the opinions expressed by the leaders of the two countries were heartfelt and reflect the dominant public sentiments in their respective countries.

Polls demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of Israelis supported Operation Cast Lead. They did so not because they enjoy bombing Palestinians (Erdoğan's claim at Davos that two former Israeli prime ministers boasted of receiving pleasure when riding into Palestine on tanks notwithstanding), but because they see Hamas as unremittingly hostile and bent on the destruction of their society. Whereas outsiders see Israel as a robust and powerful state and ask why they must resort to massive force so readily, Israelis themselves are acutely conscious of their small country's vulnerabilities and believe they must demonstrate an unyielding will to defend themselves lest they lose the ability to deter their enemies.

If Erdoğan and other Turks truly aspire to a more influential role for their country in the region, they will have to address directly Hamas's refusal to acknowledge Israel's right to exist and condemn Hamas's use of violence against innocents with the same intensity that they have condemned Israel's. They might remind themselves that whereas the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) has never aimed for the destruction of Turkey, Ankara has consistently refused to negotiate with it. Turkey is indeed in a unique position to contribute to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but to do so it must act deliberately and responsibly.

For their part, Israeli officials would do well to recognize that, no matter how justified they believed Israel to be, the campaigns in Lebanon in 2006 and Gaza in 2009 have done tremendous damage to Israel's image in Turkey. The attempt to achieve absolute deterrence can be counter-productive. While anti-Semitism exists in Turkey and is a concern for the Turkey's Jewish community, it cannot explain the recent broad declines in Turkish support for Israel.

In remarks addressed to Ankara on February 1, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni suggested, "It is possible to fix everything, we have to talk, put things on the table, keep our common interests as well as our differences in mind." Livni's proposal is sound, and Ankara would be wise to take it up, for the sake of Turkey's relationship with Israel but also for the sake of the Palestinians and the rest of the region. A frightened and further isolated Israel is not one that will benefit Turkey or any of Israel's neighbors.

Finally, given that Turkish-Israeli relations are bound up with bilateral American relations with both states, American officials have little choice but to be involved in repairing those ties. The Bush administration's aborted project to remake the Middle East started a process of estrangement that inevitably spilled

over into Turkish-Israeli relations. The rift in Turkish-Israeli relations, if not repaired soon, may develop into a chasm between America and Turkey.

MESH Pointer: See the subsequent thread, [3]In the name of Islam: a liberal appeal.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

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1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_reynolds/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_reynolds/)
2. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cR4zRbPy2kY>
3. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/in-the-name-of-islam-a-liberal-appeal/>

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Kemal Gürüz (2009-02-23 12:09:54)

In the fall and winter of 2004, I made a presentation, both at Harvard and Cornell, entitled: "Two Years of an Islamist Government in Secular Turkey: A Critique from an Historical Perspective." (Click [1]here to read it.) I do not want to claim prescience, but my worst fears are being confirmed by the recent turn events in Turkey, both domestically and from a foreign policy point of view. Turkey has been gradually moving away from being a secular Western country with a predominantly Muslim population, and is increasingly becoming more like an Islamic Middle Eastern country. For an eloquent description of the shift, I recommend this summary of recent remarks by Soner Çağaptay, [2]here. [3]Kemal Gürüz is former president, Council of Higher Education of the Republic of Turkey (1995-2003), and a past fellow (2004-05) of the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard.

1. <http://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/Europe/about/pdf/Guruz.pdf>
2. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=3016>
3. <http://www.suny.edu/sunyNews/News.cfm?filename=2004-12-01KemalGuruzBio.htm>

### Iraqi security: 2009 checklist (2009-02-03 16:43)

From [1]Mark T. Kimmitt



Following on Scott Carpenter's excellent [2]post on the state of the Iraqi elec-

tions, it is also worthwhile to consider the security situation in Iraq. A year ago, I [3]asked if 2008 would be

the year when the gains in security are met by gains in stability, or will the tremendous tactical gains achieved by our troops be withered away because of a lack of political consensus and the lack of political reconciliation? (Will those) gains in security translate into gains in stability? The next phase (of the Surge) will be far more difficult as it depends more on the Iraqis themselves to show progress on key legislation, show progress in their economy and to show progress in reconciliation.

As 2008 demonstrated, there were tremendous gains in internal security, and the recent elections demonstrate that there is a flicker of hope for political consensus and reconciliation. The economy is in good shape and in many ways the envy of the region, despite the low price of oil. Regional governments, while not embracing Maliki, at least are no longer rejecting "that Iranian in Baghdad." Overall, both the political and security situations are far better than one might have hoped in early 2007 when the "Surge" decision was announced. As a wag recently noted, the ultimate metric of success—the fact that the war in Iraq rarely merits front page news—has been achieved.

However, the situation still remains tenuous and there is no reason for complacency or casual dismissal of the challenges. As I did in early 2008, let me offer a checklist of leading indicators for 2009.

1. Keep an eye on potential flashpoints: Kirkuk, the pace of integration of the Sons of Iraq into Iraqi Security Forces, and post-election violence as results are announced.
2. Keep an eye on Iran, Syria, Al Qaeda in Iraq and other insurgent groups. How will they see 2009? An opportunity to step into a perceived vacuum created by the departing U.S. forces? An opportunity to create mischief for the new U.S. administration? An opportunity to interfere in the wake of the recent Iraqi elections?
3. What will be the effect of a 16-month withdrawal policy for the U.S. combat brigades? As this will require the return of a brigade per month, will this lead to a security vacuum in those regions now covered?
4. Will the U.S. administration adhere to a 16-month schedule, or will there be some flexibility in this timeline?
5. Will the Iraqi government stick to the requirement for all U.S. forces to be out of the country by the end of 2011? Will there be provisions made for trainers, enablers, CT forces and the protection of U.S. facilities?
6. Are the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) ready to take over the responsibility in each of those brigade areas? While the ISF have proven willing and able to handle the direct fire engagements, they have been dependent to a great degree on U.S. intelligence, air support, logistics, fire support and communications. Is the ISF ready to fight a full-spectrum counterinsurgency on its own?
7. What will be the operational consequences of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA)? Will insurgents and extremists attempt to leverage perceived restrictions on U.S. forces to increase their activities?
8. What will be the commercial consequences of the Status of Forces agreement on contractor organizations? Will contractors—which now number well over 100,000 and handle much of the logistical and commercial activities—depart en masse given the transfer of legal jurisdiction from the parent country to the Iraqi judicial system and the departure of large numbers of U.S. forces?

9. Is the Iraqi Government ready to take responsibility for the large number of detainees that the SOFA hands over to them? Will the pressures of local politics demand the release of large numbers of detainees? How will the Iraqi government treat those detainees it retains? Will they cure or create the next generation of insurgents?
10. Will the downturn in oil prices have an effect on the budgets of the Iraqi Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Intelligence? It was hoped that the Iraqi budget would include \$12 billion for the ISF, and that these funds would pay for salaries, operations and procurement. Will the procurement budgets remain sufficient to buy the equipment necessary to pick up where the U.S. forces have left?

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark-t-kimmitt/>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/02/iraqi-elections-checklist/>
3. [http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/02/army\\_iraq\\_surge\\_080225w/](http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/02/army_iraq_surge_080225w/)

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J. Scott Carpenter (2009-02-05 07:27:50)

First let me say how great it is to welcome [1]Mark Kimmitt, my friend and former colleague, to MESH. It is terrific to have him and I look forward to his insightful contributions. In reading through [2]his post, which dealt largely with security, I wanted to suggest a further question for consideration now that the provincial elections are over: Will there actually be a referendum on the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) as called for in Iraqi law? Prior to the provincial elections, the short answer would have been an unqualified yes. At the time the SOFA was debated last fall, popular sentiment seemed so strongly against it that the Iraqi parliament passed it only after insisting that the public ratify the agreement by referendum prior to July 30. Grand Ayatollah Sistani gave his tacit support only after the referendum provision was included. So what has changed? According to preliminary results coming out of Iraq, Prime Minister Maliki's "State of Law" list seems to be dominating the provincial elections. His list has come in first in every province of the South and in Baghdad. Remarkably, in the predominantly Sunni province of Salahaddin, his list is reportedly coming in second. In Basra, where he first earned his reputation as being a man of action, Maliki's list appears headed for an outright majority having routed the Fadila party which came in dead last with fewer votes than the Communists, according to *Al-Mashriq* newspaper. Maliki's success in these elections derives largely from the perception that he was able to deliver security to the people of Iraq while the other parties brought only sectarianism and failure. If he can now build on his success by appointing competent governors and delivering services in the provinces he should be able to extend his margin of victory in the December parliamentary elections, perhaps securing a large enough parliamentary group to govern without resort to a grand coalition. Only one thing clouds this vision: the summer referendum on the SOFA. During the parliamentary debate last fall Maliki strongly supported the SOFA. He spoke out on television and radio and even went so far as to organize counter demonstrations to those organized by Muqtada al Sadr. In his arguments to the Iraqi people he made the case that the SOFA was the best way to "end the occupation" and argued that he had wrested a specific date out of a President who said he would never agree to one. This was politically risky in the extreme but clearly has not hurt him in these elections. He could make the case again in July but the polarization it would risk might hurt his chances in December, especially since the parties who had lost out to him in the south, including the Sadrists and ISCI, would use the SOFA as a wedge issue to eat into his base. For this reason, Maliki may be tempted to make the argument that the provincial elections were themselves a referendum on the SOFA. And why not? His political opponents attacked him for his support of it to no avail. The other governmental parties who supported the agreement also did relatively well, including IIP which would also not likely want to face a referendum. Besides, who needs another election when you have possibly four more in the year ahead? And since the Obama Administration wants to accelerate the timetable for withdrawal in any case, why not let sleeping dogs lie? One wonders if this was not something Maliki raised with Ayatollah Sistani when he met with him yesterday. If Maliki is considering this as a way forward he should weigh the attendant risks. One is the risk of precedent. In the disputed territories of Ninewah, Diyala, and Salahaddin provinces, the Kurdish parties that have lost out in Mosul, for instance, nonetheless claim that the voters in these towns and villages voted in clear majorities for them—a referendum, if you will, on their desire to join the Kurdish Regional Government. The precedent of ignoring the law is also not something to take lightly. If you can ignore the law on so significant a point then why obey any part of it? And then there are the Sunni provinces and their new leadership, especially those affiliated with the Haadba list in Ninewah, who may see in a decision not to hold a referendum another example of betrayal from Baghdad. SOFAs, as Mark knows, tend to be negotiated behind closed doors for a reason, especially in

the Middle East where governments are so bereft of legitimacy that they would not dare to make security agreements with the United States a subject of referenda. (Even in the United States, there are occasions when the Executive Branch deems it both unnecessary and unhelpful to submit such agreements to the Senate for the American people's representatives' approval.) For this reason, the prospect of an empowered Iraqi prime minister taking his case directly to the people has immense appeal. Maliki should take the risk. If he does and wins in a straight up or down vote, his legitimacy and strength will be enhanced. The prospects of losing are, in any case, small. The vote for Maliki in these elections was because he ushered in a period of security and stability in Iraq. Iraq without a SOFA means an immediate withdrawal of American forces and risks the end of such security. No Iraqi will want to take this risk, especially if Prime Minister Maliki makes the case. [3] *J. Scott Carpenter is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark-t-kimmitt/>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/02/iraqi-security-2009-checklist/>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j\\_scott\\_carpenter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j_scott_carpenter/)

Reidar Visser (2009-02-05 07:25:21)

Additional indicators to look for relate to Nuri al-Maliki's apparent conversion to Iraqi nationalism and centralism. If this new stance, highlighted during the local elections campaign, is indeed sincere, it would mean improved prospects of Iraqi stability in the future. If not, it could easily lead to increased fragmentation and Iranian dominance. Relevant checklist points include: 1. Will Maliki continue to move in the direction of constitutional change that could bring much-needed checks and balances to the 2005 constitution? 2. Will he translate his nationalist rhetoric into coalition-building with Sunnis and secularists in local council, or will he revert to cooperation with the Kurds and sectarian Shiite leaders? 3. Will the Da'wa support a nationalist candidate in the ongoing election process of the next parliamentary speaker, or will it revert to its previous alliance with the ethno-federalists in the Iraqi parliament: KDP, PUK, ISCI and the IIP? [1] *Reidar Visser is a research fellow at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and editor of the Iraq website [2]historiae.org.*

1. <http://www.historiae.org/>
2. <http://www.historiae.org/>

## Middle East seen from Freedom House (2009-02-09 16:12)

From MESH Admin

Freedom House has just released its Freedom in the World [1]survey for 2009, rating the level of political rights and civil liberties worldwide. Freedom House divides countries into three categories: free, partly free, and not free. In its "Map of Freedom" (download [2]here), free countries are shown in green; partly free in yellow; and not free in blue. Here is the Middle East portion from the 2009 map.



The survey notes:

Since the MENA [Middle East and North Africa] region was the centerpiece of the Bush administration's Freedom Agenda, the lack of more significant and durable gains for freedom stands as a major disappointment for American policy. During the Bush years, 9 of the region's 18 countries experienced some improvement on the Freedom in the World scale, including Saudi Arabia and several of the Gulf states. There were, however, no major breakthroughs: in 2008, as in previous years, Israel was the only country in the region to enjoy a status of Free, although as the occupying power in the Palestinian territories, Israel is largely responsible for the Not Free status of the areas under its control.

1. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=445>
2. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/fiw09/MOF09.pdf>

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### Iran and the Arabs... and Obama (2009-02-10 16:35)

From [1]Michael Young

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Is Iran trying to create a "Shiite crescent," as its Arab critics insist, or is it a country merely interested in helping the oppressed in the Middle East, Sunnis and Shiites alike? That's the question indirectly posed in this news report from Al-Jazeera in English ([2]here, if you cannot view it above), and in many respects it's a red herring. The truth is simpler. Iran will use all the instruments it can muster to advance its nationalist agenda in the region—Shiite solidarity in some countries, resistance to Israel or the United States in others, and popular displeasure with Arab regimes in yet others, with overlap possible in each.

Two things are interesting here. First, that Iran's Arab rivals, realists to the bone, should tend to define Iranian behavior mainly in terms of ideology and sectarian affiliation. But that too is a red herring, because the Arab states realize that in competing with Iran, their principal comparative advantage remains Sunni sectarian mobilization. Iran, they know well, is as realist a state as any other, but one effective way of containing its power in the Middle East is to appeal to the ambient Sunni fear of a regional "Shiite threat," no matter how vague and remote that concept may be.

A second thing interesting here is what Iran's multi-layered ability to advance its regional interests means to the United States. There has been much talk of "engaging" Iran of late in Washington, and in and of itself that's not necessarily a bad thing. Already, for example, this promise may have influenced the [3]speech today of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, in which he declared that Iran was prepared for a dialogue with America, provided it took place in "a fair atmosphere in which there is mutual respect." But before we get any ideas that Ahmadinejad has truly warmed to such an opening, we might want to consider that the president felt a need to sound conciliatory because he couldn't abandon that valuable card to his future rival in the presidential election, Muhammad Khatami.

The real question, however, is how does the United States engage Iran successfully when the Islamic Republic has proven so adept at advancing its national interests in intricate ways, and seems so much more clearheaded than the United States about the endgame? The Arabs have usually fought back by appealing to sectarian paranoia; but what can the United States do against an Iran that by all accounts is building a nuclear weapon

in order to become a regional hegemon? An Iran that is indeed able to appeal to Shiites in Arab societies, perhaps most importantly in Lebanon? That can play on Arab sympathy for the Palestinians, while also influencing its allies in Iraq? And that can on occasion raise the domestic heat on American friends such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, because their societies question their legitimacy?

The simple answer is that, until now, we're not quite sure. Amid all the talk of... well, talking to Iran, the Obama administration has yet to formulate a new and comprehensive policy toward the Islamic Republic. To talk is not a strategy; it's just a verb. That doesn't mean a brilliant scheme will not soon emerge from the catacombs of the National Security Council and the State Department. It doesn't mean that Washington will inevitably be taken for a ride by the mullahs. But since we have an administration in Washington that has expressed its desire to break away from the allegedly "ideological" Bush years and return to the cooler pursuit of the national self-interest ("smart power." as Hillary Clinton calls it), then we can probably assume that Tehran will test that ability to the limit.

The Al-Jazeera report is interesting because it limits itself to a conceptual template that the Iranians are glad to work within. For every Arab attack on the predominance of Shiite sectarian calculations in Iranian foreign policy, the Iranians can find a good refutation. The real issue is that Iran is as nationalist as any other state, and as flexible in balancing its ideological weapons with its political, financial, and military ones regionally. That will be an important lesson for the Obama administration to remember when or if it moves ahead in an exchange with Tehran. It should also provide a blueprint for how the U.S. should respond when trying to put Iran on the defensive. If Iran can play on several regional and international game boards, then Washington needs to match that. Now is Barack Obama's opportunity to show that he has the subtlety that George W. Bush lacked.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_young/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_young/)
2. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ufe5dt6iVaI>
3. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/10/AR2009021000210.html?hpid=topnews>

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## Egypt and Gaza after the war (2009-02-12 16:20)

From [1]Michele Dunne



During the recent Israeli military operation and subsequent efforts

to reach a durable ceasefire, Egypt demonstrated that it has two principal interests related to Gaza: first, avoiding taking on responsibility for the one and a half million Palestinians living there; and second, transferring control of Gaza back to the Palestinian Authority led by President Mahmud Abbas to the extent possible. These interests spring from long-standing Egyptian support for the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as from concerns about stability inside Egypt itself.

There are at least two ways in which Egypt might be forced to take on responsibility for many, or all, Gazan Palestinians—and Egyptian President Husni Mubarak will try to avoid either one of them. First, there is the possibility that, due to a humanitarian crisis in Gaza, tens or hundreds of thousands of Palestinians could flood across the border into Sinai and stay on a semi-permanent basis. Egypt would then have to house them in refugee camps, creating a large and most likely restive refugee population in Sinai. This is not an idle fear; hundreds of thousands of Palestinians crossed the border illegally in January 2008 after Hamas militants bulldozed the fence to protest the closed border. President Mubarak thought it politically unwise to use lethal force against the unarmed Palestinians, and it took him nearly two weeks to persuade them to leave and then to regain control of Egypt's international border. Egypt has since constructed a sturdier barrier—but it could still be breached.

Egypt will also resist suggestions that it should once again administer or occupy Gaza as it did between 1948 and 1967. Although the Israeli government has not adopted this idea as policy, the notion that Egypt and Jordan might take on much greater responsibility for Gaza and the West Bank respectively to secure their national interests has gained currency as prospects for the near-term creation of an independent Palestinian state [2] have receded. Mubarak has addressed this prospect directly, warning in a December 30, 2008, speech that Egypt would resist attempts by Israel "to shirk its responsibility for Gaza and to over-task Egypt with its consequences."

Realizing that governing hundreds of thousands of Gazans either in Sinai or Gaza itself would be a thankless task, President Mubarak also has reason to be concerned about the implications for his own country's stability. Sinai is already a troubled area, populated largely by Bedouin with little loyalty to the Egyptian state, in which terrorists have carried out several large-scale attacks in recent years. The introduction of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians—perhaps including many militants from Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad—would undoubtedly increase tensions.

Although many Egyptians have called on their government to extend greater diplomatic and humanitarian support to Gaza, actual Egyptian rule there (or a large Palestinian refugee presence in Egypt) would inflame anti-government sentiment. Egypt is already at a sensitive political juncture, facing widespread popular unhappiness with government performance and a likely presidential succession in the next few years. Protests against the government, mostly expressing local grievances related to the economy or human rights, have become a daily phenomenon. Since the 2000 outbreak of the second Palestinian uprising, a tradition has also developed of protests that begin by criticizing Israeli or U.S. actions but quickly turn to target Mubarak and demand an end to his rule of nearly three decades. Egypt's principal opposition movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, supports Hamas fervently and often organizes such protests, either on its own or in conjunction with other opposition groups. While such protests currently do not threaten internal stability, that picture could change if Egypt were to take on significant responsibility for Gazans, a move many Egyptians would see as serving the interests of Israel more than those of the Palestinians.

The second principle motivating President Mubarak's diplomatic efforts is the desire to restore the Palestinian Authority to a role in Gaza to the extent possible. Egypt takes a realist approach to Hamas; it would prefer that Hamas not rule Gaza but acknowledges that it is impossible to ignore the group. One constant in recent mediation efforts has been Egypt's insistence on enforcing the terms of the 2005 Rafah agreement, which treats the Palestinian Authority as the responsible party on the Gaza side of the border. Egypt has



also pressed Hamas to agree to resume reconciliation talks with Fatah (broken off in November 2008) under the supervision of Egyptian General Intelligence Director Omar Sulayman. Egypt would rather play the principal mediating role between Hamas and Fatah than allow another Arab country to do so, in order to preserve some influence over the terms of Palestinian reconciliation.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit and other officials have repeatedly denied that significant arms have entered Gaza via the Sinai (claiming they have instead entered Gaza by sea), but in any case Egyptian officials are undoubtedly aware that there is now a spotlight on the arms smuggling issue. With the recent implementation of technical assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (a \$23 million program funded out of annual U.S. military assistance to Egypt) to detect tunneling and underground movements, Egypt should be able to improve significantly its performance in preventing arms trafficking into Gaza. The restoration of normal commerce in food and other essential goods through Rafah would also relieve pressure for smuggling, though not eliminate it altogether. Egypt has consistently resisted the idea of deploying international forces along its side of the border. There already are international troops in the Sinai under the guise of the Multinational Force and Observers as provided by the 1979 peace treaty with Israel, and Egypt will try to avoid what it sees as further infringements on its sovereignty.

The aftermath of the Gaza crisis affords some opportunities for the United States and Egypt to strengthen ties, which have been strained in recent years due to disagreements over U.S. actions in the Middle East as well as human and civil rights violations in Egypt. Egyptian goals in the region are generally consonant with U.S. goals, and this is true regarding Gaza. One difference is that Egypt is working explicitly for reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas, which the United States considers a terrorist organization. Even so, Egypt's unspoken agenda in mediating between the two groups has always been to promote a greater role for Fatah in any unity government and the smallest role for Hamas that the traffic will bear. In addition, Egypt is playing a leading role in attempts to shore up Arab support for the Palestinian Liberation Organization headed by Abbas as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

In the short term, U.S.–Egyptian cooperation on Gaza and other regional issues can help to restore bilateral ties. Over the longer term, however, it will be necessary for the two countries to reach an understanding on progress on human and civil rights in Egypt in order for the partnership to flourish.

Michele Dunne submitted this testimony to the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on February 12.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele\\_dunne/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele_dunne/)
2. <file:///localhost/mnt/ext/blogbooker/tmp/4p5x1k8v/www.biu.ac.il/SOC/besa/MSPS79En.pdf>

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## Soldiers sour Turkey-Israel ties (2009-02-16 16:15)

From [1]Michael Reynolds



That Turkish-Israeli relations are experiencing a crisis became apparent to all the world at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland where Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Israeli President Shimon Peres exchanged harsh, emotional, and even insulting words. Such public and personal recriminations between ostensible allies are virtually unheard of. In the immediate wake of the incident, both sides took modest steps to downplay and contain, albeit not reverse, the damage incurred at Davos.

This led some observers to conclude that ultimately the blow-out at Davos would amount to little. After all, the lynchpin of Turkish-Israeli relations is military cooperation. Both the Turkish and Israeli militaries have derived significant benefits from their cooperation. And as everyone knows, the Turkish military is highly autonomous in setting Turkish security policy and it has little sympathy for Erdoğan or the party he leads. Thus, according to this line of thinking, even if Erdoğan's outburst was in fact more than a clever ploy to boost his party's chances in the upcoming Turkish elections this March, the core of Turkish-Israeli relations, military cooperation, would still be preserved.

This is, I think, far too complacent an interpretation. As I suggested [2]here, the deterioration in Turkish-Israeli relations that was revealed at Davos is rooted in part in structural changes, and the causes behind Turkey's alienation from Israel are broader than Erdoğan's personal inclinations or the religious sympathies of his party's base, however important those may be.

This weekend Turkish-Israeli relations took another tumble. The Commander of Israeli Ground Forces Avi Mizrahi was [3]quoted in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz as saying that Erdoğan "should look in the mirror" before he criticized Peres at Davos for "knowing very well how to kill"—words described by the newspaper as "a clear allusion to the massacre of the Armenians [in World War One] and the suppression of the Kurds." Mizrahi added also that Turkey's invasion of northern Cyprus deprives it of any basis by which to criticize Israel as an occupying power.

The following day, February 14, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned Israel's ambassador



Only in 2003 have the right and religious parties, as a bloc, achieved such success; in essence, the 2009 election has erased the impact of the 2006 election that followed Ariel Sharon's defection from Likud and the establishment of Kadima. We are back in 2003, when the second intifada produced the most hawkish Knesset ever. Israel's turn to the right is a long-term development set in motion by the second intifada, the rise of Hamas as the pivotal Palestinian player, the intrusion of Iran, and what is seen by many Israelis as the failure of unilateral disengagement in Lebanon in 2000 and Gaza in 2005. In this context, the 2006 election was a transitory fluke.

In 2006, center and left parties won 70 seats, while right and religious parties held the remaining 50. Now the center and left are reduced to 55, including 11 seats held by Arab parties, while right and religious parties hold a combined 65. The Jewish left was devastated, dropping from 24 seats to 16, as many of its voters moved rightward to Kadima, replacing voters who moved rightward from that party back to Likud, their original home. Thus Kadima maintained its strength while Likud more than doubled its numbers.

Religious parties considered separately did not actually gain; ultra-orthodox (haredi) parties lost a couple of seats, while the remnant of the old National Religious Party appeared in a new guise as "The Jewish Home" and emerged with only three seats. For the first time in Israel's history, the religious camp in the Knesset will be dominated almost entirely by the haredim; the national religious camp, long a fixture of the Israeli scene, has practically disappeared.

The other winner on the right, apart from Likud, is Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu, which has outgrown its Soviet immigrant base and has managed to attract a growing clientele with its unique mixture of secularism and a new model of hawkishness based more on ethnicity than on territoriality. This is not the old right wing of "Eretz Yisrael Hashlema" (The Entire Land of Israel); Lieberman is ready to reduce the Arab presence in Israel not only by surrendering Arab population centers on the West Bank and Gaza, but even by ceding Arab-inhabited areas of Israel itself.

Israel's turn to the right does not mean the end of the two-state solution as the dominant model for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Apart from Lieberman's heterodoxy, Likud's platform neither endorses nor rules out a two-state solution, but simply condemns any further unilateral withdrawals on the model of Lebanon in 2000 or Gaza in 2005. Thus the differences between the parties are less far-reaching than differences that have sometimes existed between parties joined in the same government. Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu can therefore pursue his announced goal of a National Unity government, knowing that in any event there will not be serious peace negotiations over basic final status issues so long as there is no unified Palestinian negotiator in control of all Palestinian territories and able to implement a final agreement.

For the same reason, the formation of a government dominated by the right, with or without Kadima as a junior partner, will not stir up any untoward clashes with the new U.S. administration. With no serious peace talks in the offing, efforts will focus on stability and conflict management rather than a final resolution. A hawkish Israeli government can still work on strengthening the viability of the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority, and otherwise working toward the day when Hamas can no longer cast an effective veto over an Israeli-Palestinian peace. And in any event, all Israeli parties as well as the United States are likely to be more focused in the near future on the issue of Iran's nuclear weapons program.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)

Barry Rubin (2009-02-21 12:32:18)

Regarding Alan Dowty's recent [1]post on Israel's supposed rightward drift, one should not call the two current religious parties right-wing as such. They represent the interests of their communities. Their goal is to maximize the resources—money and jobs—they get. They may go with left-of-center governments that offer them enough. At times, Shas has taken dovish stands. I am aware that Shas endorsed Netanyahu before the election to ensure no voters defected to him, but their voters are pretty loyal, and if Shas decided to go into a Livni-led government (if she had had a bigger margin) they would support it. Note that when the National Religious Party became a single-issue pro-settler party instead of the defender of "Modern Orthodoxy" (or what we would call national-religious interests) it fell apart. Moreover, Likud has moved toward the center. The moving-to-the-right thesis may obsess the media—in part because of their agenda of trying to prove Israelis are against peace or at least make peace impossible—but it is not true. [2]Barry Rubin is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/02/inconclusive-election-in-israel-not-at-all/>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry_rubin/)

Jim Lederman (2009-02-18 04:12:30)

Unfortunately, Alan Dowty is [1]propagating an instant myth that has become too widespread and accepted—that Israel has suddenly shifted to the right. In actual fact, with the exception of the catastrophic collapse of the Likud in 2006, between 1977 and 2003, the Likud and its religious and secular political allies garnered between 59 and 69 seats during each election. Thus, when seen in historical terms, the 65 seats won this time can only be registered as an average success. Another important fact that has to be taken into consideration is that Israelis are deprived of the right to have blank ballots counted. In a country that has suffered under serially dysfunctional coalition governments for decades, this is a form of true democratic deprivation; and Israelis have been forced to look elsewhere for redress. They do so by abstaining from voting or by casting ballots for minor parties. In general, now that ideology is no longer a major political consideration for voters, many if not most Israelis vote against parties, rather than for them. Over the years, protest votes given to minor parties have made up 8-12 percent of the ballots cast. Virtually each election has seen the sudden rise of a minor protest party—only for it to become defunct within a relatively short time because it no longer serves a purpose as a depository for protest votes. Dash, Tehiya, Tsomet, Shinui, the Center Party, the Pensioners Party—even the newly-founded Meretz in 1992—all played this role. Thus, Lieberman's garnering of an additional 4 seats this time also fits an established pattern. Moreover, the manner in which the campaign was conducted this time had a potent effect on the results. Netanyahu refused to debate any issue and turned the ballot into a personality contest with Livni: "Tzipi or Bibi." Labor, preoccupied with promoting Barak as the next defense minister, essentially went along with Netanyahu's strategy. That closed off any opportunity Meretz had of fulfilling its traditional role as a propagator of issues for debate. And one should not forget that one of the outcomes of both the operation in Gaza and the shut-off in debate was a shift in voting patterns. Once it became clear, after the cease-fire was declared, that the rocket attacks had not been stopped, voters living near both the Gaza and Northern border, who had been subject to rocket attacks, shifted their votes to Lieberman and the Likud. This trend was reinforced in the North after the Jewish voters there witnessed huge Arab rallies protesting against the fighting in Gaza. Interestingly, two other examples of protest voting have also been almost totally ignored. Hadash was strengthened this time by disgruntled Meretz and former Green Party voters who cast their ballots specifically for the increasingly-popular, alternative spokesman for the left, Dov Kheinin. In addition, a poll by the Arabic-language *Panorama Magazine* taken less than a week before the polling predicted a huge drop in Arab turnout at the polls, to only 46 percent of the eligible Israeli Arab voters—largely because of a campaign by Arab political radicals to boycott the balloting. However, the number of Arab ballots cast actually rose as a protest against Lieberman's increasing strength. [2]Jim Lederman is senior Israel analyst for Oxford Analytica.

1. <file:///blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/02/inconclusive-election-in-israel-not-at-all/%E2%80%9C>

2. <file:///www.jimlederman.com/About%20Me.htm%E2%80%9D>

Robert O. Freedman (2009-02-17 15:45:20)

Alan Dowty is spot-on in his [1]analysis. I would only add that Lieberman has to make a major choice. Heretofore, as Alan noted, Lieberman has sought to serve his mostly Russian constituents. Where Lieberman's predecessor, Natan Sharansky of the Yisrael B'Aliyah Party, went wrong was when he tried to play too much of a national role and neglected his Russian constituency. The end result was that his party withered and died, joining Likud as a faction in 2003. Lieberman has national ambitions; indeed, a tongue-in-cheek [2]analysis in today's *Financial Times* by Gideon Rachman predicts he will become Israel's prime minister in 2011. The key to watch is whether, in his efforts to

move his party, Yisrael Beiteinu, from a primarily Russian party to a national one, he too will neglect his Russian constituency. What will be required is a tough secularist position, which will also be popular among old Shinui voters, as well as continued attention to the economic and cultural challenges facing Israel's Russian community. If he can do these things, as well as maintain a tough nationalist position against Israel's Arab community whose loyalty to Israel as a Jewish state can indeed be questioned (see, for example, the Israeli Arab "[3]future vision" of December 2006 as well as the behavior of Israeli Arab MK's during the wars of 2006 and 2008-09), he has a real chance of building a mainstream party, while solidifying his Russian base. [4]Robert O. Freedman is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/02/inconclusive-election-in-israel-not-at-all/>
2. [http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/d585da1a-fc3d-11dd-aed8-000077b07658.html?nclick\\_check=1](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/d585da1a-fc3d-11dd-aed8-000077b07658.html?nclick_check=1)
3. <http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/02/08/africa/web.0208israel.php>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)

Alan Dowty (2009-02-18 13:51:26)

Jim Lederman [1]says that I have propagated the "instant myth... that Israel has suddenly shifted to the right." But a major point in [2]my analysis was precisely that the 2009 election was a return to a previous pattern: "we are back in 2003." Like Lederman, I interpret the 2006 election as the exception, labeling it as "a transitory fluke." I would, however, argue with the suggestion that the right/religious majority is a normal state of affairs stretching back to 1977. Israeli politics has had more variation than that. In the four elections from 1977 to 1988, the right and religious parties together won from 60 to 65 seats, but in the 1990s this dropped to 59 in 1992, 57 in 1996, and 54 in 1999. The total then jumped to 69 seats in 2003, the all-time high point of right/religious representation, and now remains (apart from the 2006 fluke) in the same vicinity, with 65 seats. It is eminently reasonable to see this as a significant shift to the right *in the present decade as a whole* (i. e., not "sudden"), attributable to the developments that I outlined. [3]Alan Dowty is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/02/inconclusive-election-in-israel-not-at-all/#comment-1708>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/02/inconclusive-election-in-israel-not-at-all/>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)

### Iran's methodical march (2009-02-21 12:18)

From [1]Mark T. Clark



Iran is already posing new challenges to the Obama administration. Two recent developments in its nuclear and ballistic missile programs are worth mentioning.

First, The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) released a recent [2]report on Iranian nuclear activities. The Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), a Washington-based think tank, [3]analyzed the IAEA report. Three important findings emerge:

1. Iran has dramatically increased its installation of centrifuges to some 5,400;
2. Iran is manufacturing fuel rods for the Arak heavy water reactor and continues to refuse IAEA inspection; and
3. Iran has accumulated more than 1,000 kilograms of low enriched uranium (LEU) in the form of uranium hexafluoride (UF<sub>6</sub>).

Iran maintains some 4,000 centrifuges enriching uranium, but has added another 1,400 centrifuges, totaling some 5,400. Iran has yet to use the new centrifuges to enrich uranium, but could do so quickly. More importantly, Iran has produced about 209 kilograms (30 percent) more low-enriched uranium in the form of uranium hexafluoride (UF<sub>6</sub>) than would have been expected based on the November 2008 IAEA [4]report. This amount equals approximately 700 kilograms of low-enriched uranium, enough for the production of weapon-grade uranium for a single nuclear weapon. As the ISIS report shows, Iran has achieved "breakout capability," although it would have to make a decision to further enrich its LEU stockpile.

Second, on February 2, Iran successfully launched a small satellite into low-earth orbit. The satellite is very small, weighing approximately 27 kilograms or 60 pounds. The highly elliptical orbit of the satellite allowed it to pass over the United States a number of times transmitting radio signals. While some analysts downplayed the military significance of this achievement, there remains cause for concern for states outside the range of Iran's Shahab series rockets. As noted in this [5]report:

An intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) accelerates a warhead to velocities of approximately 7km/sec. By comparison, a space launch vehicle must accelerate a satellite to around 8km/sec. For a given payload, it would require more thrust to put an object into orbit than to deliver it over intercontinental distance, but it is slightly easier to put a very small object into low earth orbit than it is to accelerate a larger payload to a slightly lower velocity. The weight of the Iranian satellite (some 27kg) is considerably less than that of a nuclear warhead or other weapon of mass destruction. Iran therefore likely has some improvements to make before demonstrating true ICBM capability.

Iran continues methodically marching towards nuclear-armed missile capabilities that can threaten states in its region with nuclear weapons, and perhaps beyond. These events have occurred just as the Obama administration has made diplomatic overtures to the Iranian leadership. It seems that Iran may not give Obama time for diplomacy to work.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_t\\_clark/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_t_clark/)
2. [http://isis-online.org/publications/iran/IAEA\\_Report\\_Analysis.pdf](http://isis-online.org/publications/iran/IAEA_Report_Analysis.pdf)
3. [http://isis-online.org/publications/iran/IAEA\\_Report\\_Analysis.pdf](http://isis-online.org/publications/iran/IAEA_Report_Analysis.pdf)
4. [http://www.isisnucleariran.org/assets/pdf/Iran\\_Report\\_11-19-08.pdf](http://www.isisnucleariran.org/assets/pdf/Iran_Report_11-19-08.pdf)
5. <http://missilethreat.com/archives/id.7212/detail.asp>

**New: Upcoming events at Harvard (2009-02-23 06:31)**

From MESH Admin



If you are situated at Harvard or nearby, you now have another reason to visit MESH every day, in addition to the weblog. Scroll down to the lower end of the right sidebar for upcoming events from the calendars of the Weatherhead Center, the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, and the Belfer Center. These three calendars include the vast majority of Middle East-related events on campus, so a quick stop here will give you a good idea of what's coming up today and beyond. Clicking the link of an event will take you to its original calendar listing and full details.

**The Washington Institute in Arabic (2009-02-23 08:41)**

From [1]David Schenker



[2] As everyone who follows the Middle East knows, in recent years there's been a veritable explosion of Arabic language news sources on the region. The proliferation of satellite news channels, blogs, and websites offers Middle Easterners and outside scholars a lot of choices.

Traditionally, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy has been focused on providing timely information and analysis for U.S. policymakers. Recognizing the importance of the Middle East audience, however, in early January, the Institute rolled out its new Arabic language website, [3]here.

The site features translations of the analysis of Institute scholars, including articles from its Policywatch series and op-eds from U.S. newspapers. Translations of archived materiel will be added over time.

The site is an important new resource. Please take a look, and let your Arabic-speaking colleagues know that the Institute's site is now available in the language of the ād.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david\\_schenker/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david_schenker/)
2. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/arabic>
3. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/arabic>



### 3.3 March

#### Southwest Asia (2009-03-02 04:40)

From [1]Martin Kramer



The appointment of Dennis Ross as "Special Advisor to the Secretary of State for The Gulf and Southwest Asia" (announcement [2]here) has caused some puzzlement, in part because the geographic focus of his title seems fuzzy. This is especially so for "Southwest Asia."

On the face of it, "Southwest Asia" looks like a geographic reference, and it has always had a few enthusiasts among geographers. It's also been favored by those who deem it less Eurocentric than "Middle East" or "Near East." (Maybe it is, but since Asia as a continent is a [3]European idea, calling any region "Southwest Asia" hardly solves the problem.) Once there was even a maverick academic program, at SUNY Binghamton, called the Program in Southwest Asian and North African Studies (SWANA for short). But "Southwest Asia" got no traction in American academe, and even the SUNY [4]program eventually swapped SWANA for MENA (Middle East and North Africa).

So when did "Southwest Asia" finally get its big break, and begin to turn up in high places as a near-synonym for the Middle East? "From the moment of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979," [5]wrote U.S. diplomat and strategist [6]John C. Campbell, "Washington began to talk of 'Southwest Asia' instead of the Middle East as the area of crisis and of American concern." Cold War strategists wished to emphasize that the region was crucial not because it was east of us, but because it was immediately southwest of the Soviet Union, which had a plan to push through to the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. The sooner Americans started thinking about the region as "Southwest Asia," the sooner they would grasp the nature of the threat.

National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski effected the shift in labeling. Two days after the Soviet invasion, he [7]warned President Jimmy Carter that "the collapse of the balance of power in Southwest Asia... could produce Soviet presence right down on the edge of the Arabian and Oman Gulfs." Carter, reeling from the combined effects of the invasion and the Iran hostage crisis, opened a dramatic [8]television address to the nation some days later with these words: "I come to you this evening to discuss important and rapidly changing circumstances in Southwest Asia." Carter proceeded to warn Americans of "a threat of further Soviet expansion into neighboring countries in Southwest Asia." A month later, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee jumped on board, and held a series of landmark hearings later published as "U.S. Security Interests and Policies in Southwest Asia."

**U.S. SECURITY INTERESTS AND POLICIES IN  
SOUTHWEST ASIA**

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HOLD FOR RELEASE  
SEP 16 AM

**HEARINGS**  
BEFORE THE  
**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS**  
**UNITED STATES SENATE**  
AND THE  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON NEAR EASTERN AND  
SOUTH ASIAN AFFAIRS**  
NINETY-SIXTH CONGRESS  
SECOND SESSION  
ON  
**U.S. SECURITY REQUIREMENTS IN THE NEAR EAST AND  
SOUTH ASIA**

"A new name has been devised to cover these counties on which attention has been concentrated during the past 12 months," [9]wrote the military historian Sir Michael Howard in *Foreign Affairs* a year later. "Southwest Asia: Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and the oil-bearing states bordering what now must tactfully be termed simply 'the Gulf,' all constituting a politically seismic zone of incalculable explosive potential." Campbell later [10]gave a similar definition: "'Southwest Asia' includes everything from the eastern fringes of the Arab world to the western limits of the Indian subcontinent." (Campbell also added that "roughly, it is Zbigniew Brzezinski's 'arc of crisis.'" Brzezinski had coined that phrase a year before the Soviet invasion, and it figured prominently in a January 1979 [11]story in *TIME* magazine, whose cover showed a Soviet bear looming over the Persian Gulf. *TIME* explained that Brzezinski's "arc of crisis" consisted of "the nations that stretch across the southern flank of the Soviet Union from the Indian subcontinent to Turkey, and southward through the Arabian Peninsula to the Horn of Africa.")

This "Southwest Asia," then, wasn't a geographic reference at all, but a strategic one with a Cold War application. Not surprisingly, both the CIA and the Pentagon quickly picked up the term and ran with it. The CIA established a Southwest Asia Analytic Center, which produced papers like "[12]The Soviets and the Tribes of Southwest Asia." The Defense Department acted similarly, [13]applying "Southwest Asia" (SWA) to a large area centered in the Gulf, but extending far beyond it. "Southwest Asia" is now the core of CENTCOM's "Area of Responsibility" (AOR), which runs from Kazakhstan to Kenya.

Which brings us back to the Ross appointment at the State Department. "Southwest Asia" isn't much used at State, which still prefers "Middle East" and hasn't even given up entirely on "Near East." ("Southwest Asia" is regularly used only in the Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, where it [14]includes Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, and Sri Lanka.) After the Ross announcement, journalists wanted to know exactly what Ross's own area of responsibility covered. In particular, did it include Afghanistan and Pakistan, the original entry point to "Southwest Asia" of the Cold War strategists? Hadn't responsibility for both countries already been given to Richard Holbrooke, [15]named only a month earlier as Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan?

At first, even the acting State Department spokesman, Robert Wood, didn't know just what "Southwest Asia" included, which made for an embarrassing [16]exchange at the Department's daily press briefing. (Question: "You guys named an envoy for Southwest Asia. I presume that you know what countries that includes." Wood: "Yes. Of course, we know. I just—I don't have the list to run off—you know, right off the top of my head here.")

But the next day, Wood had an [17]answer:

MR. WOOD: Let me give you my best—our best read of this. From our standpoint, the countries that make up areas of the Gulf and Southwest Asia include Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Yemen, and those are the countries.

QUESTION: Not—not Afghanistan and Pakistan?

MR. WOOD: Look, Ambassador Ross will look at the entire region, should he be asked to, including Afghanistan. But this is something that would be worked out. You were—you asked the question yesterday about Ambassador Holbrooke and whether there was going to be some kind of, I don't know, conflict over who is working in—on that particular issues in that country.

Look, Ambassador Ross and Ambassador Holbrooke will work together where necessary if they need to, if there's some kind of overlap. But that's, in essence, the State Department's geographical breakdown of Southwest Asia.

QUESTION: Okay. So it does not—it is not the same breakdown as the military uses?

MR. WOOD: No, the military uses a different breakdown, but I'd have to refer you to them for their specific breakdown.

QUESTION: So it doesn't include Jordan? It doesn't include—

MR. WOOD: I just gave you the breakdown as I—as the State Department breaks it down.

QUESTION: So if Ambassador Ross is special envoy—special advisor for Gulf and Southwest Asia, what is the difference between Gulf and Southwest Asia?

MR. WOOD: Look—

QUESTION: For me, this is Gulf.

MR. WOOD: Well, it may be for you. For others, it may be different. I'd have to—I've given you what the Department's position is with regard to the geographic makeup of the region.

Why did the State Department construe "Southwest Asia" so narrowly—so much so that it really is indistinguishable from "The Gulf"? That's a matter for speculation. One report says Ross did have Afghanistan and Pakistan on the list of countries he thought belonged in the package. Holbrooke [18]reportedly insisted they both be dropped, and got his way.

But it's already clear that last week added yet another layer of confusion to the terminology the United States inflicts on the region to suit its own political, diplomatic, and strategic requirements. There is a "Near East" and a "Middle East" and a "Greater Middle East" (GME) and a "Middle East and North Africa" (MENA) and a "Broader Middle East and North Africa" (BMENA). And now, alongside the Defense Department's greater "Southwest Asia," we have the lesser "Southwest Asia" of the State Department as scaled down for Ross. (This is not to be confused with the "Southwest Asia" of the State Department's own Bureau

of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. Not a single country in that bureau's "Southwest Asia" is identical to Ross's.) Of course, labels tend to slip and slide across the map over time, depending on circumstance. It's just remarkable to see them slip and slide at one time, in one building.

Meanwhile, in Iran, there is no confusion, only [19]outrage that the appointment of Ross mentions "The Gulf," as opposed to the Persian Gulf. Iran has waged a persistent [20]campaign to keep the Persian adjective firmly fastened to the Gulf. But the Iranian government won't take offense at Iran's inclusion in "Southwest Asia"—to the contrary. Last year a leading Iranian journalist wrote a [21]column entitled "There Is No Middle East." The message:

The people of Southwest Asia and North Africa should not use the appellation Middle East to describe their home region because it was coined by European imperialists. The use of such non-indigenous terms only serves to reinforce mental slavery and subjugation.... The vocabulary that we use influences our thought patterns. If Muslims use Eurocentric vocabulary, even when speaking our own languages, it will undermine our sense of identity. A better substitute for the Middle East/North Africa would be Southwest Asia/North Africa, which could be abbreviated as SWANA.

Don't Persians know that the naming of Asia is owed to... the Greeks?.

••

Below: Jimmy Carter delivers his January 4, 1980 televised address concerning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. (There is a brief preface on the Iran hostages.) His White House diary [22]records this as an "Address to the Nation on the situation in Southwest Asia." Notice the prop in the opening shot: a globe positioned so as to show the region. Toward the end of this segment, the camera pans across a map. (If you cannot see the embedded clip, or wish to view the entire address, click [23]here.)

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Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)
2. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/02/119495.htm>
3. <http://www.amazon.com/Myth-Continents-Critique-Metageography/dp/0520207432>
4. <http://mena.binghamton.edu/>
5. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/19820201faessay8243/john-c-campbell/the-middle-east-a-house-of-containment-built-on-shifting-sands.html>
6. <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/campbell.htm>
7. [http://www.dlt.ncssm.edu/lmtm/lessonplans/TimothyCallicutt/US\\_MidEast\\_Policies/Presidential\\_memos\\_on\\_Afghanistan.doc](http://www.dlt.ncssm.edu/lmtm/lessonplans/TimothyCallicutt/US_MidEast_Policies/Presidential_memos_on_Afghanistan.doc)
8. <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3403>
9. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/19810201faessay8165/michael-howard/the-conduct-of-american-foreign-policy-return-to-the-cold-war.html>
10. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/19861201fabook11196/maya-chadda/paradox-of-power-the-united-states-in-southwest-asia-1973-1984.html>
11. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,919995-1,00.html>
12. <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB57/us2.pdf>
13. <http://archive.gao.gov/d19t9/144832.pdf>

14. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/100899.pdf>
15. <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/01/115297.htm>
16. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2009/02/119730.htm>
17. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2009/02/119782.htm>
18. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/25/AR2009022503815\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/25/AR2009022503815_pf.html)
19. <http://www5.irna.ir/En/View/FullStory/?NewsId=370598&IdLanguage=3>
20. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persian\\_Gulf\\_naming\\_dispute](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persian_Gulf_naming_dispute)
21. <http://www.mehrnews.com/en/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=622233>
22. <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/documents/diary/1980/d010480t.pdf>
23. <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3403>

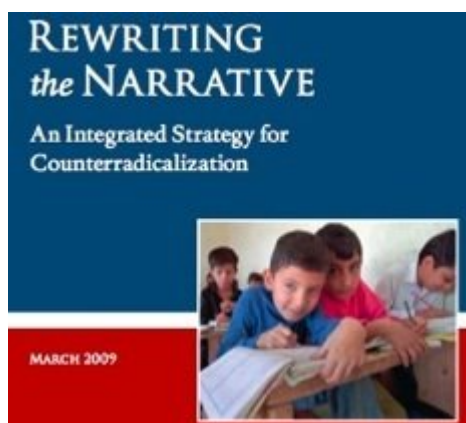
Ellen Laipson (2009-03-02 15:49:21)

The [1]Southwest Asia/Gulf Program at the Henry L. Stimson Center was so-named to convey the geography we intended to cover (Iran, Iraq, the Arabian peninsula and adjacent areas as needed), to avoid the association of the term "Middle East" with the Arab-Israeli conflict, which was not our research focus, and to sidestep the tricky Persian Gulf vs. Arabian Gulf problem. We added the word Gulf when our colleagues said they needed a little help understanding the term. I was well aware that [2]Southwest Asia was a meaningful term for the military, but a general reader would not be able to define its boundaries easily. I rather like the fuzzy boundaries, so that we can bring in Pakistan, or Jordan, when the topic or analysis demands it, but stick with the "problem set" that is west of the subcontinent, for the most part. It's also useful to note that Dennis Ross is named as an advisor, not a manager of a geographic bureau, so the ability to see the connections across crisis zones or bureaucratic divisions seems appropriate and helpful. [3]Ellen Laipson is president and CEO of the Henry L. Stimson Center, and director of its Southwest Asia/Gulf Program.

1. <http://www.stimson.org/swa/programhome.cfm>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/southwest-asia/>
3. <http://www.stimson.org/experts/expert.cfm?ID=40>

## Counterradicalization strategy (2009-03-04 09:42)

From [1]J. Scott Carpenter



- [2] This past Friday, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy released its report, "Rewriting the Narrative: An Integrated Strategy for Counterradicalization" (download [3]here). The report offers important policy recommendations for continuing the fight against radical extremism, making a clarion call for a conceptual leap away from a primary focus on violent counterterrorism to a broader concern with confronting extremist ideology.

The importance of the report lies not only in the breadth of views represented in the bipartisan list of endorsers but also in its key recommendations, the first one in particular:

Expand focus from violent to non-violent extremism. The Obama Administration needs to view the spread of an ideology of radical extremism with urgency and seriousness comparable to its view of the spread of violent groups animated by that ideology. Obviously, the first priority for the government is to prevent and deter radical extremist groups from using violence to achieve their goals. But in addition the government needs to elevate in bureaucratic priority and public consciousness the need to prevent and deter the spread of radical extremist ideology. At the same time, the United States will need to make very clear that it does not consider Islam itself a danger, but only the distorted version of Islam perpetrated by radical extremists.

This is no small recommendation, and it will likely make many in the Washington policy community nervous. The report essentially says that an end state in which people remain extremist in mentality but are simply non-violent doesn't go far enough. As conveyor belt groups like Hizb al-Tahrir and others demonstrate, the path to violent extremism often lies in the radicalizer's ideology and his ability to connect perceived global grievances to local ones. Violence then is a switch that can be turned off and on if the person is not fully deradicalized.

Deradicalization also presents its problems, however. The Saudi deradicalization program, as the report points out, offers jobs, wives and homes as enticements for the violent jihadist to stop killing. Efforts are also made to teach a purer Islam but the program "works" because it relies heavily on coercive policies towards families of the radicalized, essentially making them their brothers' keepers. When it fails—and recidivism rates are reported at 10 percent—the radicalized person reverts back to violent action.

Clearly, providing alternatives before it gets to this stage is critical, and the report offers a number of practical means for doing so. Among these is another key task force recommendation for the Obama Administration:

Rejuvenate efforts to promote prosperity, reform, and democracy in Arab countries. As a strategic response to extremism, the United States and its allies must offer a viable and attractive political alternative to the dark vision offered by radical extremist groups. Prosperous democratic societies which respect the rights of their citizens are more resilient and less susceptible to political instability and radicalization. If grievances can be peacefully expressed and mediated through democratic institutions, citizens are less apt to turn to more extreme options. Efforts to promote prosperity, democracy, and respect for human rights should, therefore, remain key aspects of this administration's foreign policy agenda, even if the rhetoric describing it changes. The key is to do it better.

That a bipartisan group would endorse such a recommendation in the post-Bush era reveals a lot about the consensus that exists in Washington over the long-term strategic importance of systemic political and economic change in the region. In the long run, as Keynes reminds, we're all dead, but avoiding revolution in the region and a further radicalization of European and Middle Eastern populations is clearly in America's national security interest.

The leitmotif of the report's analysis and recommendations is that countering extremist ideology must rely chiefly on helping mainstream Muslims provide hopeful and practical alternatives to jihadist ideology. The United States can't do it on its own. Whether in Europe, the Middle East or Southwest Asia, mainstream Muslims within their communities are the ones on the front lines, and if we can't find ways to support them, we are left with military force which cannot create a sustainable solution as we have learned in Iraq and are

struggling with in Afghanistan.

”Rewriting the Narrative” is endorsed by a distinguished group of policy practitioners: members of Congress Jane Harman (D-CA); Sue Myrick (R-NC), and Adam Smith (D-WA); former 9/11 commissioner Timothy J. Roemer; former U.S. ambassador to Morocco Marc Ginsberg; former deputy assistant to the president for homeland security Frank J. Cilluffo; the presidents of the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute Kenneth Wollack and Lorne W. Craner, respectively; prominent scholars Bruce Hoffman and Mohammed M. Hafez; former Kennedy School dean and Clinton administration official Joseph S. Nye, Jr.; former Bush administration officials Randa Fahmy Hudome and M. C. Andrews; president of the Henry L. Stimson Center Ellen Laipson; Freedom House executive director Jennifer Windsor; Hudson Institute vice president S. Enders Wimbush; president of the Progressive Policy Institute Will Marshall; Johns Hopkins SAIS adjunct professor Joshua Muravchik; and Washington Institute executive director Robert Satloff.

Full disclosure: I was co-convener (with [4]Matthew Levitt and Michael Jacobson) of the task force and I co-wrote the report. Which perhaps explains in part my enthusiasm for it...

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j\\_scott\\_carpenter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j_scott_carpenter/)
2. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pubPDFs/PSG2-Counterradicalization.pdf>
3. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pubPDFs/PSG2-Counterradicalization.pdf>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew\\_levitt/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew_levitt/)

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## Which side of history? (2009-03-10 08:03)

From [1]Michele Dunne



I am one of more than 140 scholars and experts to sign a [2]letter to President Obama, released today (March 10), asking him to take seriously his inaugural statement that leaders who ”cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent” are ”on the wrong side of history.” The question is, on which side of history will the Obama administration place itself in its policy toward the Middle East?

Early indications are for a return to traditional diplomacy and jettisoning of any serious efforts to promote democracy, freedom, and human rights. While the signatories of this letter might differ on some issues, we are joined by the belief that this early course by Obama and Secretary of State Clinton needs immediate correction. We understand that promoting Middle East peace enjoys a high priority in this administration, and we believe that it is entirely possible to cooperate with Arab governments in that endeavor while also pursuing improved human, civil, and political rights for Arab citizens. In fact, not to do so would be shortsighted and ultimately counter productive.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele\\_dunne/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele_dunne/)
2. [http://islam-democracy.org/documents/pdf/Letter\\_to\\_Pres\\_Obama\\_about\\_Democracy\\_-\\_3-5-09.pdf](http://islam-democracy.org/documents/pdf/Letter_to_Pres_Obama_about_Democracy_-_3-5-09.pdf)

Michael Rubin (2009-03-12 08:50:28)

Tamara Cofman Wittes certainly provides a representative [1]argument to take Islamists at their word and allow them to participate, and a valuable one to illustrate the debate. It is necessary to correct one unfair and inaccurate assertion. Her statement that I support "American continued acquiescence in authoritarian control" is inaccurate and in sharp contrast to everything I have written and advocated, and so with this note I correct the record. My only difference with Wittes is a disagreement with her belief that Islamist parties are sincere and engagement with them benefits liberalism in the Middle East. While she suggests that [2]*Freedom's Unsteady March* is the sum of scholarship on the issue, she may find that many Arab liberals may not agree with its conclusions. Many of their essays can be found in the book [3]*Dissent and Reform in the Arab World*. [4]*Michael Rubin is a member of MESH*.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/which-side-of-history/#comment-1870>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/freedoms\\_unsteady\\_march/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/freedoms_unsteady_march/)
3. [http://www.aei.org/books/bookID.923,filter./book\\_detail.asp](http://www.aei.org/books/bookID.923,filter./book_detail.asp)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_rubin/)

Michele Dunne (2009-03-18 17:09:25)

Barry Rubin and Josh Muravchik [1]raise important points, and I agree with some of what they said and disagree with some. First, to Barry's points. In light of the tragic developments in Palestinian politics over the last eight years, it is understandable that he would assume that things were fated to go this way and nothing the United States could have done would have made a difference. But I disagree. The best example I can give is that of the set of basic laws passed by the Palestinian Legislative Council in 1997, which Arafat refused to ratify until 2002, thereby seriously undermining the authority of the elected PLC. The United States decided not to press Arafat, saving its pressure for matters relating to the negotiations with Israel. So what do we have by 2006? A secular Palestinian leadership that has completely lost its legitimacy because it failed either to get a state through negotiations or to deliver decent governance in the territories under its control. I don't want to get into the long argument here about whether the peace process of the 1990s was viable and could have produced an agreement. But I think that the United States could at least have insisted that the Palestinian Authority under Arafat deliver decent governance and allow the institutions of a nascent state to develop. I disagree that Arafat could have refused—more or less all his funding was coming from the United States and Europe. And the Palestinian public would have supported those sorts of demands. One quick note on contacts with groups such as the Egyptian or Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, who do not themselves use violence but support its use by Hamas. I agree this is problematic, but isn't it also true that many governments in the region—let's say Turkey and Qatar, for example—take similar positions toward the legitimacy of Hamas's use of violence? Yet we do not see such positions, however much we disagree with them, as reason not to talk to them. Regarding Josh's point, I agree that it is not the fault of the United States that Arab countries have authoritarian governments and I agree that (with rare exceptions) the United States has to deal with the governments that are there. But would Josh also agree that our close relationships with authoritarian governments cause a great deal of anti-American sentiment? And that the United States should temper its necessary, practical dealings with such governments with some degree of incentives and pressure for them to give their citizens their rights? The point of the CSID letter was not to assign blame for the ills of the Arab world, but to press the Obama administration to think about how the United States can use its influence in a positive way. [2]*Michele Dunne is a member of MESH*.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/which-side-of-history/#comment-1894>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele\\_dunne/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele_dunne/)

J. Scott Carpenter (2009-03-12 14:36:20)

During one of my last visits to Cairo I met with a British diplomat friend of mine who was then dating a Cairene. She and a friend from the American University of Cairo joined us for drinks one night at one of the swankier hotels along the Nile. Over *meze* and a glass of wine the conversation turned to politics and I asked the young women who they would vote for if they could vote today. Their answer surprised me. "The Muslim Brotherhood, of course! They're the only ones who can rid us of this kleptocracy we call a government." That these Western-oriented, young women, dressed in jeans, *sans* hijab, smoking and drinking with foreigners would consider voting for the Muslim Brotherhood is shocking but reveals the truth of the moment: would-be liberals in today's Arab world have no other opposition to support than Islamist ones. That this is the current reality, however, should not mean sublimating or sacrificing altogether liberal democratic objectives to Islamist goals. I support Michele and Tamara's [1]broad point that political reform processes cannot wait until the mythical point that liberal forces are somehow ready to compete.



Unless they compete, they'll never be ready. That this risks Islamist gains in the short-run is true but it's not as if there will be free and open elections anywhere in the Middle East in the foreseeable future (other than in Iraq, a point I'll come back to below). Reforming political party laws and the laws of association, for example, could lead to the creation of a greater number of alternatives so that my young Egyptian friends would have somewhere else to cast their protest votes. The present danger from my perspective therefore is not "one vote, one time." Rather, it is the prospect of Iranian-style revolutions taking place across the region when economic dislocation coupled with intolerable levels of repression finally lead liberals and other non-Islamists to embrace the Islamists parties as the vanguard of the opposition. This is one of the reasons I did not sign the [2]letter when asked to do so. (The other was the fact that I thought the letter went too far in criticizing the Bush administration's democratization efforts, efforts I supported.) Rather than sticking to the general case for advancing democracy in the region, the letter placed too much emphasis, in my view, on opening space for the Islamist opposition. As my anecdote above makes clear the Islamists are not the ones who need help; they are, in fact, the only ones the governments allow, for their own reasons, to compete with them. The letter would have secured my support had it concluded that the United States should prioritize its political engagement and support for non-Islamist parties. That would not mean ignoring Islamist parties altogether. Already the United States engages with Islamist parties from the PJD in Morocco to Islah in Yemen, not to mention the entire spectrum of Islamist parties in Iraq. The United States, however, should be under no obligation to support political parties that refuse to acknowledge universally accepted human rights related to minorities, women or religious tolerance. To do so, moreover, undercuts the very people we should be trying to support. Today in Iraq, after years of violence and dislocation, we see a hopeful, if still evolving trend. The United States, while insisting on elections, has also been encouraging national accommodation and an end to sectarianism. During the most recent elections, none of the 400-plus political entities, even the Islamist ones, ran under the slogan "Islam is the Solution." To do so, they knew, would alienate voters who were sick to death of empty slogans. They wanted services delivered. They wanted stronger central government. They wanted an end to sectarian politics. Hopefully, the political zeitgeist that seems to be evolving in Iraq along these lines will culminate in fulsome fashion in the parliamentary elections later this year. The United States and the international community should do everything to ensure those elections are conducted transparently and are as free and fair as possible. They should not, however, shy away from expressing clearly their hopes for the further maturation of the polity—and a further step away from sectarian, Islamist politics. [3]J. Scott Carpenter is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/which-side-of-history/>
2. [http://islam-democracy.org/documents/pdf/Letter\\_to\\_Pres\\_Obama\\_about\\_Democracy\\_-\\_3-5-09.pdf](http://islam-democracy.org/documents/pdf/Letter_to_Pres_Obama_about_Democracy_-_3-5-09.pdf)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j\\_scott\\_carpenter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j_scott_carpenter/)

Michael Rubin (2009-03-11 07:25:55)

I welcome Michele Dunne's [1]efforts and certainly agree that it would be a travesty if the Obama administration abandoned transformative diplomacy and advocacy for human rights altogether. What was frustrating over the last eight years was how the debate over democratization became so partisan and, indeed, what we see now is a wholesale shift in which, for so many Democrats (the signers of this letter obviously excepted), the concept remains too tainted to implement. Simultaneously, there seems to be a flawed assumption by policymakers that reliance on autocracies is somehow beneficial to U.S. security or that ignoring human rights can somehow reverse knee-jerk anti-Americanism. I fear, however, that the [2]letter signed by 140 policy practitioners, bloggers, and activists, is flawed in its advocacy for the inclusion of Islamists:

In many countries, including Turkey, Indonesia, and Morocco, the right to participate in reasonably credible and open elections has moderated Islamist parties and enhanced their commitment to democratic norms. We may not agree with what they have to say, but if we wish to both preach and practice democracy, it is simply impossible to exclude the largest opposition groups in the region from the democratic process. At the same time, to reduce the future of the region to a contest between Islamists and authoritarian regimes would be a mistake. *Promoting democratic openings in the region will give liberal and secular parties a chance to establish themselves and communicate their ideas to the populace after decades of repression which left them weak and marginalized.* More competition between parties of diverse ideological backgrounds would be healthy for political development in the region.

First of all, some of the examples are less than meets the eye. Turkey is becoming, day-by-day, less a model of Islamist moderation and more an [3]embarrassment. Indeed, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's commitment to democracy is certainly worthy of broader debate. Soner Cağaptay's writings on the subject are always provocative and

unfortunately correct. The moderation of Indonesian Islamists, too, appears [4]shaky. In his Meridan House address (June 2, 1992), Edward Djerejian spoke of the problem, in the context of the cancelled Algerian elections, of one-man, one-vote, one-time. The problem has not gone away. Islamists are quite good at utilizing the rhetoric of democracy, but seem to fall short in practice. This came to the head at a January 2006 AEI conference in which a representative from the one of the organizations behind the letter [5]questioned Ms. Rola Dashti, a leader of the women's suffrage movement in Kuwait:

MR. ABUZAKUK: My name is Aly Abuzakuk, the Program Officer at the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy, and I live in America. For Ms. Rola, 6 months ago I attended a lecture by Mr. Ismail Shati at Carnegie. He was one that I think is speaking of the moderate Islamists in Kuwait, and he said he is for women's rights, human rights and all the issues that we are working for, aggregating all of them together as if they only represent one voice I think misses the point. There are radicals among the Islamists as there radicals among also the secularists. We are for the centrists who should make the society available for everybody to participate. We are against the denial of rights, and I think I would like to see your reaction for that and about Mr. Shati who is one of the leaders I think of the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait. MS. DASHTI: Thank you, Mr. Aly. Yes, Mr. Shati is one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait. The Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait worked against granting women political rights. I don't know the hypocrisy he could come to the U.S. and he says we advocate women's political rights and we support women, but when things come to reality, they voted against. We didn't get their support. They voted against women. They kept using Islam to blame us and tell us that you are anti-religion. This is the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait what they did.

The question of sincerity is one we should not be afraid to tackle. After all, we have gotten burned before. In 1979, Richard Falk, a political science professor at Princeton well-regarded by the Carter administration, urged the U.S. government not to fear Khomeini. "The depiction of him as fanatical, reactionary, and the bearer of crude prejudices seems certainly and happily false," Falk wrote in the *New York Times* (February 16, 1979), adding "His close advisors are uniformly composed of moderate, progressive individuals." Senate Staffer William Miller made similar statements. The United States got burned, and so too did the people who had to live under increasingly repressive Islamism. So how to address the problem of democratization and Islamism? One of the failures of the Bush administration was its inability to say that legitimate democratization requires the renunciation of political party militias. Legitimacy should come through the ballot box, not force of arms. While Bush may have failed, he did latch onto a good conception promoted by letter-signatory Saad Eddin Ibrahim, before Saad shifted his arguments to favor greater engagement of Islamists. The old Saad was right; I'm afraid the new Saad is wrong. The old Saad argued that liberals had for too long been between a rock and a hard place. They were victims not only of authoritarian regimes who had at their disposal all the mechanisms of state, but also of Islamist parties, who maintained an elaborate support structure through the mosque. Embracing Islamists won't break that dynamic. Indeed, before sustainable democracy can take root in the region—and it certainly can take root—the problem of how to strengthen liberalism needs to be addressed. Weakening authoritarians so that Islamists can fill the vacuum is simply trading apples for apples. [6]Michael Rubin is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/which-side-of-history/>
2. [http://islam-democracy.org/documents/pdf/Letter\\_to\\_Pres\\_Obama\\_about\\_Democracy\\_-\\_3-5-09.pdf](http://islam-democracy.org/documents/pdf/Letter_to_Pres_Obama_about_Democracy_-_3-5-09.pdf)
3. <http://www.meforum.org/1919/turkeys-putin-deserves-to-go>
4. <http://www.meforum.org/2044/jemaah-islamiyah-adopts-the-hezbollah-model>
5. <http://www.aei.org/events/filter.,eventID.1222/transcript.asp>
6. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_rubin/)

Harvey Sicherman (2009-03-13 16:34:49)

J. Scott Carpenter [1]makes an excellent point. But does anyone believe that, in the absence of U.S. troops, Iraq would not have been plunged into an Islamist nightmare? By every indicator, Iranians (at least, urban Iranians) are fed up with the Islamic Republic. But can they undo it? And if Egypt is overtaken by a Khomeini-style revolution because of economic stress and repression, maybe Iran will be overtaken by something in the reverse direction for the same reasons. It would be most ironic if a decade from now, we have headed back to the future, namely, an anti-American (Nasser) regime in Cairo and a pro-American one (the Shah) in Tehran. [2]Harvey Sicherman is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/which-side-of-history/#comment-1886>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey\\_sicherman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey_sicherman/)

Barry Rubin (2009-03-14 09:11:52)

Michele Dunne makes [1]excellent points, but let me raise two questions. First, what would have happened had the United States insisted on Yasir Arafat running a more democratic system? Presumably, he would have refused and the United States would have been pressed to acquiesce in order to make the peace process work. Of course, the United States would have been portrayed as reactionary, imperialistic, and anti-Palestinian for even asking. There would have been few moderates to appreciate it, and it is doubtful any moderate party would have appeared with any support. The most likely result would have been a faster rise of Hamas. Second, what does it mean to have contacts with non-violent Islamist groups? The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood does advocate and support violence, though not necessarily on Egyptian soil. Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood would be a better candidate in theory, but it supports Hamas and presumably such contacts might destabilize the Jordanian regime, a very dangerous outcome. These are very difficult moral and political questions. I would love to be able to agree with an emphasis on democracy expansion, but it simply does seem too counterproductive. There are, however, two basic themes that should be stressed in U.S. policy: first, opposition to the repression of dissidents who neither practice nor advocate violence; and second, support for basic human rights including trade union and women's rights, freedom speech, freedom of worship, etc. [2]Barry Rubin is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/which-side-of-history/#comment-1889>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/barry_rubin/)

Michele Dunne (2009-03-13 09:21:19)

Michael Rubin, Tamara Cofman Wittes, and J. Scott Carpenter have [1]raised important aspects of the debate regarding Islamists, and I must admit that there were important differences among the signatories of the CSID [2]letter on this point. Some believe that the United States should begin a broad engagement with all Islamist movements, including Hamas and Hezbollah, no matter how extreme their ideology or violent their methods. I disagree with them, but I do believe it is impossible to promote democracy while advocating the exclusion of all Islamists. I don't think it is the job of the United States to engage in any sort of grand dialogue with Islamists, but I do think U.S. diplomats should speak with non-violent Islamists just as they speak with other opposition groups and that American NGOs should continue to include such Islamists in democracy promotion programs alongside liberals and others. I also want to point out that this conversation has gone down the Islamist rabbit hole, while ignoring what are probably more significant factors in the Obama administration's jettisoning of the freedom agenda. One seems to be the persistent idea that the United States cannot promote democracy and Arab-Israeli peace at the same time. Where this idea comes from I am not entirely sure. For example, with Egypt, at no time did Mubarak withdraw or threaten to withdraw cooperation on Arab-Israeli issues during the years (2003-05) in which the Bush administration nudged him on democracy issues. As long as U.S. policy promotes peaceful, gradual reform and not regime change, Arab governments will cooperate with us on other issues when it is in their interests to do so. And what about the costs of not promoting democracy? Has no one yet learned the lesson of the 1990s, when the Clinton administration allowed Arafat to undermine the institutions of a nascent Palestinian democracy in the vain hope that it would be easier to make a peace deal with a single autocratic leader? This is an issue that needs at least as much discussion as that of what to do about Islamists. [3]Michele Dunne is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/which-side-of-history/#comment-1867>
2. [http://islam-democracy.org/documents/pdf/Letter\\_to\\_Pres\\_Obama\\_about\\_Democracy\\_-\\_3-5-09.pdf](http://islam-democracy.org/documents/pdf/Letter_to_Pres_Obama_about_Democracy_-_3-5-09.pdf)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele\\_dunne/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele_dunne/)

Tamara Cofman Wittes (2009-03-11 10:48:02)

Michael Rubin's [1]comment misrepresents the CSID/POMED [2]letter's attitude toward Islamist movements—and, more importantly, misconceives the challenges for America of building democracy in the Arab world. Let me try to make corrections on both counts. First, the signers of the CSID/POMED letter, myself included, are not arguing that America should embrace Islamist parties—we are pointing out that it would be counterproductive to exclude them *a priori* from our efforts to help the region build a democratic future. The point is that we have to get beyond our Algerian nightmares to look at each individual group's ideas and actions in the cold light of day, and judge them accordingly. Rola Dashti's colloquy with Aly Abuzakook is a great example of what this looks like in practice. Rola is a dear friend, a true liberal, and she's absolutely right about the ideological attitude and the dirty tricks adopted

by the Kuwaiti Brotherhood in its (ultimately unsuccessful) attempts to prevent women from gaining the franchise in Kuwait. That there is ample evidence on the Kuwait Brotherhood to judge their illiberal ideas and methods is, in part, because Kuwait has an open enough press and an open enough political process that the local Islamists are compelled to take public stances on the issues and defend them against liberal critiques from people like Rola. Their conversation occurred at AEI, but I can also imagine it taking place in the pages of Kuwaiti papers. So far, despite their illiberal views, the Kuwaiti Brotherhood has played by the rules. This does not necessarily mean they are moderating—but it, and Kuwait’s relative openness, means that folks like Rola have a fighting chance in Kuwait that they don’t have elsewhere in the region. So what we know about the Kuwaiti Brotherhood suggests that the United States government should under no circumstances embrace them—but it might also mean we don’t have to worry about them taking over. In Egypt, by contrast, the Brotherhood feels no such pressure to debate their ideas publicly, and so we can’t really know how to evaluate their real intentions. Because Egypt’s government so severely restricts political organization and debate, that the local Brotherhood is relatively unchallenged in the public sphere, and is in the enviable position of serving as an empty vessel for the hopes and resentments of Egyptians. Americans (and many Egyptians) naturally worry about whether the Brotherhood would subvert democracy if they gain power. Of course, the Mubaraks prefer it that way, so they can use the Brotherhood as a bogeyman against Washington. This “empty vessel” problem is the consequence of decades in which autocratic regimes prevented social and political organization in every possible forum—except the one institution they couldn’t fully control, the mosque. Saad Eddin Ibrahim was and is correct to point out that the region’s liberals are between a rock and a hard place—and I will add that this situation is sustained by American continued acquiescence in authoritarian control, a stance supported by those who, like Michael Rubin, fear another Algeria or Iran. As I discuss at length in [3]my book, *Freedom’s Unsteady March*, this “Algerian nightmare” is a powerful specter that prevented both Democratic and Republican American policymakers from seriously working to advance political openings in the Middle East—but even worse, it is a self-fulfilling prophecy. The current situation of authoritarian control and Islamist subversion squeezes political alternatives out of the public square. The longer we abjure from promoting freedom out of fear of Islamist triumph, the further we entrench the Islamists’ political advantage in the now-tilted playing field. The more entrenched the Islamists become as the political alternative to the status quo, the more the language of Islamism becomes the language of protest politics and other voices become marginalized. Already, research by Mark Tessler suggests that the most powerful determinant of public support for Islamist parties is simple dissatisfaction with the status quo. That’s why what Michael calls “old Saad” and “new Saad” are actually completely consistent—the same liberal commitments to open political debate and mutual toleration, with a clear-eyed recognition of the changed political context since 1992, in which Islamists have made a devil’s bargain with autocrats to shut liberals out. If one follows Michael’s prescription and waits to promote democratic openings until liberals are stronger, one may well wait forever. In practice, it is nearly impossible to strengthen the appeal of liberals or liberalism in the context of authoritarian control. You can keep liberals and their ideas alive, barely—but liberals can only challenge orthodoxies and make their case to the public when they have public space in which to do so. That means the United States *must* promote political freedom if it wants to strengthen liberalism. “Keeping the lid on” out of fear of another Algeria is the best way to get another Algeria—or even another Iran. The Bush administration’s failure to overcome the legacy of Algeria and develop a more sophisticated understanding of and approach to Islamist movements produced an ineffective and ambivalent policy, and helped produce the intense backlash we now face against democracy promotion in the Middle East. Michael Rubin’s stance does not advance the ball beyond the Bush experience—it actually pulls us further backward. But, as I wrote in *Freedom’s Unsteady March*,

the region’s experiences with Islamist parties has moved beyond the experience of Algeria in 1991, and few Islamist parties today can sustain either the mystique of the simplistic sloganeering that swept the FIS to victory. Even the FIS and Hamas did not win a majority of the popular vote. As a result, it is unclear in many cases whether a more open political process...would necessarily bring with it commanding majorities for Islamist forces or whether a more diverse marketplace of ideas and meaningful contestation would reduce the grassroots popularity of Islamist movements to manageable levels.

In [4]my book I lay out criteria America can use to assess the likely democratic compatibility of Islamist—or any other—political movements in the authoritarian context of the Arab world. It’s long past time to move beyond the lessons of 1979 and 1992, and start building policy on more contemporary analysis of the political landscape confronting the United States in the Middle East. Scholars and policymakers who have started down this road are well-represented among the signatories of the CSID/POMED letter, and those who dip into their scholarship will likely come to agree with Michele and myself that political freedom and open political competition are the best means to build long-term stability and advance enduring American interests in the Middle East. [5]*Tamara Cofman Wittes*

*is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/which-side-of-history/#comment-1867>
2. [http://islam-democracy.org/documents/pdf/Letter\\_to\\_Pres\\_Obama\\_about\\_Democracy\\_-\\_3-5-09.pdf](http://islam-democracy.org/documents/pdf/Letter_to_Pres_Obama_about_Democracy_-_3-5-09.pdf)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/freedoms\\_unsteady\\_march/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/freedoms_unsteady_march/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/freedoms\\_unsteady\\_march/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/04/freedoms_unsteady_march/)
5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara\\_cofman\\_wittes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara_cofman_wittes/)

Joshua Muravchik (2009-03-17 18:09:58)

I have participated in the activities of the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy for some years and have gotten into some spats in defending it. To my disappointment, however, I could not sign the [1]open letter, much as I think we should raise a cry against Obama's abandonment of the freedom agenda. Much of the [2]debate above about Islamists misses the point: this whole issue was inappropriate to the letter. The problem of what democrats should do in situations where parties with dubious democratic convictions command strong electoral support is an old one that admits of no satisfactory solution. People who believe that the United States should promote democracy may disagree about it. It was wrong for the drafters to include a position on that issue in this statement. But there is something more important that is wrong with this statement. From start to finish, it speaks as if the tensions between the United States and the Islamic world are the fault of the United States. Nothing could be further from the truth. The United States has always offered a hand of friendship to Muslims, as to everyone else. But vast parts of the Muslim world are hostile to America, some violently hostile. To be sure, some of this hostility stems from American policies, but that does not mean that those policies are wrong. The most potent of these neuralgic issues is America's support of Israel's right to exist. Another reason for the hostility is the deep strain of prejudice against Christians and Jews still at work in the Muslim world. Moreover, the support of U.S. governments for dictatorial regimes is not the reason those regimes exist. The reverse is true. Because the Muslim world consists almost entirely of dictatorial regimes, and because America has always sought friendly relations with the Muslim world, it perforce found itself having to embrace autocrats. In fact, with the exception of Saudi Arabia, all of the most repressive and unspeakable regimes in the region—Syria, Libya, Sudan, Iraq (under Saddam)—have been violently anti-American, and the United States has returned their hostility. It is odd that this statement singles out four countries by name (Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia), while failing to name the more egregious ones. Odd, too, that it fails to consider the impact of American influence in making the pro-American regimes less odious than the anti-American ones. The stark absence of freedom and democracy in the Muslim world is not America's fault. It reflects the pathologies that abide in these societies, the Middle East in particular. (The non-Middle Eastern Muslim states also lag in freedom and democracy, but not so severely.) One salient feature of those pathologies is the absence of self-criticism and the common habit of blaming everyone else (djinn, Jews, the Evil Eye, Americans) for one's own problems. By pandering to this self-destructive syndrome, this statement does a disservice to the cause of democracy in the Muslim world. [3]Joshua Muravchik is a member of MESH.

1. [http://islam-democracy.org/documents/pdf/Letter\\_to\\_Pres\\_Obama\\_about\\_Democracy\\_-\\_3-5-09.pdf](http://islam-democracy.org/documents/pdf/Letter_to_Pres_Obama_about_Democracy_-_3-5-09.pdf)
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/which-side-of-history/>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/joshua\\_muravchik/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/joshua_muravchik/)

### Iran's Protocols of Potter (2009-03-11 08:20)

From [1]Josef Joffe

[kml \_flashembed movie="http://youtube.com/v/rGsHUfl9xEE" width="425" height="350" wmode="transparent" /]

It was high time that anti-Semitism would find something hipper than those dusty Protocols of the Elders of Zion, concocted sometime between 1895 and 1902 by Russian journalist Matvei Golovinski and then used by the pro-Tsarists to discredit reforms in Russia as a Jewish plot. Egyptian and Syrian state media have turned the Protocols into television series, trying to modernize the plot and bringing it forward into the 20th century.

Iranian TV has beaten them hands down with "Harry Potter and the Ziono-Hollywoodist Conspiracy." (If you cannot view the clip embedded above, click [2]here.) J.K. Rowling, that English (and no doubt, fully Aryan) rose, as avatar of the globe-encircling Jewish kraken? Yes, though the evidence is a bit disjointed as the clip unfolds on YouTube. The basic visual argument is hardly as compelling as the original Protocols which, after all, have real-life Jews who have real faces and names, working out complicated plans to conquer the world and pollute the race. You only get Harry and his buddies and professors flitting in and out of the picture while the voice-over proclaims a story line that actually has nothing to do with Messrs. Voldemort and Dumbledore.

It is "Witchcraft and Brainwashing" that spreads the "evil essence of Zionism." This is how the logic apparently works: Since Harry Potter movies are all about W 'n' B, they are a Zionist tool. Along with "devil worship," W 'n' B will corrupt "innocent children and youth" around the world. Why is this a Zionist tool? Because witchcraft was invented by the "rabbis of ancient Egypt." Now we get a few seconds from the Order of the Phoenix even though it does not contain witchcraft-mongering rabbis. But wait. Aren't those longbearded faculty at Hogwarts kind of Jewish-looking? Didn't we see Jewish symbols in every Harry Potter movie? I swear, the kids were playing with dreidels in *The Philosopher's Stone*. And when they assembled for a meal in *The Order of the Phoenix*, they were actually celebrating Passover. You thought the matzohs were crackers, eh? Whenever the kids joust and fight, they are actually preparing for the Last Battle that will do in or enslave all the Muslims.

As we hop along this warped path of Iranian TV logic, we also learn that the world faces a "cultural crusaders' war" that is more powerful than any military assault the West has engineered in, say, Afghanistan and Iraq. How will the Jews attain world domination? By hastening Armageddon, the "End of Days," which will deliver a kind of Jewish endsieg, the Nazi term for "final victory."

What does this have to do with Harry Potter? Well, because in the next volume, Iranian TV intones, he finally wants to face down Voldemort. That will be the mother of all battles, to coin a phrase—a secret metaphor (and call to arms) for Armageddon.

Personally, I find this insulting to the Jews. Previously, the Iranian propaganda line painted the "Little Satan" as mighty regional superpower. Now, this TV clip puts down Israel/Jewry as a bunch of losers who no longer have the will and wherewithal to subjugate the Muslims directly and by force of arms. Now, they have to rely on a bunch of kids—on Harry and Hermione—to execute their evil designs.

What has the Jewish Conspiracy come to? This member in good standing feels so dissed that I will enroll in Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in the fall to learn how to turn Mr. Ahmadinejad into a toad.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef\\_joffe/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef_joffe/)
2. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGsHUf19xEE>

Walter Reich (2009-03-11 13:34:11)

Josef Joffe deftly [1]highlights the absurdity of this Iranian TV [2]clip. Even if you don't watch it—and you certainly should—you can tell, from Joe's observations, that its preposterousness makes it an unintended parody of the claim that has been hurled for a long time by anti-Semites against Jews that they secretly conspire to dominate the world by manipulating various forms of power, ranging from economics to politics to the media. Joe even takes mock umbrage at the silliness of this particular version of that claim. Can't the Iranians do better than turn Harry Potter into an agent of the world Zionist conspiracy? The trouble is that this kind of claim has been very successful in its justification for, and incitement of, anti-Semitism, including anti-Semitism of the most bloody sort. The most famous of the conspiracy theories was (and remains, since it's still in print throughout the world, especially the Arab/Muslim world) the Russian forgery that Joe mentions, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (which itself was plagiarized from earlier conspiracy theories that had nothing to do with Jews). In 1905, the anti-Semitic Russian Black Hundreds, and the Tsarist secret police, used the *Protocols* to blame the Jews for liberalization efforts in Russia, helping fan anti-Jewish pogroms. Hitler cited the *Protocols* in *Mein Kampf* as demonstrating the way the Jews plotted, and he and other Nazis cited it afterward as proof of the "Jewish-Bolshevik" conspiracy. In fact, the idea you didn't have to be Jewish to be a part of the conspiracy—a strong theme in the Iranian clip—was central to the repeated arguments made by Hitler as well as Goebbels and other leading Nazis throughout the period of the Third Reich. They frequently claimed that the Jews were behind the Soviet Union, Britain and America, all of which did the Jews' bidding, and that the Jews would, through their direct actions (such as their control of the economy) or through their control of the Allies, destroy and ultimately exterminate the Germans if the Germans didn't destroy and exterminate them first. It's this theme of the Jews using great powers as their tools that's powerfully evident in the Iranian video clip's argument that the Zionists are behind the military activities—by, after all, not Israel but the forces of the United States and other countries—in Afghanistan and Iraq. I should add that this video clip, absurd as it is, is part of the wave of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories that have washed across the Arab/Muslim media for many years—a wave that, in recent years, has reached tsunami-like proportions. By far the most common version of these theories has been the publication and re-publication of the *Protocols*—in Egypt, Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia and on the part of Hezbollah, Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) has translated some remarkable examples of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories that have raced across the pages and television screens of the Arab/Muslim media, which have included resurrections of versions of the medieval "blood libel," which has Jews murdering non-Jewish children in order to use their blood to bake Passover matzah. Excellent examples and analysis for this phenomenon in the Palestinian Authority may be found [3]here and [4]here; for Egypt, [5]here, [6]here, and [7]here; for Syria, [8]here and [9]here; and for Iran, [10]here. And an excellent overview of anti-Semitism in the Arab/Muslim media may be found [11]here. Clearly, as Joe Joffe demonstrates, the video clip is so absurd as to seem like a joke. And as one watches its absurdity one can't help but laugh. But it's part of a larger pattern that is hardly funny—and that, in other places at other times, has been central to the propaganda that was believed by vast numbers of people and served as much of the rationale that was claimed to justify the mass-murder of many millions of Jews. Once one realizes this, one has to stop laughing, as absurd as this particular clip is. One question that remains for me has to do with the extent to which the anti-Semitic propagandists themselves have actually believed in their propaganda. Clearly, many of those who published the *Protocols* in Russia knew they were foisting a forgery. Eventually, many of those who published and read it—not only in Russia but also across Europe, America and the Arab world—thought it was true. Hitler and Goebbels certainly thought it was true, and they and their fellow Nazi leaders also thought the other anti-Semitic charges they made were true. And many in the Arab/Muslim world—my guess is that, to one extent or another, most—believe that many of the anti-Semitic charges with which they've been bombarded for years are true. Did the Iranian commentators presented in the television video clip as experts on the "Ziono-Hollywood" conspiracy behind Harry Potter really believe what they said? Does the learned "Iranian film critic" really believe that the Harry Potter film series really portrays theories of witchcraft that originate in the Kabbala and are derived from "a rabbi or magicians of ancient Egypt, and were passed down to the Knights Templar"? Does the "Iranian expert on religious cinema" really believe that the Harry Potter series is part of a Zionist-led "cultural Crusader war"? Does the "Iranian university lecturer" (does he have tenure?) really believe that the Zionists have used a belief in Jewish racial supremacy "as a pretext to achieve their Zionist goals"? I have no idea. I don't even have a clue as to whether they are the people they're identified as being or actors. But I wouldn't be surprised if they are indeed those people, and I wouldn't be surprised if they actually believe what they say in that clip. What I'm convinced of, though, is that many of the Iranians who watched this clip on their television sets weren't unaffected by it. And that, I think, is a real—and potentially very bloody—problem. [12]Walter Reich is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/irans-protocols-of-potter/>

2. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGsHUf19xEE>
3. <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP0198>
4. <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP0798>
5. <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP7900>
6. <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP15000>
7. <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP20101>
8. <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP7100>
9. <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP6699>
10. <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP107206>
11. <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=ia&ID=IA44208>
12. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_reich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_reich/)

Walter Laqueur (2009-03-12 08:59:34)

Golovinski is not the author of the *Protocols*; this is one of many false trails given publicity in recent years. No one knows the identity of the author to the present day. Those interested in the historiography of the *Protocols* should look at the essays of a German academic, Michael Hagemeister (Bochum University) who has studied the subject for decades and is the most reliable authority. I don't think Nikolai II, the last Tsar, believed in the authenticity of the *Protocols*. Nor did Goebbels, who was a cynic and thought them a useful propagandistic weapon. Hitler thought there was an international Jewish conspiracy of sorts but not necessarily as described in detail in the *Protocols*. In fact, those who imported the *Protocols* to Germany (in Russia prior to 1917 it had had little impact) warned that not every detail should be taken literally—some of them quite obviously stretched belief too far. How many Iranians will believe the Harry Potter/ Zionist [1]conspiracy story? I don't think many Tehran intellectuals will. In other circles it will not doubt be given credence. There is a long tradition of popular belief in magic in the Arab world (think of the *Arabian Nights*) and more recently of conspiracy theories. True, the number of believers elsewhere is also substantial (and has grown with the spread of the Internet); in the United States and Western Europe it is thought to be about 30 percent. A detailed study about the geopolitics of conspiracy theories is overdue, as well as research about the psychological motives. I have long doubted whether the firm believers in conspiracy theories can be reached on a rational level. (Political propaganda can make use of gullibility—but this is a different story). Nevertheless, the Iranian TV presentation should be widely circulated; it will have an impact on the non-believers in conspiracy theories—after all the majority in most countries. [2]Walter Laqueur is a member of MESH.

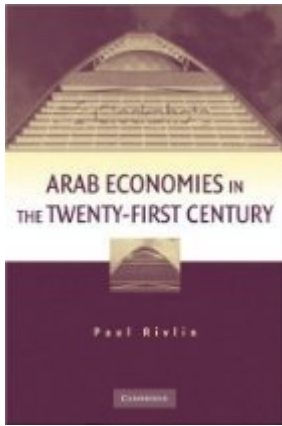
1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/irans-protocols-of-potter/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_laqueur/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_laqueur/)

### 'Arab Economies in the Twenty-First Century' (2009-03-16 08:44)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Paul Rivlin is senior fellow at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle East and African Studies of Tel Aviv University. His new book is *Arab Economies in the Twenty-First Century*.

From [1]Paul Rivlin





[2] My book brings together two areas of research.

The first is an investigation into the balance between resources and needs in the Arab world. Resources can be thought of as the economy that provides the goods and services that a country requires; needs can be interpreted as the population, its age structure and growth. The reality is more complex because one of the factors of production is labor, which means that population is therefore part of supply as well as the source of demand.

The balance between supply and demand is crucially affected by changes in the age structure of the population. The proportion of those of working-age to the young and old (who do not work) in the Arab world is favorable at present and offers these countries the opportunity to develop with lower costs in terms of investment in education, health and other welfare expenditures. The working-age population is still growing more rapidly than the population as a whole, and this will continue for at least another decade. There is an increasing need for jobs, but if they are available, then more workers will be able to support relatively fewer dependents.

But over time this will change as the share of the elderly population increases, something that already presents serious challenges in Europe and Japan. Indeed, Arab population growth already has slowed in the last decade. That will push up costs and reduce the share of the population that can carry the burden.

So far, Arab countries have not taken advantage of this "demographic transition" or "demographic gift" in the way that East and Southeast Asian countries did in the 1970s and 1980s. Research has emphasized the major contribution that demographic transition made to rapid economic development in those regions. The danger is that in the Arab world, this temporary phase will pass and demographic trends will become more burdensome again.

The second area of research is part of what might be called the new economic history of the Middle East. In recent years, a number of economists and economic historians have attempted to provide new explanations for the poor economic performance of the region. They have examined religion, culture, institutions, geography, law, international relations and internal politics in ways that once were a taboo and, for some, remain so. This literature helps to provide answers to the questions that my first research area posed: why are such deep and prolonged imbalances permitted? These imbalances manifest themselves in high poverty rates, growing inequalities in income and wealth distribution, malnutrition and rates of illiteracy. Given the threats to stability that they pose, why have governments not been more effective? This book offers an explanation.

[3]Order from Publisher | [4]Amazon | [5]Excerpt

1. <http://www.tau.ac.il/dayancenter/research.htm#PAUL>
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/41e1TT903zL.jpg>

3. <http://www.cambridge.org/us/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=9780521719230>
  4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0521719232>
  5. [http://assets.cambridge.org/97805218/95002/excerpt/9780521895002\\_excerpt.pdf](http://assets.cambridge.org/97805218/95002/excerpt/9780521895002_excerpt.pdf)
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### Netanyahu's coalition problems (2009-03-16 08:45)

From [1]Robert O. Freedman

✠ The Israeli elections, coming just a few weeks after a cease-fire ended the war between Israel and Hamas, appear to have raised more questions than they settled about the Israeli position in the Arab-Israeli peace process.

On the one hand, the extremes of both the Israeli left and the Israeli right both lost ground—the left wing Meretz Party dropped from five to three seats in the 120-member Israeli Knesset, while the right-wing tandem of the National Union and Jewish Home parties (which, unlike the 2006 elections, ran separately) dropped from nine to seven seats.

On the other hand, there was an overall shift from the center-left to center-right on the Israeli political spectrum, due in large part to the failure of the 2005 withdrawal from Gaza to end the rocket fire from Gaza into Israel, and the failure of the brief Israel-Hamas war to end attacks from Gaza. While Kadima, Israel's centrist party, lost only one seat (from 29 to 28), the left-of-center Labor party dropped six seats, from 19 to 13. At the same time, the right-of-center Likud more than doubled in size from 12 to 27 seats, and the right-of-center Yisrael Beiteinu party of Avigdor Lieberman increased from 11 to 15 seats.

Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu, who was asked by Israeli President Shimon Peres to attempt to form a governing coalition, has 21 days left to assemble 61 MKs or more in the coalition. The chances for Israel to move the peace process forward range from limited to virtually non-existent, depending on the type of coalition he forms.

To be sure, there will be no hope for a Palestinian-Israeli peace until Hamas, which currently governs a war-battered Gaza, and Fatah, which rules the West Bank, can reconcile and form a national unity government that has as one of its basic provisions Palestinian recognition of Israel and an agreement to a two-state. While Fatah and Hamas have begun reconciliation talks in Egypt, Hamas will have to make a major change in its political position, and be willing to recognize Israel, for any Israeli leader to give credence to the Palestinian position.

On the Israeli side of the peace process equation, Netanyahu is challenged by the prospect of forming two alternative coalitions, one centrist, and one right-wing. If he forms a centrist coalition—as he claims he wants to do in the face of the existential threat from Iran, the growing world economic crisis which has begun to affect Israel's economy, and the ongoing challenges of Hamas and Hezbollah—he has three potential partners, all of whom have come out for a two-state solution: Labor, Kadima, and Yisrael Beiteinu (which has been unfairly characterized by some in the media as a far-right party). Netanyahu himself, however, has not yet been willing to come out publicly for a two-state solution, and unless he does so, it is unlikely that either Labor or Kadima will join him. There is, of course, the possibility that Netanyahu will succeed in splitting the Kadima Party by offering major ministries to top Kadima politicians such as Shaul Mofaz and Dalia Itzik. So far, however, they have stayed with Kadima's leader, Tzipi Livni, in resisting a coalition government until Netanyahu explicitly endorses a two-state position.

Should a centrist coalition not be formed, then Netanyahu faces the prospect of having to form a right-wing coalition consisting of his Likud party (27 seats), Yisrael Beiteinu (15 seats), the two Haredi (ultra-orthodox) parties Shas (11 seats) and United Torah Judaism (5 seats), and the two far-right parties, Jewish Home (3 seats) and National Union (4 seats), for a total of 65 seats.

However, such a coalition will be very problematic for Netanyahu. His first problem will be overcoming the bitter disagreements between the Haredi parties on the one hand and Yisrael Beiteinu on the other. Yisrael Beiteinu leader Avigdor Lieberman's call for civil marriage and an easing of conversion requirements, something of great importance to his Russian immigrant constituents but anathema to the Haredim, has led Shas leader Rabbi Ovadia Yosef to call Lieberman the "Devil" and to state that anyone who voted for Lieberman's party will have committed an unredeemable sin. Even if Netanyahu manages to make peace between Shas and Yisrael Beiteinu, he faces very serious budgetary demands from the Haredi parties which hope to increase allocations to their specialized institutions, to increase child allowances, and to greatly increase subsidized housing construction. Indeed, Shas alone has asked for \$375 million more in allocations. At a time of rising economic constraints, as well as rising demands from the Israeli Defense Ministry to meet the threats from Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas, there is a real question as to where Netanyahu will find the money to meet the Haredi demands.

Yet another challenge Netanyahu faces in forming a right-wing coalition are the demands of the Jewish Home and the National Union parties. Both have demanded an end to the settlement freeze and the legalization of the hitherto illegal Jewish settlement outposts on the West Bank. If Netanyahu accedes to their demands, he will find himself in an open confrontation with Barak Obama, whose special envoy to the Arab-Israeli conflict, former Senator George Mitchell, has made no secret of his opposition to Jewish settlements on the West Bank as a major obstacle to the peace process.

Given these constraints, it is clear that Netanyahu would prefer to have a centrist coalition with Kadima (together they would have 55 seats) and either Yisrael Beiteinu or Labor or preferably both to give him a very broad coalition. Indeed, he has just signed a coalition agreement with Yisrael Beiteinu. Whether he would be willing to pay the price for such a coalition with Kadima—explicit support for a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict—and possibly a rotational agreement between himself and Tzipi Livni as prime minister (Labor's Shimon Peres and Likud's Yitzhak Shamir had such an agreement in the mid-1980s), remains to be seen.

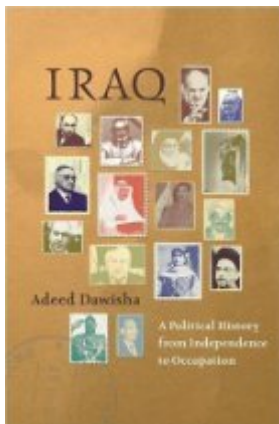
1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)

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### 'Iraq: A Political History' (2009-03-20 07:59)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Adee Dawisha is professor of political science at Miami University in Ohio. His new book is *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation*.

From [1]Adee Dawisha



[2] The idea for this book took shape in the post-2003 period as I searched for answers and tried to make sense of the quagmire into which Iraq seemed to be sinking. Successive governments, first appointed by the Americans, later elected by the Iraqis, would fail in the most rudimentary functions of governance. More than six years into the new era, the state was still less than capable in extending essential services and providing security for its citizens, with the result that in the perceptions of many Iraqis, state institutions would recede almost into irrelevance.

As America's footprints sank deeper in the treacherous quicksand of Iraq's discords and tensions, it was obvious that the seeming failure of the American project in Iraq was not just a failure of state institutions. The new masters, strangely unschooled in the ways of the land over which they now held dominion, would fail in two other undertakings: molding a unified Iraqi identity that would overcome ethno-sectarian loyalties, and fashioning robust representative institutions.

But was the American endeavor really so unique, indeed so alien, to Iraq that it was bound to fail? In fact, the narrative of a socially fractured Iraq and the way that state and civil institutions tried to deal with this seemingly intractable problem did not arise after April 2003. The story is as old as the history of Iraq itself.

My book examines the political development and institutional evolution of Iraq from the inception of the state in 1921 to the post-2003 years of political and societal turmoil. Its premise is that from the very beginning of the state, the Iraqi project devolved into three separate, yet interrelated undertakings: the construction and consolidation of the institutions of governance; the effort to legitimate the state through the framing of democratic structures; and the creation of an overarching, and thus unifying, national identity.

When the British installed Faysal bin Husayn as king of Iraq in 1921, the project to create a national identity, to sculpt a 'nation' out of the different and disparate communities, became a critical undertaking as essential to the future of Iraq as building an effective and credible process of governance. The British and the newly-crowned king also recognized early on in the monarchical period (1921-58) that a key route to amalgamating the country's disparate groups into a coherent whole was through the construction of civic and representative institutions.

My purpose in this book is to demonstrate that the most useful and effective way of making sense of the post-2003 seeming waning of the country—the failures of state institutions, the frailty of democratic attitudes and commitments, and the fragility of a coherent national identity—is through a systematic understanding of the same three projects as they were first undertaken by the British and the Iraqi ruling elites in 1921, and then developed, with a few successes and many failures, during the life span of the country right through to the tumultuous events of the post-2003 era.

[3]Order from publisher | [4]Amazon | [5]Excerpt

1. <http://www.users.muohio.edu/dawisha/>
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51%2Bnjb%2Bvj3L.jpg>
3. <http://press.princeton.edu/titles/8887.html>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0691139571>
5. <http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/s8887.html>

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## President Obama speaks to Iran (2009-03-21 12:50)

From [1]Philip Carl Salzman

[kml \_flashembed movie="http://youtube.com/v/6MDklnATBI" width="425" height="350" wmode="transparent" /]

President Obama used the occasion of Nowruz, the Persian New Year, to reach out to the Iranian people and the government of the Islamic Republic, promising a new start and relations based on mutual respect. The President stressed the commonalities between Americans and Iranians, who both spend their holidays by congregating with family and friends, exchanging gifts, and celebrating. The great historical achievements of Iran, including its literature, music, and painting, were acknowledged, as were the rich culture and high potential of Iran today. (If you cannot see the embedded clip of his remarks, [2]click here.)

Notwithstanding President Obama's misleading implication that previous American regimes had not extended a friendly hand to Iran, his brief speech—not broadcast on Iranian television—was gracious and I expect would be received favorably by the Iranian people. The President's emphasis on the commonalities of Americans and Iranians reflects the major cultural frame of "progressive" American culture, a frame which emphasizes and celebrates "diversity" and "inclusion." In this frame, Iranians and Americans should be able to get along just the way Iranian-Americans get along with Spanish-, Jewish-, African-, Italian-, and other hyphenated-Americans. We are all human, the President seems to say, and we all want the same things, which, if we work together, we can all gain. This is another assumption of the "progressive" American frame: all can be winners; there need be no losers; life is not a zero-sum game. And, if we are all winners, we can all be equal, a third element of the frame.

How will this message be received by the Iranians? Well, of course, there are Iranians and Iranians. Many have been and are positively disposed toward the United States. A public opinion poll done after President Bush's "Axis of Evil" speech showed that a small majority of Iranians agreed with the characterization. (The pollster was quickly incarcerated.) Many Iranians would like better relations with America. But these Iranians are not the ones in charge. The government of the Islamic Republic is a self-perpetuating theocracy, supported by muscular control agencies, such as Revolutionary Guard. It decides policy, and the populace must conform or take the consequences, often deadly.

What is the cultural frame of the theocrats running the government of the Islamic Republic? For these mullahs, Shia Islam is the *raison d'être* of their regime. They work for the greater glory of Shia Islam, for the conquest and subjugation of their mortal enemies, the Sunni Muslims, and the final triumph of Islam through the subjugation or eradication of non-Muslim infidels. These are ultimate goals, but in the shorter run the triumph of Shia forces in Lebanon and the annihilation of the Jews of Israel would be satisfying

achievements. Shiism is the one true way, and "diversity" beyond Shia Islam is not celebrated. "Inclusion" is only possible within a hierarchy of Shia dominance. "Common humanity" does not apply to "[3]sons of apes and pigs." The Shia cultural frame of the Iranian theocrats and their civilian agents, such as Ahmadinejad, is highly particularistic, defining its values and strategy in terms of Shia Islam. Pleas based on "common humanity," "diversity," and "inclusion," will be like drops of rain in the desert.

The people of Iran, on the other hand, would be more receptive to the President's message. They know that many Iranians have settled happily in the United States and are doing well. Many Iranians are fed up with government by mullah and, given a chance, would chuck them out. Feeling against the mullahs is so strong in some segments that at least some people refuse to say the Islamic greetings of salaam alekum and khoda hafez, and have reverted to the ancient Persian greetings of darood and bedrood.

President Obama has come far, fast, with pretty words. But it seems highly unlikely that the rulers of Iran will be swayed, and almost certain that they will continue on their chosen path. What else, beyond words, does President Obama have in his quiver?

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)
2. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MDk1neATBI>
3. <http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Area=sr&ID=SR01102>

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Mark N. Katz (2009-03-22 11:41:57)

In his broadcast [1]message to Iran, President Obama expressed the desire for improved relations not just with the Iranian people, but also with the Iranian government. Philip Carl Salzman [2]may well be right that the Iranian people are ready for improved Iranian-American relations, but that Iran's authoritarian rulers are not. Not only does the Iranian leadership have an ambitious international agenda hostile to American interests, but it may also fear that an Iranian-American rapprochement would undercut their legitimacy and even their hold on power. Yet even if Tehran rejects his offer of improved relations, President Obama was right to have made it. Here's why: To begin with, President Obama's message was not just intended for Iran, but for the world at large. To those in Europe, the Middle East, and elsewhere who (rightly or wrongly) blamed the United States—especially the Bush administration—for the poor state of relations between Washington and Tehran, Obama has made clear that his administration is genuinely willing to improve relations. If Tehran does not respond in kind, the Obama administration at least stands to gain credit in important quarters just for trying. This could prove highly useful for the United States in rallying others to support increased sanctions or other actions against Tehran if it rejects Obama's offer. In addition, while the Iranian clerical leadership and the regime's security forces fear that improved relations with the United States could undercut their rule, they also have other—perhaps more important—things to fear. The collapse in oil prices has seriously impacted Iran's already weak economy, thus increasing the prospects for domestic unrest. The growing strength of the Taliban in both Afghanistan and Pakistan also increases the prospects that this virulently anti-Shi'a movement will support Tehran's restive Sunni population. And while many see the drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq as an opportunity for Iran to increase its influence in that country, the actual result may be to trap Iran in an endless proxy war with Arab states supporting the Sunni tribes and other anti-Iranian forces there. Finally, the prospect of increasing Kurdish-Arab conflict in Iraq as the United States leaves will confront Tehran with two unappetizing prospects: Turkish intervention in Iraq, and the spillover of conflict into Iran itself. The economic and security problems that Tehran faces are, in fact, quite dire. While many Iranian leaders may be vain enough to think that Tehran can deal with these problems on its own, they are pragmatic enough to understand that there are no external powers other than the United States which would be both willing and able to help Iran do so. If they decide they cannot resolve their problems without external assistance (and this is a big "if"), they could realize that the United States is their most desirable partner. Obama's friendly gesture could encourage them to arrive at this epiphany. Salzman is right that the Iranian leadership has strong ideological motivations. Their assistance to Hezbollah and Hamas, as well as their hostility toward Israel, prove this. For these policies do nothing to solve Iran's economic problems or the security threats it faces both internally and from neighboring countries. (The nuclear issue is more complicated; even Iranians hostile to the theocratic regime see Iran's acquisition of atomic energy power as economically beneficial.) But ideology is not the only motive for

the Iranian leadership's actions. It is also animated by some very pragmatic ones—the first and foremost of which is the survival instinct. And often in the past, ideologically-based regimes have found ways both to modify their ideologies, as well as find justifications for doing so, when their pragmatic interests require this. Given the seriousness of the economic and security problems Iran faces, President Obama's friendly gesture could be useful in helping the Iranian leadership realize that the United States is neither the only nor the most important threat they face, and that it could even be an ally against the latter. But will this work? Tehran's failure so far to release recently-arrested Iranian-American journalist, Roxana Saberi (who, by the way, has sought to portray the human dimension of Iran in her reporting), is not encouraging. Nor was Supreme Leader Khamenei's negative reaction to the Obama broadcast. On the other hand, Khamenei did not completely rule out dialogue with the United States either. As he is never one to miss an opportunity to castigate the United States, this could be significant (but, of course, might not be). Tehran is unlikely to accept Obama's offer right away. But it might well do so as Tehran comes to realize that improved relations with the United States can help Iran deal with its many serious challenges—and that Tehran cannot do so effectively without the United States. It is the task of American diplomacy to deliver this message both firmly and persuasively. [3]Mark N. Katz is a member of MESH.

1. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MDklneATBI>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/president-obama-speaks-to-iran/>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_n\\_katz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_n_katz/)

### Hezbollah: narco-Islamism (2009-03-22 15:40)

From [1]Matthew Levitt

Earlier this month, the United Kingdom [2]announced that it is reopening dialogue with the political wing of Hezbollah. Unlike the United States, the United Kingdom has only [3]banned Hezbollah's terrorist (External Security Organization) and military wings. The ban on the terrorist wing came in 2000, while the ban on the military wing only came in June 2008 in response to Hezbollah's "providing active support to militants in Iraq who are responsible for attacks both on coalition forces and on Iraqi civilians, including providing training in the use of deadly roadside bombs," for [4]plots to kidnap British security workers in Iraq, and for its support for terrorist activity in the Palestinian Territories.

Meanwhile, the European Union has not yet designated any part of Hezbollah—military, political or otherwise—although it did [5]label Imad Mughniyeh, the late Hezbollah chief of external operations, and several other Hezbollah members involved in specific acts of terrorism.

But despite the differences between U.S. and European perceptions of and policies toward Hezbollah, there is one critical area where all parties' mutual interests converge, namely law enforcement. Regardless of divergent political considerations or definitions of terrorism, combating crime and enforcing sovereign laws are straightforward issues. More than any other Islamist group, Hezbollah has a [6]long record of engaging in criminal activity to support its activities. The United States and its European counterparts have a particularly strong shared interest in combating the group's increasing role in illicit drug trafficking.

Just this past week Admiral James G. Stavridis, the Commander of U.S. Southern Command who has now been nominated to head NATO troops as Supreme Allied Commander Europe, [7]testified before the House Armed Services Committee about the threat to the United States from the nexus between illicit drug trafficking—"including routes, profits, and corruptive influence"—and "Islamic radical terrorism." While Hezbollah is [8]involved in a wide variety of criminal activity, ranging from cigarette smuggling to selling counterfeit products, the connection between drugs and terror is particularly strong. According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), 19 of the 43 U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations are definitely [9]linked to the global drug trade, and up to 60 percent of terror organizations are suspected of

having some ties with the illegal narcotics trade.



Hezbollah is [10]no exception to this statistic, and in recent years has augmented its role in the production and trafficking of narcotics. Hezbollah has utilized the vast Lebanese Shi'a expatriate population, mainly located in South America and Africa, to its advantage. According to Michael Braun, former assistant administrator and chief of operations at the DEA, "Both Hamas and Hezbollah are active in this [Tri-Border] region [see map at right], where it is possible to make a profit of \$1 million from the sale of fourteen or fifteen kilos of drugs, an amount that could be transported in a single suitcase."

For example, Admiral Stavridis's testified that in August 2008, the U.S. Southern Command and the DEA, in coordination with host nations, targeted a Hezbollah drug trafficking ring in the Tri-Border region of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay. In August 2008, the United States, in cooperation with Colombian investigators, identified and dismantled an international cocaine smuggling and money laundering ring based out of Colombia. This operation, which was made up of a Colombian drug cartel and Lebanese members of Hezbollah, used portions of its profits—allegedly hundreds of millions of dollars per year—to finance Hezbollah.

Such revelations should not surprise. Back in December 2006 the U.S. Treasury listed Sobhi Fayad as a Specially Designated Terrorist. Why? Because, Treasury [11]informed, "Fayad has been a senior TBA [Tri-Border Area] Hezbollah official who served as a liaison between the Iranian embassy and the Hezbollah community in the TBA. He has also been a professional Hezbollah operative who has traveled to Lebanon and Iran to meet with Hezbollah leaders. Fayad received military training in Lebanon and Iran and was involved in illicit activities involving drugs and counterfeit U.S. dollars."

Africa is additionally becoming an area of concern regarding terrorist groups engaged in drug trafficking. According to Admiral Stavridis, drug traffickers have expanded their presence in West Africa as a "springboard to Europe." Hezbollah has long [12]maintained a strong presence in Africa, and has utilized Africa as a strategic point to from which to raise and transfer funds and to engage in criminal enterprises, such as diamond smuggling.

The nexus between drug trafficking and terrorist activities—specifically those of Hezbollah—represent an immediate law enforcement challenge for the United States and its European allies. While the Europeans may not view Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, they are certainly eager to prevent Hezbollah from running criminal enterprises within their borders. Countries are particularly determined to prevent the importation of illegal narcotics across their borders, whether by organized criminal networks, terrorists groups, or the hybrid narco-terrorist networks that DEA officials describe as "meaner and uglier than anything law enforcement or militaries have ever faced."

So while there is no common understanding between the United States and the United Kingdom on whether or how to engage Hezbollah or even how to classify Hezbollah and its various component parts, there is no "gray area" as to whether drug trafficking is illegal. The United Kingdom and other European



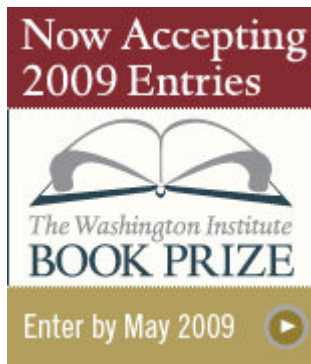
nations are no less eager than the United States to combat the flow of drugs into their countries and to prevent Hezbollah from operating criminal enterprises within their territory.

The British decision to openly engage Hezbollah politically is misinformed, to be sure. But do not be surprised if the Brits talk to Hezbollah "political" leaders on the one hand while arresting some of their cohorts involved in illicit narcotics on the other. Officials may openly describe these actions as targeting criminals, not Hezbollah, but the effect will be much the same.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew\\_levitt/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew_levitt/)
2. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/mar/05/uk-set-for-hezbollah-talks>
3. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/security/terrorism-and-the-law/terrorism-act/proscribed-groups>
4. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2236044/Hizbollah-planned-kidnap-of-British-workers-in-Iraq.html>
5. [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2005/l\\_314/l\\_31420051130en00410045.pdf](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2005/l_314/l_31420051130en00410045.pdf)
6. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2266>
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8. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC07.php?CID=238>
9. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=1223>
10. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=307>
11. <http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/hp190.htm>
12. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=463>

## Write a book, win a prize (2009-03-23 18:10)

From [1]Robert Satloff



[2] It's time to remind new authors (and their publishers) that the May 1 deadline for the [3]2009 Washington Institute Book Prize approaches. This prize, inaugurated last year, is awarded annually to three outstanding new books that have illuminated the Middle East for American readers. It is also one of the most rewarding prizes in publishing. Gold Prize is \$30,000, Silver Prize is \$15,000, and Bronze Prize is \$5,000. Watch one of last year's jurors, Michael Mandelbaum (who is also a member of MESH), announce the 2008 prizes in this clip (if you don't see the embedded video, click [4]here).

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Or read the Book Prize citations for the 2008 winners [5]here. You may also watch Yaroslav Trofimov,

author of *The Siege of Mecca*, accept the 2008 Gold Prize [6]here.

The deadline for the 2009 competition is May 1, 2009, for books published during the year prior to the deadline. Read the full rules [7]here.

Last year's prizes went to scholars and journalists, university press books and trade hardcovers, works on history and politics. For the new crop of books, The Washington Institute Book Prize has a fresh new panel of three independent jurors, to keep things interesting. If you've authored or published a book over the past year, don't miss the opportunity to submit.

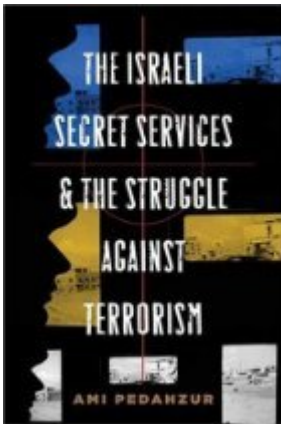
1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_satloff/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_satloff/)
2. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC11.php?CID=479>
3. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC11.php?CID=479>
4. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tCWDmdRFJ5g>
5. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC11.php?CID=495>
6. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC07.php?CID=450>
7. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC11.php?CID=480>

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### 'The Israeli Secret Services vs. Terrorism' (2009-03-24 16:16)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Ami Pedahzur is associate professor of government at the University of Texas, Austin. His new book is *The Israeli Secret Services and the Struggle against Terrorism*.

From [1]Ami Pedahzur



[2] One of the first steps taken by President Barack Obama after his inauguration was to start the process of shutting down the detention camp at Guantánamo Bay. Supporters of the step praised the president for adhering to moral principles and international law while skeptics have argued that this would undermine the effectiveness of the war on terror. Only time will tell whether this step was successful or not, but in the meantime it should turn our attention to the reasons for creating this detention camp in the first place.

The detention center at Guantánamo Bay has raised questions of why leaders tend to choose offensive measures to combat terrorism and why these measures aren't more successful. In my book, I address this question through the analysis of the Israeli counterterrorism endeavor over the last sixty years—an endeavor dominated by what I call the "war model." Since the raids on Palestinian population centers in

the early 1950s by the Unit 101—Israel's first commando unit—this model had yielded very limited results. Emotion, pressures from the security establishment and domestic political considerations have shaped Israeli counterterrorism policy more than any overarching strategy to cope with the threat of terrorism.

My conclusions have implications for policymaking beyond the Israeli case. Most policymakers might be surprised to learn that the demise of terrorist groups and the end of terrorist campaigns in the past have had little to do with offensive counterterrorist measures applied against them. The only approach that has dramatically reduced the number of terrorist attacks and their lethality is the "defensive" one. Sending military forces after the terrorists is much less effective than enhancing security in public areas and relying on domestic intelligence organizations and police forces. And most democracies, despite their declared policies, end up negotiating with terrorists on a frequent basis and cut deals with them.

Terrorism is one tactic which sub-state actors of various types apply for attaining their goals. This tactic is mostly chosen in asymmetrical conflicts, when such groups suffer from inherent military inferiority. Terrorism is employed as a symbolic act of violence aimed at non-combatants with the intent of creating an atmosphere of fear and anger amongst the citizens of the target state. Media coverage of these events only enhances this sense of fear and panic.

However, it is not only civilians who are subjected to the fear inflicted by terrorism. Policymakers suffer from the same effect. A terrorist attack, especially on a large scale or of a highly symbolic magnitude, is likely to frustrate, upset, and lead to emotional turmoil. Thus, leaders are influenced by their own emotions well before they reach a decision-making point. In most cases, elected policymakers in democracies are eager to prove to their terrorized constituents that they are strong, and would like nothing more than to boost public morale as well as their own approval ratings. Consequently, and without knowing it, they limit their cognitive scope of possible decisions to a small number of offensive responses. Unfortunately, this is exactly the outcome that terrorists are interested in.

This process is reinforced by the fact that the angry leaders naturally seek the advice of the security establishment. Most military and intelligence officers are trained to see any challenge from a narrow offensive perspective, and do not have a full grasp of the political and social causes and implications of terrorism and counterterrorism. Thus, they are likely to provide policymakers with a relatively limited set of aggressive options for response.

In past wars, the enemy was identifiable, the rules of engagement were clear, and victory was easy to measure. The struggle against terrorism presents intelligence and military officers with unprecedented challenges. The heads of the security establishment are first faced with the challenge of identifying an elusive enemy. In many cases, the same sub-state actors that perpetrate terrorism, such as Hezbollah, Hamas, the IRA, and ETA, are also involved in local politics and even social activities. They rarely wear uniforms and they operate from civilian population centers. Thus, the reliance on signal and visual intelligence, which is highly effective in the struggle against ordered armies, becomes secondary to human intelligence. In other words, technology is at best only a supplement in solving the intelligence puzzle.

After identifying the terrorists, comes the challenge of understanding their motivations and goals. What state actors, especially in the West, perceive as rational does not necessarily reflect the preferences of sub-state actors in other cultures. Therefore, it is very hard to make assumptions regarding the true motivations of the terrorists, identify their vulnerabilities and predict their future steps. This requires intelligence analysts who speak the relevant languages, have a deep understanding of other cultures and are capable of transforming their knowledge into policy alternatives.

But even a clear intelligence picture and a good policy are not enough. Modern militaries are not

structured or trained to respond to 21st-century terrorism. They are trained to fight wars with other armies. Even elite counterterrorism units and SWAT teams are more suitable for coping with past scenarios such as hostage-taking crises than with suicide bombers. Thus, the expectations that the armed forces can carry out successful counterterrorism operations are not entirely realistic.

The reliance on the armed forces also takes a high toll in other national security areas. The resources which are needed for countering terrorism are diverted from other military units and projects, which often are more vital from strategic and national security points of view.

In the Israeli case, the best example is the misuse of Sayeret Matkal, a highly trained intelligence recon unit, the main goal of which is to supply detailed intelligence for operations like the one against the Syrian nuclear facility in 2007. This unit also has been deployed for rescue, kidnapping and assassination missions since the late 1960s. After a series of failures, especially in rescue missions, Israel formed an elite police counterterrorism unit (Yamam), with the sole purpose of carrying out counterterrorism related operations. Yet, Sayeret Matkal's commanders know that successful counterterrorism operations, unlike clandestine recon operations, are much more visible and likely to sustain the unit's reputation and flow of resources. So they use their political ties in policymaking circles to keep on being assigned such operations. This leaves the Yamam counterterrorism experts, who have far less political clout, frustrated and marginalized.

As I indicated earlier, terrorism is merely one tactic that is employed by groups which simultaneously use other strategies, most commonly guerrilla warfare. The LTTE ("Tamil Tigers") in Sri Lanka, the PLO in the 1970s and Hezbollah today are the best examples of highly versatile groups in terms of strategies, tactics and weapons. It is very hard to declare a war on a tactic, and thus the majority of wars against terrorism turn quickly into extended counterinsurgency operations.

While the state enjoys superiority in technology and firepower, the insurgents usually fight within a well-known territory and easily assimilate among non-combatants. This leads the states to use air strikes and artillery attacks and thus to cause collateral damage amongst civilians. This vicious cycle eventually enhances popular support for the insurgents, as was reflected in Israel's 2006 war in Lebanon and 2009 war in Gaza. In most cases, after a long war of attrition, the state, which launched the attack and refused to negotiate with the terrorists, will cut a deal with them either through direct or indirect negotiations. In terms of winning or losing, such a scenario actually strengthens those who initiated the campaign of terror in the first place.

Clearly, these failures raise the question of whether the resources now being spent on counterterrorism operations shouldn't be allocated to other national security needs, while thinking "outside the box" on creative ways to cope with terrorism.

[3]Order from Publisher | [4]Amazon | [5]Excerpt

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/government/faculty/profiles/Pedahzur/Ami/>

2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/519h3m9cj-L.jpg>

3.

[http:](http://cup.columbia.edu/book/978-0-231-14042-3/the-israeli-secret-services-and-the-struggle-against-terrorism)

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4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0231140428>

5.

[http://cup.columbia.edu/book/978-0-231-14042-3/](http://cup.columbia.edu/book/978-0-231-14042-3/the-israeli-secret-services-and-the-struggle-against-terrorism/excerpt)

[the-israeli-secret-services-and-the-struggle-against-terrorism/excerpt](http://cup.columbia.edu/book/978-0-231-14042-3/the-israeli-secret-services-and-the-struggle-against-terrorism/excerpt)

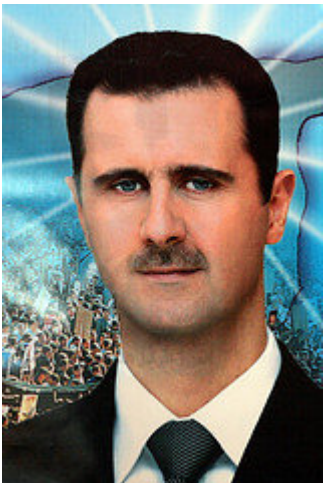
Walter Laqueur (2009-03-25 14:48:02)

I read Ami Pedahzur's [1]post with interest and look forward to reading his book. I agree with him that armies are not the best instrument to deal with terrorism. I also agree that it is much cheaper in every respect to negotiate with terrorists than to fight them. But it all depends on what the terrorists want and whether their demands can be satisfied at not too high a price. For this reason (and for some others), generalizations can be misleading. And it is also for this reason that Israeli successes and failures are only of limited relevance with regard to other places. "Most democracies," Pedahzur writes, "end up negotiating with terrorists on a frequent basis and cut deals with them." It happened in Northern Ireland (one hopes the arrangement will last), but there were no deals in Spain, France, Germany, Italy or other democracies. What happened (and happens) outside Europe is yet another story. Wherever overwhelming power is employed without restraints (Chechnya, Homs and Hama to give but two examples), the terrorists are defeated. But democratic countries cannot usually act this way, unless their very existence is at stake. In other words, there is one law for countries laboring under the handicap of restraints, and those (the majority) who do not. As for the latter, the rules of "asymmetric warfare" do not apply. I am willing to predict with some confidence that there is no future for terrorism in China unless central state power disintegrates. [2]Walter Laqueur is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/the-israeli-secret-services-and-the-struggle-against-terrorism/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_laqueur/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_laqueur/)

## Syria, Israel, and Bush (2009-03-25 14:57)

From [1]David Schenker



Earlier this month, the Saban Center at Brookings published a [2]monograph by Itamar Rabinovich titled *Damascus, Jerusalem, and Washington: The Syrian-Israeli Relationship as a U.S. Policy Issue*. Rabinovich, a distinguished Israeli academic and former diplomat, has been a longtime analyst of the Israeli-Syrian peace track. Based on the title, I had expected to read a proposal for how Washington might best advance Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations.

But the paper doesn't make a proposal. Instead, the study focuses on the history of the Israeli-Syrian track and the U.S.-Syrian bilateral relationship since 1974, concluding with four short scenarios of how that relationship might evolve.

Rabinovich is a highly regarded historian of Syria (he has just published a very readable [3]collection of his essays on the subject), and there is little with which to quibble in his description of U.S.-Syria-Israel dealings from 1974 to 2001. But his analysis of Bush-era Syria policy rests on a subtle presumption that the Bush administration erred in refusing to engage with Damascus. The stage is set in the preface, where

Rabinovich critiques the Bush administration's policy "neither to engage with nor attack [Syria], but to seek soft ways of penalizing it [that] failed to work."

Rabinovich could have been a bit more charitable. After all, Israeli efforts to engage Damascus in the 1990s (in which he took part) not only failed to deliver any benefits, but resulted in the strengthened position of Hezbollah in Lebanon and the erosion of Israeli deterrence. But the main problem with this paper is that the author tends to downplay the Syrian contribution to the impasse in U.S.-Syrian relations, by a method that might be described as argument by elision and omission. Here are a few examples.

- Syria in Iraq. Rabinovich notes that in September 2008, Secretary of State Rice commended the Syrians for (in Rabinovich's words) "taking serious steps to seal their border with Iraq." "In contrast to Rice," he complains, "Bush persisted with his anti-Syrian, anti-Asad view and conduct."

In fact, Bush had good cause to "persist." The very month when Rice made her comment, Maj.-Gen. John Kelly, Commander of MNF-West in Iraq, [4]said this in a press conference:

The Syrian side is, I guess, uncontrolled by their side... The Iraqi security forces and the Iraqi intelligence forces feel that al Qaeda operatives and others operate, live pretty openly on the Syrian side... Syria is problematic for me but, more importantly, for the Iraqis because it doesn't seem that there's much being done on the other side of the border to assist this country in terms of maintaining the border and the integrity of, you know, Iraqi sovereignty.

It was immediately subsequent to Rice's praise of Syria's border measures that the United States launched a commando strike that killed a senior Al Qaeda operative on Syrian territory.

Syria's role in abetting the killing of Americans in Iraq was probably the central issue in the U.S. approach to Syria during the Bush years. Bush "persisted" not because he was "anti-Syrian" or "anti-Asad," but because progress in Iraq depended on persistence against its opponents, which Syria chose to become. Even Bush's critics now acknowledge that such U.S. persistence in Iraq has paid off.

- Syria-Iran. Rabinovich cites the President's September 2007 UN General Assembly address, claiming that Bush "lump[ed] it [Syria] together with Iran." In English, one "lumps together" unlike things that should rightly be separated. But in retrospect, Bush's rhetorical linkage of Damascus to Tehran was well warranted. The speech came just weeks after the discovery and September 7, 2007 destruction of the illegal Syrian nuclear facility in Kibar. As it turns out, if [5]recent reports are to be believed, the North Korean-built facility was financed by Iran.

In fact, it has been Syria which has been keen to "lump" itself with Iran, and which has issued repeated assurances that it will not be "de-lumped." As Syrian President Bashar al-Asad [6]explained just last month, Syria-Iranian relations

are firm and continuously improving; they are strategic relations, which have proved their efficiency and importance in all of the issues which our region has been passing through since the Revolution in Iran in 1979. They are not transitory relations. We have no option but to be in a stable and enduring relation[ship].

Last September, Press TV [7] reported that Asad compared Syria's relations with Iran to Israel's relations with the United States. "Israel's demand [that Damascus cut ties with Tehran] ," he said, "is the equivalent of Syria requesting Israel to break its relations with the United States." Could Syrian and Iran be more closely "lumped" together?

(Parenthetically, Rabinovich misattributes the reason the Bush administration revealed the details of the Kibar operation in spring 2008. He says the administration released this information to "embarrass the Syrians and their North Korean suppliers." But the Bush administration didn't embark on a gotcha effort to embarrass anyone. The precipitating cause of the revelation was Congressional demands for information on the Israeli strike. If there was a secondary motive, it had to do with putting pressure on Iran.)

- Pelosi visit. When Rabinovich discusses House speaker Nancy Pelosi's pilgrimage to Damascus in 2007, he merely notes that it provoked President Bush, and caused "a brief strain in the relationship" between the United States and Israel, which endorsed the trip. He doesn't mention the regrettable and predictable aftermath of the visit: the incarceration of several leading members of Syrian civil society. The Bush administration didn't oppose such legitimizing gestures out of pique, but in the full realization that the price would be paid by Syrians.

Omissions in the monograph extend beyond presentation of Bush policy, to two other crucial points: Syria's relationship to Hezbollah, and Israeli opinion on the Golan.

- Syria-Hezbollah. Rabinovich treats the 2006 war with Hezbollah as an isolated incident, as though Syria were uninvolved. There is no mention whatsoever of the weapons that Syria provided directly from its own arsenal to the Shiite militia, including, most prominently, the Syrian-produced 220 mm rocket—one of which hit the main train station in Haifa, killing ten Israelis—and the Syrian provision of top-of-the-line Russian anti-tank Kornet missiles to Hezbollah that disabled several IDF Merkava tanks, killing several IDF soldiers. Damascus played a crucial role in building Hezbollah's impressive arsenal, eventually deployed against Israel during the 2006 war. One wouldn't know that from this paper.

- Golan. Rabinovich notes that in Israel's most recent election campaign, "right wing parties were vociferous in their opposition to withdrawal from the Golan Heights," as though such opposition were a fringe sentiment. He does not mention that this is widely believed to be the predominant opinion of Israelis. In fact, according to polling, the vast majority of Israelis would rather divide Jerusalem for peace with Palestinians than return the Golan for a Syria deal.

The concluding section on "Lessons for the Obama Administration" similarly seems to argue by omission. Instead of discussing the elephant in the room—the nature and likelihood of a potential Syrian reorientation or the kind of changes Syria would have to effect to make a deal with Israel feasible—Rabinovich refers to unnamed Syrian officials who have "alluded to the position that Syria's alliance with Iran is not fixed and that it is mostly a result of Washington's rejection of Syria."

It's a remarkable line—blaming Syria's relationship with Iran entirely on Washington—yet Rabinovich lets it stand uncontested. He could have identified dozens of other quotes by the same officials—even by President Asad himself—claiming that the alliance is fixed, and is based on shared objectives. "We do not belong to those states which build temporary, transitional or circumstantial relations," Asad [8] told Iranian TV in September. "We do have our principles, and interests; thus the factors binding Syria and Iran are increased and more solid day by day." Why isn't that also worth quoting?

In summation, the triangle of relations that Rabinovich attempts to describe is enormously complex. Yet from reading this paper, one gets the sense that Israel and Syria might already have a peace treaty, were it

not for President Bush. Rabinovich knows far too much about Syria not to know better. One hopes that his next paper will shift the focus to decision-making in Damascus.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david\\_schenker/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david_schenker/)
2. [http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2009/03\\_syria\\_israel\\_rabinovich.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2009/03_syria_israel_rabinovich.aspx)
3. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/11/the-view-from-damascus/>
4. <http://www.defenselink.mil//transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4309>
5. <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1072478.html>
6. [http://www.presidentassad.net/INTERVIEWS/A1\\_Assad\\_Interviews\\_2009/Bashar\\_A1-Assad\\_A1\\_Manar\\_TV\\_Interview\\_January\\_26\\_2009.htm](http://www.presidentassad.net/INTERVIEWS/A1_Assad_Interviews_2009/Bashar_A1-Assad_A1_Manar_TV_Interview_January_26_2009.htm)
7. <http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=70965&sectionid=351020101>
8. [http://www.presidentassad.net/INTERVIEWS/Bashar\\_A1\\_Assad\\_Iran\\_TV\\_Interview\\_September\\_17\\_2008.htm](http://www.presidentassad.net/INTERVIEWS/Bashar_A1_Assad_Iran_TV_Interview_September_17_2008.htm)

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David Schenker (2009-03-28 14:34:04)

I welcome Professor Rabinovich's earlier [1]response to my [2]post. Our disagreement, I believe, is not on being tough or soft on Syria. The fact that the Syrians are not today dipping their toes in the Sea of Galilee is because the Israelis kept to certain red lines in their past negotiations, and I am sure that Professor Rabinovich was a central actor in keeping Israel vigilant to those red lines. Moreover, our disagreement is not over the wisdom or efficacy of Bush administration policy. Indeed, I do not disagree with much of what Rabinovich writes about the shortcomings of the policy, in particular, his observations that the administration "did not always speak or act with one voice," and that Washington's credibility suffered as a result of "empty threats." Rather, I believe the core of our disagreement is over whether engagement is essentially a one-way or two-way conversation. For example, in my previous post, I cited three comments from Asad on key policy issues; in Professor Rabinovich's Saban Center [3]paper, President Bush, Prime Minister Olmert, UN Special Envoy Terje Rod Larsen, and Saban Center Director Martin Indyk are quoted, but no Syrian official is ever quoted. The distinction is important because it underscores a central problem with the current debate on engagement with Syria: So many in Washington are so busy listening to themselves and the Israelis that they have stopped listening to what the Syrians are saying. In this surreal debate, people are no longer analyzing from a shared base of evidence. Truth be told, I have been broadly [4]supportive of the Administration's preliminary handling of the engagement with Syria. But to discuss engagement—or the trilateral relationship between Jerusalem, Damascus, and Washington—without even looking at what the Syrians themselves are saying about strategic reorientation, presents an incomplete and, I believe, misleading picture. In the context of engagement, I think Michael Rubin [5]asks the right questions. The Obama administration has set out to "test" Syria. Yet the Syrians ostensibly are saying publicly that they intend to fail the test. How are we going to judge the outcome and in what timeframe? Based on our experience with Damascus, it's safe to say that the process will not be quick, and that Syria will be playing for time. As such, the NSC/State NEA needs to set some explicit benchmarks regarding discernable changes of behavior, and be clear when expectations are not met. In the meanwhile, until sufficient changes in Syrian policy are effected, sanctions should remain in place. If engagement doesn't achieve results, the Obama administration should have in place a contingency plan, including, among other options, a return to the Bush-era policy of pressure and isolation. (My colleague John Hannah articulated this point in fuller detail during a [6]talk last month). I have written a paper discussing Washington's preliminary outreach to Syria for the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs ([7]here). The paper assesses how Syria has responded, both in actions and words, to the Administration's new policy of engagement. I thank Michael and Professor Rabinovich for their comments. Professor Rabinovich has written an important and useful paper on U.S.-Israel-Syrian engagement. It is not, in my view, the final word on the topic. Nor, I assume, is this thread. [8]David Schenker is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/syria-israel-and-bush/#comment-1938>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/syria-israel-and-bush/>
3. [http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2009/03\\_syria\\_israel\\_rabinovich.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2009/03_syria_israel_rabinovich.aspx)
4. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=3017>
5. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/syria-israel-and-bush/#comment-1945>
6. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=3030>



7. [http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DRIT=1&DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=376&PID=0&IID=2905&TTL=The\\_Obama\\_Administration\\_Reaches\\_Out\\_to\\_Syria:\\_Implications\\_for\\_Israel](http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DRIT=1&DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=376&PID=0&IID=2905&TTL=The_Obama_Administration_Reaches_Out_to_Syria:_Implications_for_Israel)

8. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david\\_schenker/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david_schenker/)

Itamar Rabinovich (2009-03-27 10:11:45)

I would like to thank Michael Rubin for his thoughtful [1]comments. My understanding of the Bush policy is as follows. Clinton's policy was predicated on an effort to reach Arab-Israeli peace while containing Iran and Iraq. The Bush policy reversed the logic by trying to subdue the two rogue elephants in the eastern part of the Middle East, expecting that once this happened, it would be easier to promote Arab-Israeli peace. The ideological dimension lay in the expectation that the spread of democracy in the region would transform it. In this context I would like to say that in my view the Bush administration was right to reject the Baker-Hamilton report. As for the Pelosi trip to Damascus, I see it as a political step designed to show President Bush after the Democratic victory in Congress that he could not make foreign policy on his own. Gingrich did the same to Clinton after November 1994 when he suspended the debt relief to Jordan. As for Syrian conduct, the litany of misdeeds is long, and is detailed in the paper: the conduct in Iraq and Lebanon, supporting Hezbollah and Hamas, building a nuclear reactor with North Korean help, etc. It is also important that the Asads have always tried to straddle the line. Both the United States and Israel have had a hard time dealing with this penchant. The Saban paper was an "analysis paper," and as such did not offer policy advice. But when it comes to the present, I would say the following. The key question is whether Syria is willing to reorient its policies, build a new relationship with Washington, make peace with Israel, distance itself from Iran, stop supporting Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad and respect Lebanon's sovereignty (realizing that Syria will always have a great deal of influence in Lebanon). This can only be established through two coordinated channels of U.S.-Syrian and Israeli-Syrian negotiations (or pre-negotiations). Israel should insist on direct negotiations. The Syrians will probably try to straddle the line, and the task of the U.S. and Israeli policy-makers and negotiators is going to be particularly arduous. [2]*Itamar Rabinovich was Israel's chief negotiator with Syria.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/syria-israel-and-bush/#comment-1943>

2. [http://www.hks.harvard.edu/about/faculty-staff-directory/itamar-rabinovich/\(page\)/faculty](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/about/faculty-staff-directory/itamar-rabinovich/(page)/faculty)

Michael Rubin (2009-03-27 09:07:05)

After reading the [1]exchange between David Schenker and Itamar Rabinovich, as well as Ambassador Rabinovich's [2]paper, I hope he can further clarify his responses, beyond dismissing Schenker's points as a misreading. In the West, it is tempting for officials to place blame for diplomatic failure more on predecessors or successors, rather than on their adversary. It appears that Rabinovich treats the Syrian regime too much as a passive template. The decision not to progress in peace lies more in Damascus than in Washington. Rabinovich writes: "The dominant strand in the Bush Administration's Middle East policy reversed the Clinton approach and replaced it with a mixture of ideology and Realpolitik.... In immediate terms, the new strategy meant a loss of interest in both the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian tracks of the peace process." At best, this is an oversimplified reading. The Bush administration did not lose interest, but it valued accountability. The Clinton administration tried to flip Syria but, by the end of their term, officials acknowledged that Asad appeared more interested in winning concessions through process than ever reaching peace. Meanwhile, the frequency of shuttle devalued it as a tool. "Doing nothing" does not mean a lack of interest, but rather a decision to determine Syrian intentions and base relations on Syrian behavior rather than simply its rhetoric. Perhaps Rabinovich sees the Bush approach as too laced with ideology, but this is backward. To embrace engagement as always positive and to read sincerity into an opponent's engagement undercuts reality and, indeed, is a far more destructive ideological prism. Bush certainly embraced an end to Syrian terrorism—Damascus' protection of Imad Mughniyeh certainly calls into question Syrian assistance in the war on terrorism—but, when it came to peace, that decision rests solely in Damascus and, as I've outlined [3]here, abandoning rejectionism is not a decision I believe Asad will make, although I understand Rabinovich interprets Syrian history and strategic interests differently. As a side note, to criticize Bush for not embracing the Baker-Hamilton Commission report is unfair; the Commission was [4]flawed. Certainly, Rabinovich—a veteran official of different administrations—understands how politicians and officials gerrymander commissions to reach conclusions. The report's section on Syria—not run through the Commission or its experts—was written Edward Djerejian, a former U.S. ambassador to Syria, who has personal interest in lifting sanctions on Syria. In retrospect, Bush appears wise to have rejected many of its Iraq recommendations and instead embrace the surge. As to engaging Iran, the Bush administration did this with, at best, checkered success. David Schenker is also right to note that Pelosi's visit to Syria, rather than advancing dialogue, undercut the pressure upon which effective diplomacy is based. If Congressional dialogue was effective, U.S. Senator Arlen Specter might have something positive to show for his [5]15 tax-payer funded trips to Damascus. That said, I am in awe of Rabinovich's

expertise and experience. While he writes, “Policy recommendations for the current time are an altogether different matter,” I would certainly encourage him to outline these at some point, even if they are not covered in his Saban Center paper. [6]*Michael Rubin is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/syria-israel-and-bush/>
2. [http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2009/03\\_syria\\_israel\\_rabinovich.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2009/03_syria_israel_rabinovich.aspx)
3. [http://www.forbes.com/2008/11/12/syria-assad-obama-oped-cx\\_mr\\_1112rubin.html](http://www.forbes.com/2008/11/12/syria-assad-obama-oped-cx_mr_1112rubin.html)
4. <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/012/850ulqxz.asp>
5. <http://www.michaelrubin.org/1027/specter-colleagues-travel-abroad-but-bid-for-dialogue>
6. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_rubin/)

Michael Rubin (2009-03-27 10:43:59)

I thank Ambassador Rabinovich for his [1]response, with which I find nothing to argue. However, I would like to press Ambassador Rabinovich or David Schenker—or any other MESH members—further. Ambassador Rabinovich writes: “The key question is whether Syria is willing to reorient its policies, build a new relationship with Washington, make peace with Israel, distance itself from Iran, stop supporting Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad and respect Lebanon’s sovereignty (realizing that Syria will always have a great deal of influence in Lebanon). This can only be established through two coordinated channels of U.S.-Syrian and Israeli-Syrian negotiations (or pre-negotiations).” I agree that “The Syrians will probably try to straddle the line,” but: (a) What criteria should Washington and Jerusalem use to determine Syrian sincerity and in what time frame? After all, open-ended engagement is an invitation to delay and devalues diplomacy’s impact. (b) What parallel methods of coercion should support diplomacy? Sanctions, other forms of pressure? (c) What policy should be pursued if Washington and Jerusalem again conclude that Damascus is insincere? To call for (re)engagement without considering these other factors—something I’d argue the Obama administration appears guilty of across the board with regard to Syria and other adversarial states—can be counterproductive. [2]*Michael Rubin is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/syria-israel-and-bush/#comment-1943>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_rubin/)

Itamar Rabinovich (2009-03-25 15:13:33)

I was genuinely sorry to read David Schenker’s [1]post on my paper. There are no two ways about it: either I cannot write or he cannot read. I do not intend to go point by point, but most of Mr. Schenker’s complaints are based on a misreading of my text. To take one example, he complains that I imply that the Bush administration bore the blame for the impasse with Syria by not engaging Damascus. He then quotes the sentence from the paper which criticizes the administration for failing to take a clear course of *either* taking on Syria in an effective fashion or engaging it. I do criticize the administration for taking a middle course, which lacked the cutting edge and effectiveness of a clear-cut policy. I could proceed, point by point, to demonstrate that Mr. Schenker either misunderstood me or quoted me out of context in order to impose his bias on the subject matter. I urge those interested in the subject to read the paper ([2]click here), and see for themselves. Underlying the post is the implicit assumption that I am “soft” on Syria, allow the Syrians to get away with their misdeeds, etc. I am a former negotiator with Syria but I am not “soft” on Syria. I do not think that one could read my paper and walk away with the feeling that I have a benign view of Syria’s record or that I wish to “give away the store” to the Syrians. One thing is true: I do not offer a prescription for dealing with Syria now. I was invited by the Saban Center to write the particular paper that I wrote. Policy recommendations for the current time are an altogether different matter. [3]*Itamar Rabinovich was Israel’s chief negotiator with Syria.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/syria-israel-and-bush/>
2. [http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2009/03\\_syria\\_israel\\_rabinovich.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2009/03_syria_israel_rabinovich.aspx)
3. [http://www.hks.harvard.edu/about/faculty-staff-directory/itamar-rabinovich/\(page\)/faculty](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/about/faculty-staff-directory/itamar-rabinovich/(page)/faculty)

## Egypt and Israel plus thirty (2009-03-26 15:20)

From [1]Harvey Sicherman



Churchill once observed that "jaw-jaw" was better than "war-war." This advice has not been taken very often in the Middle East. Indeed, so rare is it that the very act of "jaw-jaw" has been celebrated as a breakthrough even if not very much—except a process—results from it.

March 26, however, marks the 30th anniversary of both a very successful process and an enduring agreement. The Egyptian-Israeli Treaty has survived assassination, war, and recession. This history holds important lessons as yet another American administration tries to reach for Arab-Israeli peace. The ingredients for success are easy to state: (1) two leaders who have convinced each other that they want an agreement and are capable of carrying one out; (2) an American president willing to reduce their risks in doing so and to mediate personally if necessary; and (3) reasonable expectations, rather than legal perfection, about the results.

No one would say that Egyptian-Israeli relations are the warmest. The cultural exchanges foreseen by the Treaty have never materialized. There is also plenty of diplomatic friction. But the essentials have held and, at its bare minimum, the Treaty still reflects a mutual determination to avoid war. It may sometimes look like a peace of the generals, but it is still peace.

Can this Treaty and its relative, the Israeli-Jordanian Peace (1994), be replicated with others? Israel and Syria would seem to be the best candidates if—always the "if"—the parties have really convinced each other they want a fair deal. On the Palestinian track, however, no one thinks that Abu Mazen can deliver his side of the bargain even if he wants one. And there are corrosive doubts that the risks from Iran and its surrogates can be reduced by the United States. That is where we will continue to be unless the new administration somehow curtails Tehran. And a failure on that score will have dangerous repercussions for the Egyptian-Israeli relationship as well.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey\\_sicherman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey_sicherman/)

### A government in Israel, for now (2009-03-30 07:48)

From [1]Alan Dowty



Having induced the Labor party to enter his coalition, Prime

Minister-designate Binyamin Netanyahu is scheduled to present his new government on Tuesday. The unwieldy result of his labors is a coalition of five parties with 69 seats, or 74 if he succeeds in adding the ultra-Orthodox United Torah Jewry between now and then.

Netanyahu will thus become the fifth prime minister in Israel's history to make a comeback after having lost the office or left it under duress. The persistence of familiar faces in Israeli politics may say something about the stability of the political order—or the way in which the system stifles the emergence of new leaders.

Netanyahu bought Labor support by, among other things, offering no fewer than five ministries to a party that holds only 13 seats in the Knesset, setting a new standard for the ratio of ministers to seats. Applying the same arithmetic to his deals with Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beitenu and the Sephardi ultra-orthodox Shas party, he now faces the impossible task of finding available chairs at the cabinet table for all of the Likud worthies who deem themselves deserving of the honor. Consequently this may be the most bloated government ever, with as many as 28 ministers and seven deputy ministers; in other words, nearly one of every three Knesset members may be in the government.

Even after splitting existing ministries in two, for the sole purpose of creating new posts in the cabinet, and appointing ministers without portfolio, some key Likud figures will be left out in the game of musical chairs. Netanyahu's first distraction, therefore, will be possible major defections in his own party. He may, as he did in 1996, delay delivering the bad news to those being left out until an hour or two before presenting his government.

But that will not be the last coalition crisis. As many as five or six of the Labor members of Knesset might defect from the coalition, and in any event the by-laws of the Labor party require a new primary election for party leadership within 14 months of losing in a general election. Given the discontent within the party against Ehud Barak's leadership, his tenure as defense minister could easily be cut short a little over a year from now, and in that case Netanyahu would need either Kadima or United Torah Jewry in order to retain a majority.

But that will not be the last crisis. By some accounts, the long-pending investigation of Avigdor Lieberman for corruption may soon come to a head, and if he is indicted he would be forced to resign from his promised position as foreign minister. Without Lieberman, it is unclear whether Yisrael Beitenu would hold together or remain as the second party in the government.

Nor is that the last likely crisis. The militantly secular Yisrael Beitenu and Shas are miles apart on many issues, but especially on the issue of conversions and civil marriage. Reportedly a committee will be appointed to find a compromise acceptable to both sides—an unlikely proposition by all accounts. If it does not achieve this goal in 15 months, Yisrael Beitenu will be free to pursue its own program. So expect fireworks in a year or so.

Given this tricky agenda, it is not surprising that Tzipi Livni has predicted that the government will last no more than a year, and on that basis has confidently led the Kadima party into expectant opposition. What may be surprising is the nature of the challenges that Netanyahu must overcome in order to stabilize his government: domestic and political rather than foreign and security-related. Since there is no Palestinian partner at present with whom a credible settlement could be negotiated and, more importantly, implemented, the new government will not have to contend with the kind of fierce international (especially U.S.) pressure that some have naively predicted.

Instead, Netanyahu will probably push the Syrian channel as a substitute to deflect what pressure

there is. The Syrian option has much going for it, so much so that the last six Israeli prime ministers (including Netanyahu in his first incarnation) have all given it a try. The main obstacle is that Likud's platform rejects withdrawal from the Golan Heights, without which there is no point talking with Syria. But Netanyahu proved to be an opportunist the first time around, so who knows?

In any event, the foreign priority for any Israeli government will be the Iranian nuclear issue, not the Palestinians or Syria.

And almost lost in the shuffle is the announcement that Israel has carried out a successful test of its Iron Dome defense system against short- and medium-range missiles, a system projected to offer 95-percent protection of areas bordering Gaza. This is potentially of much greater significance than any of the current political horseplay.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)

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### In the name of Islam: a liberal appeal (2009-03-30 17:00)

From [1]Soner Cagaptay



A trap awaits Turkey analysts seeking to explain rising anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism in Turkey. There is a tendency to look into the historic roots of both phenomena and to explain both as hardwired in the Turkish polity, not as products of current politics.

To be sure, there are anti-Western instincts in Turkish nationalism, not unlike most post-Ottoman nationalisms. Turkey has had past episodes of anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism as well. However, these phenomena were never grassroots movements and never politically sanctioned. Moreover, the Turks have historically supported strong ties with the United States. They also did not oppose intimate ties with Israel, which Turkey recognized in 1949.

Today, though, this is no longer the case, as the Turks view the United States as the country's chief enemy. A recent poll shows that 44 percent of the Turks consider the United States the biggest threat to Turkey. And the number of people in the country who have anti-Semitic views is rising dramatically. In 2004, 49 percent of the Turks said they did not want a Jewish neighbor; in 2009, this number climbed to 76 percent.

So why are the Turks suddenly spiteful towards the United States and Israel, Americans and Jews? Anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism are surging in Turkey because the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government sanctions both phenomena. This combination of anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism is not a coincidence. The Islamist thinking is as follows: The Jews are evil, they run America, and therefore

America is evil.

Take, for instance, the billboards that Istanbul's AKP government put up during the Gaza war in Istanbul's mixed Muslim-Jewish neighborhoods. These oversized billboards depicted a burnt-out child's sneaker, with a sign saying "humanity is slaughtered in Palestine" over it. Under the sneaker, in large print, the billboard quoted the Old Testament commandment "Thou shall not kill" and added "You cannot be the Children of Moses." What on earth does the Gaza war have to do with Jewish law? Is it an accident that a day after these billboards appeared in Istanbul's cosmopolitan Nisantasi neighborhood, vigilantes distributed fliers calling for a boycott of Jewish businesses? Or that the next day, Jewish businesses in the neighborhood took down their names?

The outrage sparked by the Gaza war has failed to subside. In early February, the AKP government of Istanbul opened a cartoon exhibit in the city's downtown Taksim Square metro station—Taksim Square is to Istanbul what Times Square is to New York City—which included many cartons depicting bloodthirsty Israelis killing Palestinians with American help, such as one in which a satanic-looking Israeli soldier with white pupils washes the blood on his hands of a faucet, labeled the United States. Each month, millions of Turks pass through the Taksim metro station—a government-owned public service.

Unsurprisingly, such black propaganda is not without consequences. A sage once told me that a society is truly anti-Semitic when teachers say bad things about Jews in school. Last month, a group of Turkish schoolteachers distributed sweets in the Central Anatolian town of Kayseri to commemorate Hitler's blessed memory. During the Gaza war, Israelis, including Israeli teenagers who were visiting Turkey to play volleyball, were attacked. Shops plastered signs on their windows, saying that "Americans and Israelis may not enter." What is more, Turkish Jews felt physically threatened for the first time since they found refuge in the bosom of the Ottoman Empire.

All this has nothing to do with whatever historic causes one might seek for such developments. Popular anti-Semitism is driven in Turkey by the acts of the AKP government—and that is a fact. Analysts should follow Turkey's current politics closely in explaining the Turks' shifting political attitudes. If we fail to point out how anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism are spiked up by the AKP, once such sentiments lay roots, we will have no other explanation but to say that anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism are intrinsic to Turkish society and, god forbid, the Turks' religion, Islam.

I call on fellow liberals to think twice before they bypass Turkey's political transformation and turn to historicizing anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism in Turkey. The surge of these sentiments since 2002 demonstrates that, when in power, Islamists can corrupt even the most liberal of the Muslim societies. The singular example of a Muslim society that is friendly towards Jews and Americans risks disappearing in front of our eyes if we do not point out the political nature of Turkey's current transformation.

If we ignore the political forces changing Turkey today, others will blame the change on the Turks and Islam tomorrow.

MESH Pointer: See the earlier thread, [2]Behind the blow-out at Davos.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/soner-cagaptay/>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/02/behind-the-blow-out-at-davos/>

Alvin H. Rosenfeld (2009-04-03 09:41:21)

During a recent visit to Istanbul, I learned first-hand the results of the political manipulation of anti-Semitism that Soner Cagaptay describes in [1]his post. The outpourings of hatred against Israel and, especially at the street level, also against Jews during the time of the Gaza fighting rattled the nerves of Turkey's Jews, many of whom had never before encountered popular anti-Semitism of this kind and were stunned by its ferocity. To be sure, Turkey was hardly alone in witnessing large demonstrations of public anger leveled against Israel and those who allegedly comprise its supporting "lobbies." Manifestations of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic animosity took place on the streets of cities throughout Europe, the Middle East, and elsewhere. Few, if any, however, surpassed the size, determination, and passion of anti-Jewish hostility on display in Istanbul and some of Turkey's other towns. Moreover, these raw feelings were not confined only to organized street demonstrations but spilled over into the country's schools, shops, work-places, newspapers and television stations, etc. In short, while Turkey was only one player in a newly globalized movement of extreme hostility focused on Israel and the Jews, the country stood out for what appeared to be an effort to stimulate and spread such aggressive feelings. None of Turkey's Jews was physically assaulted, and its major institutions, which are heavily secured, received no damage. But many of the community's members, finding themselves on the receiving end of such an angry onslaught, were made to feel not just uneasy but unwanted. In seeking to account for this disturbing state of affairs, Soner Cagaptay looks away from history and towards politics. Given recent political developments in the country, he is not wrong to do so, although a truly comprehensive explanation would have to look back in time and acknowledge periods of relatively good relations between Jews and Muslims but also some extremely tense and even destructive times. There were periods when Jews suffered as the result of discriminatory government policies against minorities in general, such as the levying of special taxes on non-Muslim Turkish nationals (1942), which proved to be ruinous for many Jews. At other times, Jews have been specifically targeted as such: in earlier decades there were anti-Jewish riots in some parts of the country; and recent years have seen lethal terrorist assaults against Turkish synagogues and assassination attempts against prominent figures in the Jewish community. Despite the often heralded "tolerance" that Ottoman rulers extended to the Jews, all has not been entirely just and amicable over the generations. Had it been so, the size of Turkey's Jewish population — once numbering perhaps 90,000 souls — would be a lot larger than the roughly 20,000 it is today. Nevertheless, Cagaptay is correct to put the blame for the worst of today's anti-Semitic developments on the country's political leadership headed by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey's present prime minister, whose penchant for using incendiary language may have been a prod to the open release of anti-Jewish sentiments within nationalist and Islamist segments of Turkish society. When a country's prime minister charges that "Israel's barbarity is beyond cruelty," that "Israel has become a country of bandits" and is guilty of "crimes against humanity," that "Israelis" (or Jews) "know very well how to kill," and that "sooner or later, Allah will punish [them]," his inflammatory messages will not be lost on his supporters, numbers of whom are likely to take their cue from their nation's leader and act accordingly. Add to these pernicious charges the irresponsible accusation that Jews "control the media" and "disseminate false reports on what is happening," and the picture, already ugly, becomes worse still. Much of the overwrought rhetoric cited above appeared in the run-up to Turkey's municipal elections, which have just concluded. Some commentators interpret the Turkish prime minister's harsh words as intentionally aimed to improve his party's chances with the electorate. (If so, the tactic seems to have failed, for the AKP fared less well in this election than in the previous one.) Others see Erdoğan's rough treatment of Israel's Shimon Peres at Davos as exposing more visceral, less politically calculated impulses. Whatever his motives, Erdoğan's encouragement of popular anti-Semitism can only damage his country internally and make it appear to be an unreliable actor on the international stage. He himself seems to have recognized as much when he belatedly issued a much-publicized statement declaring, "Those who think to act against Jews will have to face me." This stern warning was highlighted in some of the mass media, which also registered a cautionary note about the damaging effects of popular anti-Semitism, noting that it is bad for the country and should be restrained. No one knows for sure what lies ahead, but a couple of conclusions might be drawn from these unnerving events. One has long been known: anti-Semitism is nothing for people in positions of leadership to fool around with, for when released into society, it will have predictably toxic effects. Those on the receiving end of such venom will suffer, but in different ways, so, too, will those who use anti-Semitism for their own ends. Pursuing a politics of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish incitement may elevate Turkey's Islamist image in Iran and win Erdoğan favor in parts of the Arab world. But if Turkey wishes to be seen as a responsible partner among Western nations, it would do well to curb populist appeals that encourage the growth of anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism within the public sphere. To do otherwise, as Soner Cagaptay persuasively argues, is to take the country down a path that it does not want to follow. [2]Alvin H. Rosenfeld is professor of Jewish studies and English at Indiana University.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/in-the-name-of-islam-a-liberal-appeal/>

2. <http://www.indiana.edu/~jsp/rosenfeld.html>

Philip Carl Salzman (2009-04-02 18:02:17)

Soner Cagaptay [1]warns us that "the surge of these [anti-American and anti-Semitic] sentiments [in Turkey] since 2002 demonstrates that, when in power, Islamists can corrupt even the most liberal of the Muslim societies. The singular example of a Muslim society that is friendly towards Jews and Americans risks disappearing in front of our eyes if we do not point out the political nature of Turkey's current transformation. If we ignore the political forces changing Turkey today, others will blame the change on the Turks and Islam tomorrow." The fault, according to Cagaptay, lies with the "Islamist" AKP regime, which encourages anti-Semitic and anti-American sentiments through various activities. Let us accept Cagaptay's account of the changes in Turkey as resulting from the influence of the government. But why should a religiously-oriented party exhibit anti-Semitism? Can it really have nothing to do with the party's *raison d'etre*, the advancement of Islam? Two elements deeply embedded in Islam are anti-Semitism and the insistence on domination. This is hardly news to any student of Friday sermons or Islamist pronouncements. The former characteristic is documented exhaustively in Andrew Bostom's [2]*The Legacy of Islamic Antisemitism*; the latter in Bat Ye'or's [3]*Islam and Dhimmitude* and Bostom's [4]*The Legacy of Jihad*. It should thus hardly come as a surprise that a turn toward Islam-oriented politics would lead to increased anti-Semitism and antipathy for a non-Muslim power. Cagaptay fears that we might blame, "god forbid, the Turks' religion, Islam." As one of the principles of Islam is that any criticism of Islam must be answered by summary execution, this is probably good advice. Even in Canada (unlike in the Netherlands), where one is not likely to be executed for criticism of Islam, such criticism easily leads to prosecution by the so-called Human Rights Commissions, and, failing that, certain accusations of "Islamophobia" and racism. Islamism in the East and political correctness in the West discourage criticism of Islam. And yet, there is a mysterious correlation between Islam and Islamism. It may be worth closer examination. [5]*Philip Carl Salzman is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/in-the-name-of-islam-a-liberal-appeal/>

2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1591025540>

3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0838639437>

4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1591026024>

5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)

### The Lieberman factor (2009-03-31 10:39)

From [1]Robert O. Freedman



As Binyamin Netanyahu takes over as Israel's new prime minister, the key to the future of his government may well be Avigdor Lieberman, the leader of the predominantly Russian-immigrant-based Yisrael Beiteinu Party, who was selected by Netanyahu as his foreign minister.

There are two major challenges which Lieberman poses to the Netanyahu government. The first is the question of how strongly he will pursue the secularist themes that permeated his campaign. Pushing that agenda could lead either his party, or Shas, with which it has been in conflict over religious issues, to leave the government. The second issue is Lieberman's call for a transfer of territory inhabited by those Israeli Arabs who won't pledge loyalty to Israel, to a new Palestinian state, in return for Israel maintaining some of the Jewish settlements on the West Bank.

Israel had a Russian-based political party before Yisrael Beiteinu. That was the Yisrael Ba'Aliyah party of Natan Sharansky. After initially securing seven seats in the 1996 election, Sharansky's party fell to two seats in 2003 and then merged with Likud. Sharansky's biggest mistake, and the primary cause of the demise of



Yisrael Ba'Aliyah, was his neglect of the interests of the Russian sector of Israel's population, as he went on to pursue a career in national politics.

So far, at least, Lieberman has not made this mistake. Issues of conversion and civil marriage are central to Israel's Russian immigrant community. A reported 300,000 of the one million Russians in Israel are not Jewish according to Jewish law, and Lieberman put their status at the center of his campaign. Unfortunately for Netanyahu, Shas, another major part of his coalition, is dead set against both civil marriage and easing the conversion process. While the two parties (as Alan Dowty has [2]noted) have temporarily seemed to paper over their dispute through the establishment of a committee, Lieberman might well leave the government if that committee does not come up with a compromise satisfactory to Yisrael Beiteinu. The departure of Lieberman's 15 seats could cause the Netanyahu coalition government to collapse, unless he attracts Tzipi Livni's Kadima party, a very unlikely prospect at this time.

Another major difference between Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu party, and Sharansky's Yisrael Ba'Aliyah party, is that Lieberman has succeeded in making his party more of an Israeli mainstream party. Lieberman's means of doing this was to exploit the rising anger of many Jewish Israelis toward Israel's Arab minority.

There are two factors at work here. First, Israeli Arabs justifiably feel resentment against discrimination by the majority Jewish community in terms of government grants to their villages and jobs in the public sector. Little has been done to improve the economic status of Israel's Arab community, despite the recommendations of a high-level commission set up to investigate the causes of the Arab rioting in October 2000 after the start of the Al-Aqsa Intifada.

On the other hand, the leaders of the Israeli Arab community have increasingly identified with Israel's enemies, particularly Hamas and Hezbollah, and have written several policy documents that effectively call for the end of the Jewish State. These actions have precipitated increasing anger against the Israeli Arabs—or Palestinian Israelis, as many now wish to define themselves—and have enabled politicians such as Lieberman to capitalize on this anger for electoral purposes. Indeed, it is estimated that one-third of his vote came from non-Russian Israelis angry at the Israeli Arabs.

Lieberman's plan to deal with the Israeli Arabs, which some commentators both in Israel and abroad have called "racist," involves giving the Israeli Arabs a choice. Either they can pledge loyalty to Israel as a Jewish State, or they can leave Israel—with their land. What Lieberman suggests is the transfer of Israeli Arab cities like Umm al-Fahm and towns in the Arab triangle in the Galilee, to a new Palestinian state, in return for Israel's annexation of Jewish settlement areas on the West Bank such as Maaleh Adumim and Gush Etzion. The outspoken Lieberman says aloud what many Jewish Israelis increasingly believe—that it is impossible for Jews and Arabs to live together in a single state.

Whether or not one agrees with Lieberman, there have been cases of population transfers following wars caused by nationality conflicts. Indeed, compared to the expulsion of Germans from Czechoslovakia and Poland after World War Two, or even the exchange of Greeks and Turks in 1923 following the failed Greek invasion of Ottoman Anatolia, Lieberman's idea is far more gentle. The dilemma, of course, is that the vast majority of Palestinian Israelis don't want to leave Israel for the chaos and corruption of the West Bank, even with their land. In Israel, their economic status is far better and they can speak freely.

Nonetheless, as tensions rise between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Israelis, the Arabs may soon face a difficult choice. The more they identify with Hamas and Hezbollah—organizations dedicated to the destruction of Israel—the more Lieberman's ideas will become popular. Assuming Lieberman is not sidetracked by a series of corruption investigations against him, Yisrael Beiteinu may increase in its electoral strength in future elections—something that has to worry not only Israel's Arab community, but politicians on the right side

of Israel's political spectrum, such as Binyamin Netanyahu.

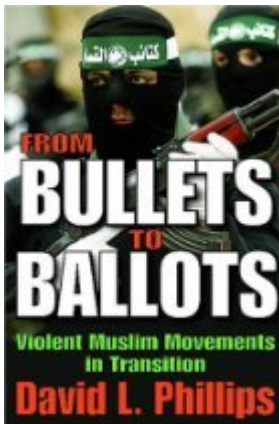
1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/03/a-government-in-israel-for-now/>

## 3.4 April

### 'From Bullets to Ballots' (2009-04-06 04:10)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. David L. Phillips is visiting scholar at Columbia University's Center for the Study of Human Rights, adjunct associate professor in New York University's Department of Politics, and senior fellow at the Atlantic Council. His new book is *From Bullets to Ballots: Violent Muslim Movements in Transition*.

From [1]David L. Phillips



[2] U.S. officials must be steely-eyed in confronting terrorist threats. However, we simply cannot kill all our adversaries. An effective counterterrorism strategy must go beyond confrontation and coercion. It must also be based on a deeper understanding of the disenfranchisement that gives rise to despair and the conditions that delude individuals into believing that sensational violence serves their cause.

My book is a post-mortem of George W. Bush's counterterrorism policy. It is also intended as a guide for the Obama administration. Part of it consists of case studies of groups that are at various stages of abandoning violence and seeking their goals through political means: the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, Hamas, Hezbollah, the Kurdistan Worker's Party, Free Aceh Movement, and the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front. Some of these groups are making progress; others are back-tracking; while some groups are dividing into various factions. These case studies are considered within the context of world affairs since Bush declared his "Global War on Terror," of which the book is deeply critical.

The United States missed a golden opportunity after 9/11. The headline of *Le Monde* read: "Nous sommes tous Américains." But instead of building on international sympathy, Bush squandered the world's goodwill through a series of foreign policy blunders.

The UN Security Council supported U.S. military action to topple the Taliban. It also welcomed our pledge to democratize and rebuild Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the Bush administration's failure to

expend the required resources stirred doubt about the sincerity of its commitment.

The debacle in Iraq fueled further speculation. Using democracy to justify the U.S. occupation convinced detractors that democracy promotion was a Trojan horse for toppling governments averse to U.S. interests. Conspiracy-prone Iraqis were astonished by the post-war reconstruction fiasco. They wondered how the United States could vanquish Saddam's Republican Guard, but fail to keep the electricity and water flowing.

Nothing eroded America's credibility more than neglecting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Waiting until the final year of his administration to announce a major push for peace in the Middle East compounded concerns arising from the Bush administration's support for corrupt, tyrannical, and (in the eyes of devout Muslims) impious regimes in the Muslim world.

I wrote *From Bullets to Ballots* in order to encourage the Obama administration to develop a deeper appreciation and different balance between confrontation, coercion, and co-optation of extremists.

The book is far from soft on terrorists. To be sure, every U.S. president has had the option—indeed the responsibility—to preempt an attack against the United States. I make the case, however, that Bush discredited this approach by conflating preemption and prevention. Preemption is justifiable when attack is imminent, whereas preventive war involves military action when there is no urgent threat.

The book insists that the United States can never condone torture, rendition, extra-judicial execution, or political assassinations. However, it acknowledges that targeted killings of armed combatants may be necessary under dire circumstances to prevent the killing of civilians.

When it comes to coercion, I advocate smart sanctions, which are more effective by targeting individuals with travel bans, freezing their overseas assets, and curtailing commercial operations in countries that sponsor terror. Financial intelligence can be used to choke off financial flows, and partnerships with local law enforcement can help disrupt hawala banking used by terror groups to move money. It is possible to interdict financing at its source by screening alms to radical clerics who misuse contributions as payments to "martyrs" or to support militant operations.

While observing the principle of free speech, the United States cannot stand idly by while the Internet is used to incite hatred, raise funds, recruit killers, and facilitate the command and control of terror operations. Unleashing viruses and computer worms can help address security risks. So can bombarding servers, redirecting traffic, and using a password assault to disrupt communications and penetrate websites used for nefarious purposes.

These confrontational and coercive measures are necessary options, but in the book I maintain that democracy and development assistance are also vital to the realization of US national security and global interests. All options explored in the book are explained in the context of case studies and the discussion of actual country conditions.

Democracy assistance has enjoyed bipartisan support for decades. To be effective, however, the United States should avoid arrogance and tread softly. In the book, I insist that leaving a heavy footprint alienates allies, risks undermining local initiative, and fomenting further violence.

Moreover, I underscore that democracy assistance is not about empowering leaders of whom the United States approves. One of Bush's failings was to equate democracy with elections. Democratization is a process, not an event—one that must go beyond elections by including assistance to promote the rule of

law, minority rights, and security sector reform, and enhance independent media and civil society thereby ensuring transparent and accountable governance.

Development assistance must also take into account national security considerations. The book points out that strengthening the formal education sector and increasing educational access for young girls undermines radical madrassas. I also advocate greater access to information and science education to help cultivate analytic thinking as a bulwark against extremism.

The most vulnerable persons must not be allowed to slip through the cracks and become victims of manipulation. To this end, hardship and resulting radicalization can be mitigated via a social safety net focusing on health services, as well as steps to develop community and national health systems. Additionally, viewing humanitarian assistance through a conflict-prevention lens both addresses basic needs and enhances stability, which is necessary to break the cycle of violence and counter extremism. Aid, trade, and debt forgiveness stimulate economic development and the emergence of a moderate middle class, thus helping to eradicate poverty, which is a potential breeding ground for extremism.

Eliminating the conditions that cause instability and give rise to extremism requires both U.S. leadership and international cooperation. Terrorism will continue to be the defining issue of our times. From Bullets to Ballots is grounded in the conviction that America will not be safe unless it finds the right balance between security, development and democratization. Moreover, foreign aid must be based on more than altruism. In light of today's financial crisis, expenditures on democracy and development assistance are even more valuable when they also enhance U.S. national security.

[3]Order from Publisher | [4]Amazon

1. <http://www.acus.org/users/david-phillips>

2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51WvnigI4wL.jpg>

3. <http://www.transactionpub.com/cgi-bin/transactionpublishers.storefront/49d9c4e60005e158ea6dc0a80aa50712/Product/View/1&2D4128&2D0795&2D6>

4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1412807956>

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### Obama's Mideast debut (2009-04-08 05:36)

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On April 6, U.S. President Barack Obama gave an address to the Turkish parliament in Ankara, on the occasion of his first visit to a Middle Eastern country as president. (If you cannot see the embedded video above, [1]click here. The text is [2]here.) In his speech, the President touched on a range of issues related to U.S.-Turkish and U.S.-Muslim relations. The following MESH members responded to an invitation to comment on the speech: J. Scott Carpenter, Michele Dunne, Hillel Fradkin, Adam Garfinkle, Bruce Jentleson, Josef Joffe, Mark N. Katz, Michael Reynolds, Michael Rubin, Philip Carl Salzman, Harvey Sichernman, Raymond Tanter, and Michael Young. Soner Cagaptay's assessment is added in the [3]comments.



[4]J. Scott Carpenter :: There were many, including me, who were worried that President

Obama's speech before the Turkish parliament would send the wrong signal to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development (AKP) government, by embracing Erdoğan's conceit that Turkey is somehow a leader of the "Muslim World" and a major player in the Middle East. Our worry, it turns out, was unjustified—for the most part.

In the speech, the President struck mostly high notes. Symbolically he linked Turkey strongly to Europe by traveling there as part of his European trip. He spoke of Turkey as the secular, democratic nation-state that it is, even as he challenged it to move forward on religious freedom and minority rights. His formulation that Turkey is a country where the Muslim faith is practiced was merely... accurate. When the President mentioned Turkey's desire to play a role in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, he did so only after referencing the more proximate conflicts of Nagorno-Karabakh and still-divided Cyprus. Importantly, in a thinly-veiled reference to Hamas, the President called on the Turkish government to "reject the use of terror, and recognize that Israel's security concerns are legitimate."

There were a couple sour notes, however. When the President delivered the requisite reminder that the United States is not, I repeat, not at war with Islam, he once again invoked the tired bromide of the so-called "Muslim World." When will senior U.S. policy makers stop reinforcing Al Qaeda's narrative about a mythical Muslim world? The President also continued to avoid the "D" word (democracy). Prosperity, instead, is the word of the day. Finding ways to improve education expand healthcare, boost trade and investment without improved transparency and accountability will be a neat trick which I look forward to hearing more about. The President promised more detail in "coming months."


Whatever the Turkish people might have thought about the speech, Erdoğan's body language suggested he did not like it. At all. The fact that Obama tracked substantively with President Bush on Iran and the Palestinian issue was clearly painful for him to hear. More painful still probably was the President's wise decision to skip the Khatami-inspired Alliance of Civilizations meeting in Istanbul. The AKP were desperately hoping to rope the President into this muddleheaded effort to divide "civilizations" into religious camps. Actions always speak louder than words.



[5]Michele Dunne :: In President Obama's address to the Turkish parliament, he made a few basic statements—inter alia, "The United States is not, and never will be, at war with Islam," "The United States strongly supports the goal of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security," and "The United States strongly supports Turkey's bid to become a member of the European union"—that were, if not revolutionary, at least useful in their clarity. I will leave the evaluation of what Obama said on internal Turkish affairs to those who specialize in that, but what he said about specific reforms inside Turkey seemed to reach a satisfying level of detail, and he made several general statements—e.g., "freedom of religion and expression lead to a strong and vibrant civil society that only strengthens the state," and "an enduring commitment to the rule of law is the only way to achieve the security that comes from justice for all people"—that encouraged further movement on these issues.

What was peculiar about Obama's speech, however, was his strong emphasis on democracy (mentioned at least eight times) as the tie that binds the United States and Turkey in friendship, and yet his unwillingness to apply the same principle in the latter part of the speech to U.S. relations with the Muslim world. There, the "D" word was banned. Aside from the usual platitudes about "mutual interest and mutual respect," Obama promised to promote the welfare of people in the Muslim world only in socioeconomic terms: education, health care, trade and investment. No objections to that, Mr. President, but what's the plan for working with countries where the state stands squarely in the way of citizens getting those things? And that would apply to quite a few states in the Muslim world.

The President and Secretary Clinton can only go around the world apologizing for the Bush administration for so long. The Obama administration needs its own foreign policy—one that is neither Clinton-warmed-over nor anything-but-Bush—and one that takes account of current conditions. Those conditions include much more political ferment and stronger demands for civil and human rights than existed in the Middle East a decade ago. So promoting democracy and human rights will need to be part of that foreign policy, including in the Muslim world. It's getting to be about time to face that, and Turkey would have been an excellent place to start.

 [6]Hillel Fradkin :: Towards the close of his speech to the Turkish parliament, President Obama declared "as clearly as I can" that the "United States is not at war with Islam." He sought to reinforce that message by implying that our military actions within the Muslim world, in past and future, have only the object of "rolling back a fringe ideology" and the terrorism represented most prominently by Al Qaeda—an effort he regards as shared by Muslims themselves.

Much attention has and will be paid to this declaration—it is already being referred to as an "olive branch"—even if it stated the obvious. The United States is not in fact at war with Islam and never has been, as President Bush made clear by declaring Islam to be a religion of peace but a few hours after the attacks of September 11, 2001. For after all, why would we Americans be at war with a peaceful religion? Moreover, although our soldiers are presently engaged in fighting some Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, we are fighting side by side with other Muslims. A statement of these facts would have enhanced Obama's declaration.

But perhaps the obvious must sometimes be stated, and Obama is perhaps in a better position to make it clear by virtue of a fact he mentioned in his speech: he is among those Americans "who have Muslims in their family, or have lived in a Muslim-majority country." Perhaps this will put this issue to rest so long as such misunderstanding as exists is not willful. At all events, and as Obama implied, the future of peaceful and fruitful relations between the United States and the Muslim world may depend less on the United States than on the approach that the Muslim world takes to terrorism of all varieties—including anti-Israeli terrorism—and the ideologies which inform them.

But Obama's speech was not primarily addressed to the Muslim world, but to the Turkish people and its government. In the long run, it is the substance of his remarks to them which is likely to be more important than his declaration—and not only for U.S.-Turkish relations but for the wider Muslim world. Here he placed less stress on Turkey's Muslim heritage than its republican heritage as the first and so far the most successful Muslim-majority republic.

As Obama almost indicated directly, this emphasis comes against the background of recent concerns that Turkey under the present leadership of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) might be weakening in its fidelity to that heritage, turning away from its long-standing alliances with Western countries—including the United States—and even moving closer to radical Islamic actors such as Sudan and Hamas. Obama's remarks, although gently stated, essentially urged Turkey to renew its historic commitment to republican democracy and reaffirm its role as the place where East and West "come together."

Obama referred explicitly to the heroic statesmanship of Atatürk, George Washington and perhaps above all of Abraham Lincoln. In light of his appeal to Lincoln, one might say that Obama invited Americans, Turks and Europeans to listen to the "better angels of our nature," and urged Turks in particular to rededicate themselves to the propositions upon which modern Turkish history and success have been

built. This was an important message to deliver, and it can only be hoped that it will be well received. That hope may however embrace not only Turkey but the wider Muslim world, which might profit from the example of Turkish republican success both now and hopefully in the future. In the long run, the reception of that message will be more important to American-Muslim relations than the declaration that the United States is not at war with Islam.



[7]Adam Garfinkle :: President Obama's speech to the Turkish parliament yesterday was, to my way of thinking, an anti-climactic event. For months now we have been tantalized by the promise that Obama would go to a majority-Muslim country and tell it like it is. And this is what we get? This was a box-checking speech, full of duck-billed platitudes and not a single deliverable. The only things noteworthy about it were that: a) it happened; b) there was no quid pro quo protocol equilibration to Greece; and c) the speech abjured the old language that Turkey is a "moderate Muslim nation." Turkey, we learn, is a secular democracy, just as Atatürk and his secular fundamentalist followers have insisted ever since 1924. This comes at a time when Turkey has a government, and a fairly popular one, that makes that description less resonant politically than ever. Why go talk to a Muslim-majority society only to pretend, sort of, that you're not?

As for the "key" line—that we are not at war with Islam—well, Obama buried his lead four-fifths the way down the text, and of course that statement is nothing Bush administration principals, including the President, did not say dozens of times. If it suits your interests not to believe that statement, it's not going to matter much which U.S. president says it. If it suits your interests now to stop saying you don't believe it, then any president who is not George W. will do. If some Muslims now have heard this statement for the first time, just because it was delivered in Turkey by Barack Obama, fine: better eventually than not at all. But no, that statement in and of itself is not a game-changer, not with more U.S. soldiers headed to Afghanistan, more missiles fired into Pakistan's border areas, more violence inevitable in Iraq over the next two years. Those of the conspiratorial persuasion seeking evidence that Obama is a liar will be able to find it just as easily as those who were sure George W. was a liar.

As for the speech itself as a form of the "black arts" (as Peggy Noonan once put it about speech-writing), it's the worst major presentation the President has given (or delivered) so far. Judging from the official transcript pulled off the White House website, I counted at least two dozen mild infelicities, bona fide clunkers and grammatical errors that never should have made it past a second draft. One of these days people will stop comparing Obama to the hopeless George W. Marblemouth and recognize how mediocre this stuff really is.

Am I saying I could have written a better speech for this occasion? Yes, I actually believe that. There were oh-so-many missed opportunities in that speech—so many ways to have better concretized U.S.-Turkish friendship, and so many ways to have recognized that tolerance, hospitality, rule of law and other virtues (not to exclude democracy) which apply to Turkey, historically and at present, do not have to be expressed in an American idiom to be real and worthy of sincere admiration.

Maybe the lack of a unifying theme and anything remotely resembling a deliverable is the good news here. Some people had been hoping that Obama would use this occasion to launch a Presidential initiative on Israel/Palestine, stating U.S. parameters for a settlement, inviting the world to sign up to them, and implying muscular suasion on all engaged sides to make it happen. That we did not hear. Though I am skeptical that such a policy is wise, I'm almost sad it didn't happen: that, at least, would have made the speech memorable.





[8]Bruce Jentleson :: Good speech. Got both the music and the words right. Doesn't solve all problems in U.S.-Turkish relations, or all issues on the U.S. agenda of which Turkey is part, but does amount to a good start on both separating from the most counterproductive parts of the Bush policy and defining the key elements of an Obama policy.

Obama struck two key notes in getting the music right. One was his emphasis on mutual respect. This is the same phrasing he used in his inaugural address and in his video message to Iran. True, the respect mantra often gets invoked in the Muslim world as cover for less defensible positions. But its genuine resonance is even truer. Meeting people where they are, rather than where one may think they should be, is more likely to lead to being able "to build on our mutual interests, and rise above our differences," as Obama put it, than lecturing and hectoring. Those self-styled hard-headed powerites who like to deride this sense of mutuality would do well to remember how the strength of anti-Bush sentiment in the Turkish parliament blocked Turkish military cooperation with the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

The other was the line about not being at war with Islam. This needed to be said. Sure, Bush made any number of disclaimers of his own. But they didn't stick. In saying that trust was strained "in many places where the Muslim faith is practiced," Obama was recognizing reality. That's strategic, not self-flagellatory as some neo-cons would have it.

On the substance he also got much right. He spoke to Turkey's multi-faceted role as an ally, not just on terrorism or any one particular issue but more broadly on a range of global, regional and bilateral issues. He gave Turkey credit for its diplomacy in the Israel-Syria talks, while stressing active U.S. re-engagement in the Arab-Israeli peace process. He supported Turkey's accession to the European Union. He also pushed a bit on internal democratic reform and rule of law. He approached the Armenia issue with more of an eye to what the two countries need to do together than what the lobby back home expects of him.

Much remains to be done. Music and words are fine, but action must follow. But not bad for a start.



[9]Josef Joffe :: "The United States is not, and will never be, at war with Islam." This is one of those sentences which are so right that nobody could disagree—like "I love jamocca ice cream" or "The sun sets in the west." Of course the United States is not at war with Islam, and never will be. If you want to push it, you might say: a part of Islam is at war with America, and for that there is plenty of evidence—from 9/11 to an endless slew of statements made by Bin Laden or al-Zawahiri or a bunch of lesser imams and mullahs or by various leaders of Hezbollah and Hamas, not to speak of those representatives of the "Arab street" we get to see on Al-Jazeera.

Why would the president affirm what was undeniable in the first place? To make a gesture, of course. As he did with this sentence: "I also want to be clear that America's relationship with the Muslim community, the Muslim world, cannot, and will not, just be based upon opposition to terrorism. We seek broader engagement based on mutual interest and mutual respect."

Again, this is as "surprising" (or if you want to be catty: vacuous) as the "we are not at war" sentence. Whoever based America's relationship with the umma on "opposition to terrorism?" Not Bush '43—not, he, the coddler of Saudi Arabia, the financier of Egypt, the ally of Jordan's Abdullah, the



guarantor of the Gulfies. How patient, to the point of self-effacement, was W. with Turkey, after Ankara betrayed him in the run-up to the Iraq war? And who saved the Muslim Bosnians from the rage of the Serbs? The U.S. Air Force in the days of Clinton.

"We will listen carefully, we will bridge misunderstandings, and we will seek common ground." Does this mean we did not listen carefully to our Arab allies, paying over-sensitive respect to their fence-sitting and their mumbly caveats? Here Obama resorts not to belaboring the obvious, but to the oldest (liberal) tradition of American foreign policy. There are no clashes, no interests, no conflicts—just "misunderstandings." And if we listen hard and patiently enough, these "conflicts" will just go poof.

Of course, these are not the ways of international politics, where collisions and conflicts are real, where the measure is not goodness or careful listening, but the power and the will that—sometimes quietly, sometimes loudly—backs up diplomacy.

Especially in the Hobbesian universe that is the Islamic Middle East—say, from the Levant to the Hindu Kush—homily will get you nowhere. Let's hope the 44th president of the United States is not like Jimmy Carter who took four years to learn about the nasty ways of the world—who preached in the beginning that we should lose our "inordinate fear of communism" only to be rewarded by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and who let Khomeini come to power only to be repaid with the 444-day humiliation of the embassy hostage crisis.



[10]Mark N. Katz :: President Obama's speech to the Turkish parliament was designed to appeal not just to the Turkish public, but also to the broader Muslim world. In it, Obama certainly struck many positive notes. His administration is for improved Turkish-American and Muslim-American relations. His administration also seeks peace or improved relations between Turkey and Armenia, Greek and Turkish Cypriots, Israel and the Palestinians, and Israel and Syria, among others. His administration supports Turkey's admission to the European Union.


Indeed, Obama signaled that America is willing to work with all parties in the Muslim world except the terrorists. He called for the United States to work with Muslims and non-Muslims alike against them. The only two terrorist movements that he mentioned by name, though, were the PKK and Al Qaeda. He made no mention of the Taliban, Hamas, and Hezbollah, among others. By not describing them as terrorist, Obama has certainly opened the door—and perhaps even raised the expectation—that he is willing to work with them.

The audience applauded when Obama said, "The United States is not, and will never be, at war with Islam." His next sentence—"In fact, our partnership with the Muslim world is critical not just in rolling back the violent ideologies that people of all faiths reject, but also to strengthen opportunity for all its people"—appears to be more an expression of hope than a statement of fact. For unfortunately, there is widespread support in the Muslim world for non-democratic movements that engage in terrorism. Many Muslims instead see groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, and even the Taliban as legitimate "national liberation" movements.

What Obama may soon find is that it is going to be extremely difficult for the United States to appeal to the broader Muslim world and to fight terrorist groups within it simultaneously. The Bush administration at least recognized that this was a dilemma and attempted to resolve it by recognizing the need for democratization (even if it did not push very hard for this in many Muslim countries). But Obama's statement that "Turkey's democracy is your own achievement. It was not forced upon you by any outside

power,” appears to be a strong signal that his administration does not share even the Bush administration’s recognition that the United States can and should do something to promote democratization in the Middle East.


Obama’s hopes for improved relations between the U.S. and the Muslim world are laudable. But unless public opinion in the Muslim world stops supporting non-democratic political movements, or these movements undergo a democratic transformation, it is doubtful that the improved relations he hopes for can be achieved.

 [11]Michael Reynolds :: President Obama demonstrated in Turkey the talent that has distinguished him at least since his tenure as head of Harvard’s Law Review: namely, the ability to play the role of reconciler between otherwise seemingly irreconcilable sides. The best example of this was his ability to touch on the question of the Armenian genocide in his speech to the Turkish parliament in such a way as to win applause from the parliamentarians as well as [12]praise from one of the leading advocates of Turkish recognition of genocide.

Obama’s charisma extended beyond the parliament. Even the thousands of leftist protesters who declared Obama to be merely a new face for an old American imperialism felt compelled in interviews to concede that, yes, Obama himself comes across as intelligent, affable, and appealing. Posters showing a cartoon Uncle Sam with Obama’s face superimposed recalled the famous New Yorker magazine’s spoof of Obama dressed in a turban, albeit with precisely the opposite point: far from being a secret Al Qaeda sympathizer, Obama represents merely a new face for an old American imperialism.

Obama’s message of humility, patience, and charity thus left a generally positive impression in Turkey. Needless to say, however, articulating a vision wherein conflicts are resolved through mutual and sincere compromise is easier said than achieving that vision. Obama has not yet indicated publicly to what extent he is willing to use American power, positive as well as negative, to push the resolution of the Middle East’s multiple conflicts.

Another thing that that struck me was this statement made by Obama in support of Turkey’s EU candidacy: “Europe gains by diversity of ethnicity, tradition and faith—it is not diminished by it.” It is a quintessentially American assertion. The sentiment behind it is, indisputably, appealing on the most obvious level. But one has to wonder what citizens of the European Union, regardless of their stance on Turkey’s EU candidacy, think when the President of the United States of America makes declarations about what constitutes Europe’s fundamental interests.

 [13]Michael Rubin :: There are certain points every U.S. official should make upon visiting Turkey. President Obama did his homework and delivered them. He is correct when he declares, “Turkey is a critical ally. Turkey is an important part of Europe. And Turkey and the United States must stand together—and work together.” Obama is right to highlight Turkey’s EU accession ambitions as well as the reforms accomplished over the past several years. And he successfully tiptoed through the political minefield of the Armenian genocide debate.

However, Obama also broke new ground, not all of it positive. For example, Obama stated, “The United States will continue to support your central role as an East-West corridor for oil and natural gas.” But how can Obama expect to pressure Iran to accede to its international obligations when Turkey’s State

Minister Kürşad Tüzman seeks to raise bilateral trade with the Islamic Republic to [14] \$20 billion? (It was just \$1.3 billion when the AKP took power.)

And while diplomatic nicety is the bread-and-butter of speechwriters, in the case of Obama's reference to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, it can have cost. Here his comments were infused with moral equivalency which is especially dangerous given Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's embrace and, indeed, endorsement of Hamas. Obama could have sent a positive message, especially in a country like Turkey which has suffered so much terrorism, had he reinforced that idea explicitly that democracies must stand against terrorism and that no political agendas can legitimize terrorism. Obama drew equivalence between Al Qaeda and the PKK; he should have added Hamas to the mix. Let us hope that, before Obama embraces Erdoğan as a true partner, he becomes aware of the Turkish Prime Minister's [15]endorsement of Al Qaeda financier Yasin al-Qadi.

Rhetoric is easy, but can be ephemeral. It is easy to say "We will be respectful, even when we do not agree," but the President of the United States should never sacrifice the values of free speech or expression in order to protect the sensitivity of anyone who might take insult. To compromise fundamental values is a slippery slope; we should not go down the path of Europe. Nor should Obama speak of the Islamic world. He should recognize the true diversity of Muslim peoples, and not seek to impose a unitary identity upon them.



[16]Philip Carl Salzman :: Will President Obama, even with his Muslim middle name, have any greater luck than President George W. Bush reassuring the Muslim world of the good will and good intentions of the United States? He goes farther, saying that "we will convey our deep appreciation for the Islamic faith, which has done so much over so many centuries to shape the world for the better." Along the same line, addressing Turkey's application to the EU, he argues that "Europe gains by diversity of ethnicity, tradition and faith." In fact, the benefits of Islam, both in history and prospectively in the EU, are highly contested, but the Turks and Muslims more broadly probably welcomed these sentiments.

The President says that the United States is not and can never be at war against Islam, that "our partnership with the Muslim world is critical in rolling back a fringe ideology that people of all faiths reject." Here the President asserts a division between the moderate majority of Muslims and the minority "fringe" of jihadis—oops, I mean "terrorists"—not to be specified further. This may be a distinction without as much of a difference as we, and the President, might hope. If the President says it enough, maybe his Muslim audience will come to believe it.

The President's approbation of Turkey and its recent legal measures was clear, while he urged its leaders to continue along the line of diversity and pluralism, particularly in regard to the Kurds (but not the PKK), and the Orthodox Christians, as well as to resolve differences and improve relations with Armenians. At the same time, he stressed the secular nature of the Turkish constitution, and made no mention of the Islamist—I mean Islamic—party in government.

President Obama took a hard line on Iran, focusing not on cooperation in regard to Iraq and Af/Pak, but on Iran's movement toward nuclear weapons. He offers a stark choice to Islamic Republic: "Iran's leaders must choose whether they will try to build a weapon or build a better future for their people." No hints about what may follow the manufacture of an Iranian nuclear bomb.

They say that those who ignore history are destined to repeat it, first as campaign promises, then as foreign policy. So it is with Palestine. In spite of much [17]good advice from MESH prior to the

President's ascension, he is determined to achieve what so many, with so much effort, have failed to achieve: "In the Middle East, we share the goal of a lasting peace between Israel and its neighbors. Let me be clear: the United States strongly supports the goal of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. That is a goal shared by Palestinians, Israelis, and people of good will around the world." (Emphasis added.) I do not know which Palestinians the President has been speaking to, but neither Hamas nor Fatah will recognize Israel, and the preferred goal of most Palestinians appears to be a different two-state solution: Palestine and Jordan.

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[18]Harvey Sicherman :: President Obama's speech at the Turkish parliament gave ample evidence of his gift for allowing his audience to see themselves in him. Thus, he spoke winning words to those advocating the democratic Kemalist Turkey of the West. But those who wanted to "reorient" (literally) Turkey toward the East could also find comfort in references to Ankara's mediation of regional conflicts and imperial Muslim past. Kemalism, of course, burns the bridge to the East. And the current Turkish government is suspected by its opponents of seeking to burn the bridge to the West. Nevermind; Obama levitated above this contradiction with the crowd-pleasing conclusion that "Turkey's greatness lies in your ability to be at the center of things." Gifted rhetoric to be sure.

In the wake of Presidential parades, a clean-up crew (usually the unfortunate Secretary of State) must collect the policy. Three specifics:

1. RESET: To use the blackberry-proficient President's favorite phrase, he wants a renewal of U.S.-Turkish cooperation. On the most neuralgic item—the Kurds—Obama pledged "our support" against the PKK while restating that the new Iraq should not be a danger to its neighbors (i.e. no independent Kurdistan). He advocated Turkish entry to Europe (a poke at France and Germany) and swallowed whole in public his previous view of the Armenian genocide, which he consigned to the historians.
2. I'm coming your way: Obama notified Israel's new government not to quarrel over the two-state solution, "the road map and Annapolis... a goal that I will actively pursue as President of the United States."
3. I feel your pain: Ankara was another installment in a campaign to change the American image, this time for Muslims. Obama declared (as had Mr. Bush) that the United States was not "at war with Islam." He tried manfully to lift the American-"Muslim World" relationship out of the terrorist focus through two devices: a respectful search for common ground and his personal experience of Muslims in the family. This, too, was cunningly designed to sway his audience: I am not one of you but I am close enough to know you, a near relative as it were. And, of course, "we will convey our deep appreciation for the Islamic faith..." Although variations on the theme were also uttered by his predecessor, the President can count on amnesia, and his own striking example, to change the image. But does this really matter? And is Obama not raising expectations of impossible comity with a "Muslim World" at war with itself and gripped by the grievance culture besides?

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[19]Raymond Tanter :: In tennis, when confronting a choice between hitting the ball cross-court or down the line, "Solve the riddle by going up the middle!" Like the tennis analogy, the visit of President Obama to Turkey is a search for a middle ground between opposing points of view.

One school of thought: Turkey's harsh response to Danish cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad should prompt the NATO alliance to reconsider Turkey's commitment to the global struggle against radical Islam. Because such "Islamism" is priority number-one for NATO, and because Ankara holds an incompatible view of the threat, consider removing Turkey from the alliance.

When Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen rose as consensus candidate for NATO Secretary General, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan raised objections. Rasmussen had been prime minister when the cartoons were published and refused to censor the newspapers in which they ran. Rasmussen was cleared for the NATO post after negotiating with Turkish President Abdullah Gül and stating: "I consider Turkey a very important ally and strategic partner, and I will cooperate with them in our endeavors to ensure the best cooperation with Muslim world." Obama's apt intervention to help devise language acceptable to the parties allowed for the appointment of Rasmussen and typifies the President's approach of searching for a middle ground between opposing points of view.

A second school: Turkey's strategic position—the second-largest NATO-member army; borders with Syria, Iraq, and Iran; a base for U.S. operations in Afghanistan; and Europe's sixth-largest economy—requires greater outreach and integration of Turkey into Europe.

Accordingly, Washington should take a lead role in promoting Turkish accession to the European Union to overcome French objections. Enhanced bilateral relations would include expanding the economic component of U.S.-Turkey relations and promoting more collaboration between mid-level military officers. To overcome religious tension, the United States would no longer treat Turkey as a "Muslim country" and more as a European country.

The most prudent course for the Obama administration is the middle path between these two extremes, a road the President is beginning to take. Indeed, Turkey is too important an ally to alienate with even the suggestion that the country might be removed from NATO. But enthusiastic engagement should depend on the degree to which Turkey is on the same page as the rest of NATO regarding the threat of radical Islam.



[20]Michael Young :: As I read President Obama's comments to the Turkish parliament on Monday, I couldn't help but think of Egypt.

Under the conditions prevailing during much of the past 25 to 30 years, his speech would have been one that, in its references to the Arab-Israeli conflict but also at the highly symbolic moment of Obama's first contact with the Middle East, would have been made before the Egyptian parliament. Instead, the U.S. president chose a non-Arab state as the venue for his first major address to the region and the Islamic world.

One wonders how Egypt's President Husni Mubarak reacted when he heard Obama say: "The United States and Turkey can help the Palestinians and Israelis make this journey. Like the United States, Turkey has been a friend and partner in Israel's quest for security. And like the United States, you seek a future of opportunity and statehood for the Palestinians. So now, working together, we must not give into pessimism and mistrust."

Surely, he felt that someone had gently bumped him back into the line. Wasn't Egypt the traditional mediator between Israelis and Palestinians? If your hunch is that this gives us a sense of the thorough marginalization of the Arab countries compared to their non-Arab periphery, particularly states like Turkey

and Iran, but also Israel, then your hunch comes very late. Whether it was in his passages on Iran, Iraq, or terrorism, and even in his appeal to the Muslim world, Obama not once mentioned Egypt or Saudi Arabia, though he did mention their rival, Syria, just once.

Remember, in 1990 it was Egypt and Saudi Arabia that were the cornerstones (if you could call them that) of the Arab mobilization against Iraq when Saddam Hussein ordered his soldiers into Kuwait. When the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was extended in 1995, it was Egypt that led the Arab effort to create a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East (and failed). Throughout the 1990s, Egypt was the go-to place to talk about Palestinian-Israeli issues, and when Egyptians were the victims of Islamist violence during the 1990s, it was the go-to place to hold anti-terrorism summits, for example the one at Sharm al-Sheikh in 1996.

That Obama mentioned these topics, and others, in Ankara did not mean that it is time to write Egypt's obituary. But with Mubarak now an old man, still sitting atop a political system seemingly incapable of renewing itself in pluralistically invigorating ways, and with no end in sight to the Saudi gerontocracy, it is not surprising that Obama should have struck his highest notes in a country that is of the region but not quite in it—and therefore untainted by its irrepressible decline. The United States will continue to ally itself with Arab states to contain Iran, but as Obama made clear in his speech, and in his diplomatic initiatives in recent weeks, he relies much more on countries like Turkey and Russia to act as hooks on which to hang any international effort to deal with Iran's nuclear program.

Obama sent a kind word to the world's Muslims, and surely many in the Arab world applauded his lines. But what he was really telling them, intentionally or not, is that their region is changing, and it's changing in ways that may soon turn the Arabs into secondary characters in their own narrative, because their regimes simply seem unable to change.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3PrM9WJZus>
2. [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-By-President-Obama-To-The-Turkish-Parliament/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-By-President-Obama-To-The-Turkish-Parliament/)
3. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/04/obamas-mideast-debut/#comments>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j\\_scott\\_carpenter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j_scott_carpenter/)
5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele\\_dunne/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele_dunne/)
6. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/hillel\\_fradkin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/hillel_fradkin/)
7. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)
8. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bruce\\_jentleson/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bruce_jentleson/)
9. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef\\_joffe/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef_joffe/)
10. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_n\\_katz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_n_katz/)
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17. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/first\\_100\\_days.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/10/first_100_days.pdf)
18. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey\\_sicherman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey_sicherman/)
19. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_tanter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_tanter/)
20. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_young/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_young/)

Philip Carl Salzman (2009-04-10 07:42:09)

Why did President Obama take such an unalloyed hard line in regard to Iran, saying that the Islamic Republic's leadership had to choose between nuclear weapons and the wellbeing of its people? This [1]speech, after all, follows the President's Nowruz reaching out with a peaceful hand to Iran, and negotiations with Iran about stabilizing the Af/Pak region. Perhaps this statement and position was directed as much to Turkey as to Iran itself. Turkey has been warming up political relations with the Islamic Republic, trade is increasing, further cooperation appears to be in the works. Obama's warm words for Turkey, and harsh challenge to Iran, make clear to Turkey that associating with an outcast, or partial outcast, would not advance Turkey's standing in the world. Obama wants to see Turkey firmly in NATO, and not partnering up with Iran. Iran is going to be difficult enough to deal with, without Turkey by her side. [2]*Philip Carl Salzman is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/04/obamas-mideast-debut/>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)

Soner Cagaptay (2009-04-08 10:15:45)

President Obama's April 6 speech to the Turkish parliament in Ankara has addressed Washington's concerns over Turkey's turn from the West. In his speech, Obama tackled the erosion of Turkey's liberal democratic values. He also took up Turkey's recent foreign policy differences with the United States. Lately, a civilizational view of world politics has formed in Ankara, relativizing good and bad according to religion and splitting the Turks from the West. In the latest incident, at the Davos meeting in January, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan chided Israel's president for "killing people"—and then returned to Ankara to host the vice president of Sudan. Since September 11, Turkey is fact becoming a "Muslim" nation, and a member of the "Muslim World." The only way to counter this conception—as well as Turkey's turn towards illiberal politics at home and a civilizational view in foreign policy—is to emphasize Turkey's Western vocation. By speaking strongly in favor of a Western and European Turkey, Obama did exactly that, putting Turkey back in the West. Recently, there has been much confusion in the United States and Europe about Turkey's identity. Until September 11, Turkey was considered a NATO ally, a secular democracy and a member of the West. Suddenly, following September 11, this changed. Turkey became a Muslim ally, considered a model of Islamic democracy and a member of the Muslim world. The punditocracy began to describe Turkey as a "moderate Muslim state," and regional experts viewed Turkey as part of the Greater Middle East. A German Turk born and raised in Berlin told me that prior September 11, his friends referred to him as "the Turk." On September 12, he became "the Muslim." He added: "I had not changed in one night, but the world had." In due course, U.S.-Turkish relations focused exclusively on the Muslim Middle East, particularly Iraq. This development came at the expense of previous U.S.-Turkish cooperation in the Caucasus, Black Sea, Central Asia, and within Europe and NATO. Thrown into a closed-circuit, Muslim lot, Turkey started to empathize with Muslim world on matters, moving away from the United States on key foreign policy issues, such as Iran, Sudan, and Hamas. Coupled with the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey, Washington's singular focus on Middle East issues empowered a religion-based civilizational vector in Turkish foreign policy. This stimulated an exclusively Muslim identity among Turks at the expense of European and pro-Western identities. An exclusive focus on the Muslim world in U.S.-Turkish ties is short-sighted since Turkey is more than just a Muslim partner for the United States. Branding Turkey as a Muslim country only runs against the grain of the country's identity fabric: the Turks are at ease with multiple identities, including Muslim, Turk and Western. President Obama has a grasp of this issue, and that is why he opted to not deliver his "address to the Muslim world" from Turkey. Enforcing the view of Turkey as a Western nation, he de-linked his Turkey sojourn from his campaign promise to visit a Muslim country during the first 100 days of his presidency. With his Ankara address, Obama put the post-September 11 confusion about Turkey's identity to rest. The President started his speech with a rhetorical question: "I have been to... the NATO Summit in Strasbourg and Kehl, and the European Union Summit in Prague. Some people have asked me if I chose to continue my travels to Ankara and Istanbul to send a message. My answer is simple: *Evet* (Yes in Turkish)." The president added that Turkey belongs in Europe and the West and that "Europe gains by the diversity of ethnicity, tradition and faith." For Obama, Turkey is a country in the West that happens to be Muslim, rather than a Muslim country in the Muslim world. This is good news for Turkey's democracy, and even better news for the Western orientation of Turkish foreign policy. In his address, Obama made strong references to Turkey's secular democracy and the need for the country to move towards European Union (EU) accession. Importantly, Obama set Europe and its liberal democratic traditions as Washington's benchmark for evaluating domestic Turkish developments. On foreign policy, the President referred to Turkey as a "resolute ally and a responsible partner in transatlantic and European institutions." Obama understands Turkey's strategic importance — Turkey borders Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Russia, and is a staging ground for operations in Afghanistan and beyond. With his speech, Obama set NATO as a Western gauge for cooperation with Turkey



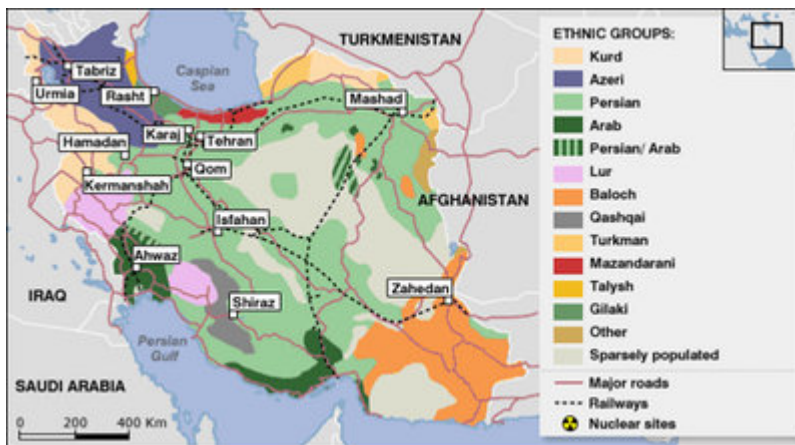
on key foreign policy issues. Turkey is a nation that is Turkish by its birth, Muslim by its culture, and Western by its political identity and institutions. By placing Turkey back into the Western polity, Obama has hailed all three characteristics, allowing Turkey to thrive as a country with multiple identities. During his visit, the President chose to visit Atatürk's mausoleum, the Blue Mosque and the Turkish parliament, symbolically demonstrating that he grasps the non-exclusive nature of Turkish nationalism, Islam and Western political identity in Turkey. With his speech, Obama has also made a successful case against the argument that Islam and the West are exclusive of one another. This is one reason why Obama was received with open arms in Turkey. As the President of the United States, a country full of diverse ethnicities, religions and races, Obama has a grasp of Turkey's complexity, and understands the importance of maintaining its multiple identities. [1]Soner Cagaptay is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/soner-cagaptay/>

### Persians and Others: Iran's minority politics (2009-04-14 08:13)

From [1]Philip Carl Salzman

There is a natural tendency to reify countries and think of them as unitary entities, often indicated by calling countries "nations" and presuming a homogeneity and uniformity among the population. But this reification and assumption of homogeneity are almost always inaccurate and misleading. In the case of Iran, it would be a great error to think of the population as being homogeneous, for the people of Iran are in fact quite diverse. There are ethnic, linguistic, organizational, and religious differences among Iranians. (To enlarge any map in this post, click on it.)



[2]

Diversity in Iran. The core population of Persian civilization consists of the Persian (Farsi)- speaking city and village dwellers who tend to occupy central Iran. These Persians make up about half of the population. Generally on the geographical peripheries of the country are a number of important populations who differ ethnically and linguistically from Persians:

- In the south around Bandar Abbas and the southwest in Khuzistan, are Arabic-speaking populations.
- In the southwest, in Fars province, are important Turkic-speaking peoples.
- In the west are Lurs, an important population speaking Luri.
- In the west northwest are Kurds, speaking Kurdish.
- In the northwest are the Azeri Turks, speaking Turkish.



- In the northeast are Turkmen, also speaking a Turkish language.
- In the southeast are Baluch, speaking Baluchi.

It is noteworthy that many of these populations have ethnic compatriots across the boundaries of Iran:

- Arabs in Iraq and across the Gulf.
- Kurds in Iraq and Turkey.
- Azeris in the Republic of Azerbaijan.
- Turkmen in Central Asia.
- Baluch in Pakistan.



[3] One important difference between the Persian heartland and the periphery, is that the Persians are urban dwellers or village peasants, while most of the other populations are tribal: some of the Arabs, the Turks of Fars, the Lurs, the Kurds, some Azeris, the Turkmen, and the Baluch. Tribes are political organizations designed to provide protection and security for their members, and mobilization against enemies. Tribes have a strong preference for independence, and strive always to stay out of the clutches of the state. However, modern times and modern military technology, combined with state antipathy, have undercut tribal independence and integrated tribal populations, to a greater or lesser degree, within state structures. Nonetheless, tribal structures remain, and can be activated if circumstances permit.

One major cultural unifying factor in Iran is religion. Some 90 percent of Iranians are Shi'a Muslims, traditional enemies of the Sunni majority in the Arab world and elsewhere. Shi'ism cuts across ethnic boundaries, providing a commonality for most Iranians. Under the Islamic Republic, Shi'ism has become a central focus of culture and governance. There are small minorities of Christians and Jews, a somewhat larger group of Baha'is, but the great bulk of the non-Shi'a are Sunni.

Sectarian politics: internal and external. The cultural, linguistic, organizational, and religious diversity of Iran is not, however cause for celebration on the part of the rulers of the Islamic Republic and their agents. Diversity, plurality, and difference do not fit the vision, the duty, and the mandate of the Islamic Republic. Rather, the Islamic Republic has for its *raison d'être* the advancement, exclusively, of Shi'a Islam. This is believed to be God's mandate to the Islamic Republic. Consequently, "inclusion" is not a value in its own right, but is only possible within the parameters of Shi'a domination.

Furthermore, religion aside, non-Persian ethnicities, speakers of Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, Turkman, Baluchi, as well as tribal peoples are suspect in regard to their loyalty to the state. The Islamic Republic only established its control after military campaigns against the tribes, the Kurds, the Turkmen, and the Baluch—just as Mohammed Reza Shah had to do, and just as Reza Shah before him had to do. Each fall of a regime in Iran is followed by declarations of independence by ethnic groups and tribes around the country, and must be suppressed militarily if the new government is to take effective control. So the diffidence of the Islamic Republic toward these groups is historically grounded.

The Islamic Republic is not fully satisfied by the imposition of Shi'a dominance in Iran; it acts to extend Shi'a dominance outside of its borders. Two effective campaigns along this line are the alliance with the Alawites of Syria and the financial, military, and political support for Lebanese Shiites especially through Hezbollah. It is even prepared, as the new champion of Islam, to extend its influence through support of Sunnis, such as Hamas, as long as the alliance is directed against more distant enemies, such as the Jews of Israel. Iranian envoys and missionaries in Africa carry the good Shi'a word to more distant lands, such as Northern Nigeria, backed by financial and other aid. The Sunni stalwarts, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, appear to be on the defensive against Iranian-backed Shi'a incursions.

State-minority relations: Baluchistan. Baluchistan, the larger part of the Province of Sistan and Baluchistan, is the most alien region of Iran. It is geographically farthest from the centers of governance. Its deserts are shaped by the most extremely arid climate (the unpopulated central desert aside). The population deviates from the Persian majority in the Islamic Republic in ethnicity, language, organization, and religion: Baluchi ethnicity; Baluchi language, tribal organization, and Sunni Islam. It is the least developed and poorest province. Furthermore, it abuts on the east the vast Pakistani Baluchistan with its much larger population of Baluch, and on the south the Indian Ocean, which opens Iran's borders in the region to vulnerabilities.

What to do with this unpromising and potentially threatening region? The Islamic Republic, perhaps following the example of the Chinese in Tibet and Inner Mongolia, decided to flood Baluchistan with Shi'a Persians. But how to do this? A brainstorm led the Islamic Republic to make Baluchistan a center of university education—this in a land which some decades before had not even a primary school or madrasah. Universities were built and have drawn staff and multitudes of students from the Persian heartlands. Now the University of Sistan and Baluchistan is the second-largest university in Iran, and has branches in Baluchi towns that were little more than oases. There is even an international university on the southern coast.

With the flood of government money, and the new incoming population to accommodate, Baluchistan has undergone a lightning-fast urbanization. The provincial capital, before the Islamic Republic no more than 10,000 in population, has now reached half a million. Farther south, small villages or artificial government posts now can boast, along with their universities, more than 50,000 residents. Many Baluch from the countryside, formerly nomadic pastoralists, have moved to the towns and cities to take jobs in various support services.

Governance in Baluchistan is largely by Shi'a Persians for Shi'a Persians. Shi'a religious authorities are present, and Shi'a rituals and displays are prominent. It has been alleged recently that Shi'a missionaries are active among the Baluch. The Sunni Baluch do not appreciate this imposition of Shi'ism in Baluchistan.

It also appears that Baluch are not favoured for posts and jobs. According to Dr. M. Hossein Bor, in a recent [4]briefing to the U.S. Congress,

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A practice widely used to discriminate against Baluch and other minorities is Gozinesh mean-

ing selection, an ideological test requiring applicants to universities and candidates for government jobs to demonstrate allegiance to Shia Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran including the concept of Vilayat-e Faghih (Governance of Religious Jurist), a concept not adhered to by Sunnis. This practice has been used to exclude Baluch from admission to universities or employment by government ever since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979.

In the world of business, many Baluch work for Shi'a Persians, which adds a class dimension to relations between Persians and Baluch.

To insure government control, there are a large military presence and frequent roadblocks. This has been heightened due to a small but effective insurgency by the Jundallah ("Soldiers of God"), also called the People's Resistance Movement of Iran, run by Abdulmalak Rigi, from the Rigi tribe of the Sarhad region. During the past several years, the Jundallah has attacked and killed military personnel (26 in two attacks this January), kidnapped military personnel, and recently set off a suicide car bomb at a police facility in Saravan. The Jundallah stands for greater respect for Sunni Islam within the Islamic Republic and, presumably, better treatment of Baluch in Baluchistan. The Jundallah is not a mass movement, and many Baluch remain ambivalent about it. But it does signal the potential for something larger, something that the Islamic Republic would wish to avoid. However, in a recent [5]speech, Supreme Leader the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei attributed the insurgency to outside interference:

Those evil people at the border areas of Iran with Pakistan... We have recordings of some of these evil people, and we know that they are connected to Americans. They talk to them via wireless radio, and get their orders from them. These are evil, murderous terrorists, who are connected to American officers in a neighboring country. Unfortunately, this is still going on.

The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic gives no indication he has reflected on the situation and treatment of Baluch in Baluchistan.



[6] Minorities around Iran. Baluchistan is an extreme case, but one that reflects problems of minorities throughout Iran. Baha'is and Jews are under constant pressure, and are regarded as suspect by the Islamic Republic. So too with any national minorities, such as Kurds. All of these have seen arrests, disappearances, and executions for alleged anti-regime activities. But this should not be surprising, when opposition newspapers are shut down and Shi'a Persians with views differing from the Islamic Republic also are arrested, made to disappear, or turn up dead on the side of roads, and so on.

The position of minorities in Iran has not gone unnoticed outside of Iran. Baluchi nationalists in Pakistan regard Iranian Baluchistan as Occupied West Baluchistan. Saudi newspapers have recently denounced Iranian treatment of Sunnis and Arabs; the [7]following is from the leading Saudi daily, Al-Watan:

Although a million and a half of Tehran's native residents are Sunni, they do not have a single mosque in which to pray, or [a single] center in which to congregate.... A Sunni Muslim citizen cannot hold a senior position in the [Iranian] state, even if he is very knowledgeable and enjoys broad public support....

Intense [efforts] are underway to 'Persianize' the Arab region of Khuzestan (Arabistan), and the oil-rich city of Al-Ahwaz, [although] it is situated in the southwest of Iran where the majority of population is Sunni Arab. This is being done by evicting Arab residents, particularly Sunnis, from their homes, and settling families of Persian origin in their place. Sunni regions, in both western and eastern Iran (i.e. in Baluchistan), are being subjected to a policy of intentional marginalization, [implemented by non-] development and by excluding their residents from [government] positions.

This racist attitude applies not only to Sunnis but to all Arabs [in Iran]....

In Iran, Arab and Sunni clerics and leaders are killed, [Arab] social activists are arrested, and there are attempts to restrict the Arab culture, yet international human rights organizations remain silent – as though they are in league with the regime of the mullahs.

Iran's neighbors are watching Iran's treatment of its minorities, as they watch Iran's manoeuvres in the wider world of Persian-Arab and Shi'a-Sunni relations. Persian interference in Saudi Arabia through its Shi'a minority, could be met with counter-measures among the Sunnis of Iran. The ambitions of Baluchi, Kurdish, Turkish and other nationalists, both inside and on the borders of Iran, might begin to draw support from major Sunni powers if the Islamic Republic's external initiatives tread too heavily upon their toes. The Islamic Republic has been looking at openings in other countries in the wider region to advance its influence and its goals. But now other countries are looking at potential openings in Iran as point of leverage on the Islamic Republic. What is good for the Persian goose,...

The rulers of Iran have got and stayed where they are because they are true believers. The weakness of their strength is their relations with the others. Being true believers, they cannot appreciate diversity, and have failed to be inclusive. The danger for the Islamic Republic is that the others, perhaps with external encouragement and support, turn from resentment to dissidence to outright rebellion and insurgency. Since the founding of the Islamic Republic, the others in Iran have not had much of a say. They may find new ways to speak.

This post was originally presented at the conference on "The Future of Iran as a Regional Power," March 30-31, 2009, organized by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), and jointly sponsored by Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, National Defence Canada, and the Privy Council Office. It is published here with the permission of Academic Outreach, CSIS.

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2. [http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3617/3440771819\\_5c58544b7e\\_o.gif](http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3617/3440771819_5c58544b7e_o.gif)
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## Egypt, Iran, the United States: All politics is local (2009-04-14 15:33)

From [1]Michele Dunne



After several years in which Egypt seemed to have ceded the mantle of Arab leadership to Saudi Arabia (and even to small states such as Qatar), the octogenarian Hosni Mubarak has become reenergized in the last few months. He came out swinging against Hezbollah last week, charging the Lebanese group with efforts to destabilize Egypt via terrorist attacks. He has pressed harder recently for a deal in Fatah-Hamas talks (see [2]this article by Khaled Hroub in the [3]Arab Reform Bulletin for more on the struggle between Egypt and Hamas). He took a forceful position in the Gaza crisis, despite deep opposition in Egypt and throughout the region.

What has changed? Has the Iranian threat to Egyptian interests finally become clear to Mubarak? Mubarak has lashed out at Hezbollah leader Nasrallah several times in the last few years, and perhaps views the current episode as a way to expose the dangers Hezbollah presents—and to get back at Nasrallah for his calls to Egyptians to rise up against Mubarak during the recent Gaza affair. Regarding the Iranian dimension, Mubarak has always been strongly suspicious of the Islamic Republic. Just last year he rebuffed the latest of repeated attempts by Iran to reestablish diplomatic relations, broken 30 years ago.

While Iran is a continuing worry, what seems to be motivating Mubarak now are two interests—one in foreign policy, one domestic—that are closely related. Mubarak's renewed assertiveness suggests that he views the advent of the Obama administration as an opportunity to reestablish his worth as a U.S. ally. By serving as the principal channel to Hamas, Mubarak has placed Egypt at the center of the Israeli-Palestinian issue, important to the Obama administration. And by taking on Hezbollah strongly, he has placed Egypt squarely on the correct side of the regional divide between allies of Iran and allies of the United States.

The curious thing, however, is that Mubarak does not really need to try this hard. The Obama administration came into office focused on rebuilding relationships that were tested by the policy disagreements and freedom agenda of the Bush era, and already has given signals of friendly intentions toward Cairo.

This brings us to the domestic Egyptian dimension of what Mubarak is up to. The next two years promise to be interesting and challenging ones in Egyptian politics. In autumn 2010 there will be parliamentary elections, which are likely to be at least as controversial as those of 2005 (in which the Muslim Brotherhood won over 20 percent of seats, in spite of government interference). In September 2011, Mubarak's current presidential term finishes, and (assuming he is still with us) the 83-year-old president will have to decide

whether to run again for another six-year term, step aside and encourage his son Gamal to run, or step aside and encourage someone else (perhaps a military or security figure) to run. What those three options have in common is that all will be deeply unpopular with the Egyptian public, because there is no expectation that the election will be freely contested.

While there is no reason to expect that opposition in Egypt will be strong enough to force Mubarak's hand regarding presidential succession, it certainly would be helpful to him to have unambiguous U.S. support for whichever course he chooses. Also, keeping the Muslim Brotherhood cowed and defensive (whether through direct measures against the group or against its regional allies and ideological bedfellows) helps Mubarak clear the decks for whatever he plans to do. Playing the regional power game has its value, but keeping hold of power at home is the bottom line.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele\\_dunne/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele_dunne/)
2. <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/arb/?fa=show&article=22929>
3. <http://carnegieendowment.org/arb/>

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Michele Dunne (2009-04-16 09:23:49)

I agree with [1]Jon Alterman that Mubarak may be using the Hezbollah threat to demonstrate Egypt's indispensability to Washington, as I indicated in my [2]initial post. The further question I asked was why exactly Mubarak needs to work so hard at this now, when he already has a U.S. administration that is ready to embrace him. That is where the domestic political angle comes in. The need to secure presidential succession is now coloring many other issues, whether in domestic or foreign policy, and failing to take it into account leaves out a critical factor in understanding Egyptian actions and motivations. [3]*Michele Dunne is a member of MESH.*

1.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/04/egypt-iran-the-united-states-all-politics-is-local/#comment-1990>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/04/egypt-iran-the-united-states-all-politics-is-local/>
3. <file://localhost/mnt/ext/blogbooker/tmp/4p5x1k8v/4p5x1k8v-body.tex.lynxcomments.html>

Jon Alterman (2009-04-15 10:05:05)

I'm not sure I agree with the domestic politics [1]argument. Skeptical as I am of arguments that the world revolves around Washington, this gesture feels to me that it's intended for inside-the-Beltway consumption. With all of the Egyptian delegations passing through Washington in recent months, it's hard not to notice that Egypt is waging a charm offensive, perhaps to be capped with a presidential visit in the coming weeks. But charming the new administration means demonstrating Egypt's indispensability to U.S. policy in the Middle East, which has sometimes proven a harder sell. The current campaign has all the elements of such a play, a trifecta that highlights cooperation on Arab-Israeli security, counterterrorism, and curbing Iranian influence in the Middle East. As I argued in my recent [2]newsletter, though, the U.S.-Egyptian bilateral relationship suffers from not having had a shared grand project at its core for some time. The current move by Egypt seems to me to be more about tactics than strategy, reinforcing a sense that this relationship isn't about anything in particular rather than vital to U.S. national security. None of this is intended to deny the domestic upside of what the Egyptian government is doing, only to suggest that the more important audience is along the Potomac rather than along the Nile. [3]*Jon Alterman is a member of MESH.*

1. <file://localhost/mnt/ext/blogbooker/tmp/4p5x1k8v/4p5x1k8v-body.tex.lynxcomments.html>
2. [http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/0409\\_menc.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/0409_menc.pdf)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon\\_alterman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon_alterman/)

Steven A. Cook (2009-04-17 13:23:37)

I agree and disagree with both Michele Dunne and Jon Alterman. It's clear that President Mubarak wants to kiss and make up with Washington, but it is not just a function of the Obama administration. Yes, Cairo's policy over the last few years was to wait out the Bush administration because, in the words of one official, "anything that comes next has

got to be better.” But Mubarak and company’s efforts to prove Egypt’s strategic value span the last few years of the Bush era as well as the first few months of President Obama’s term. Mubarak’s seconding of King Abdallah’s now famous (or infamous) Shi’a crescent remark; his stand on the Lebanon war; his refusal to bow to political pressure during Israel’s Gaza offensive; that senior Egyptian official stating bluntly, “we want to help Washington keep the Iranians busy with themselves”—all these were about placing Egypt on the right side of the regional divide, as Michele [1]suggests. I agree with Jon’s friendly [2]critique of Michele’s contention that domestic political dynamics explain Mubarak’s sudden activism. The elections of 2010 and 2011 are important, but they do not seem to be the primary factor driving the Egyptians. There is something else going on here, and it is likely the Egyptian (and Saudi) mistrust of Washington’s now-stated policy of engagement with Tehran. While neither Cairo nor Riyadh wants Washington to take military action against Iran (or authorize the Israelis to do so), they are also quite concerned that any American dialogue with the Islamic Republic will come at Egyptian or Saudi expense. The Egyptians, although not as acutely paranoid as the Saudis (who worry that Washington wants to replace Riyadh with Tehran as its primary interlocutor), are nonetheless concerned that U.S.-Iran engagement will further erode Egypt’s regional position. Mubarak’s tough talk on Hezbollah and Iran is an implicit way of signaling to the Obama administration not to get too carried away with engagement, because Tehran remains a very bad actor. Whatever problems might have developed in the U.S.-Egypt bilateral relationship over the last eight years, the Egyptian president is reminding his American counterpart that Cairo remains critical in creating a regional environment that makes it easier for the United States to exercise its power. [3]Steven A. Cook is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/04/egypt-iran-the-united-states-all-politics-is-local/>

2.

<http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/04/egypt-iran-the-united-states-all-politics-is-local/#comment-1990>

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### MESH on Twitter (2009-04-15 11:05)

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1. <http://twitter.com/MESHHarvard>

### Foreign policy: a practical pursuit (2009-04-17 11:05)

From [1]Martin Kramer

“Scholars on the Sidelines” is the headline of an [2]op-ed by Harvard’s Joseph Nye in Monday’s Washington Post. There he notes that the Obama administration has appointed few political scientists to top positions, and predicts a widening of the divide between policymaking and academic theorizing. His Harvard colleague Stephen Walt has [3]echoed the complaint, placing the blame upon scholars who follow what he calls “the cult of irrelevance.” Michael Desch, a Notre Dame political scientist, also has written in the same vein in a [4]new piece entitled “Professor Smith Goes to Washington,” claiming that while Obama may be “depopulating the Ivy League and other leading universities with his appointments,” it’s unlikely the academics can match the influence of the think tanks or overcome the anti-intellectualism that pervades society and government.

The driver of this year’s rehashing of the issue is the promise of the Obama administration; just a few



years ago it was the threat of Al Qaeda. Ask Bruce Jentleson now a MESH member, who wrote a similar and much-discussed [5]lament about academic insularity—exactly seven years ago.

Of course, the debate is older than that. I addressed it myself, in an [6]article entitled "Policy and the Academy: An Illicit Relationship?" originally delivered as a lecture in 2002. The occasion was the tenth anniversary of the passing of [7]Elie Kedourie (1926-1992), who taught politics at the London School of Economics and whose work has had an abiding influence upon many students of the Middle East, myself included. My subject was a short essay by Kedourie, dating from 1961, entitled "Foreign Policy: A Practical Pursuit." I explored (and contested) Kedourie's principled belief that policy and the academy should not meet, and that the divide benefited them both.

My piece is on the web and many have read it. But now that this debate has resumed, I think it useful to provide access to Kedourie's own text—a trenchant 1,100 words—which I think speaks rather more forcefully than my synopsis of it. Read his piece first, and only then read [8]my discussion of it. (By the way, the poet he quotes is Eliot; the poem, Gerontion. And yes, Kedourie usually did put "social scientists" in quotation marks.)

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Foreign Policy: A Practical Pursuit

by Elie Kedourie

Foreign policy, it is universally agreed, is a practical pursuit. It is an activity the end of which is the attainment of advantage or the prevention of mischief. Foreign policy, in short, is action, not speculation. Is the academic fitted by his bent, his training, his usual and wonted preoccupations, to take or recommend action of the kind which generals and statesman are daily compelled to recommend or take?

Someone might say, in reply, that academics are the best fitted for this activity. They have, after all, a highly trained intelligence, they are long familiar with the traffic of ideas, and long accustomed scrupulously to weigh evidence, to make subtle distinctions, and to render dispassionate verdicts. Plato, it might be urged, was not far out in his hopes of philosophers becoming kings.

The good academic is indeed as has just been described, but it is not really wise to invoke Plato's shade, and exalt the scholar to such a high degree. For consider: if the academic is to recommend action here and now—and in foreign policy action must be here and now—should he not have exact and prompt knowledge of situations and their changes? Is it then proposed that foreign ministries should every morning circulate to historians and "social scientists" the reports of their agents and the despatches of their diplomats? Failing this knowledge, the academic advising or exhorting action will most likely appear the learned fool, babbling



of he knows what.

It may be objected that this is not what is meant at all: we do not, it may be said, want the academic to concern himself with immediate issues or the minutiae of policies; we want his guidance on long-term trends and prospects; and here, surely, his knowledge of the past, his erudition, his reflectiveness will open to him vistas unknown to the active politician, or unregarded by him. And should not this larger view, this wider horizon be his special contribution to his country's policies and to its welfare? But this appeal to patriotism, this subtle flattery, needs must be resisted. Here the man of action may be called on in support: it is related of the great Lord Salisbury that presented with a long, judicious, balanced memorandum written by one of his officials, and abounding in wise considerations on the one hand, and in equally sage considerations on the other hand, he impatiently exclaimed: "How well do I know these hands!"

The long view, the balanced view, the judicious view, then, can positively unfit a man for action, and for giving advice on action—which, as has been said, must be taken here and now. The famed academic, Dr. Toynbee, writing his *Study of History* in 1935 came to the conclusion, on the weightiest and most erudite of grounds, that there was no likelihood of Peking ever again in the future becoming the capital of China! Should he not have remembered the sad and moving confession of Ibn Khaldun—a writer he much admired—that his minute knowledge of prosody unfitted him for the writing of poetry?

What is true of poetry is as true of politics, and an academic's patriotic duty is not to confuse rulers with long views and distant prospects, for the logic of events seems to take pleasure in mocking the neat and tidy logic of ideas:

Think now [it is a poet who warns us]  
 History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors  
 And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,  
 Guides us by vanities. Think now  
 She gives when our attention is distracted  
 And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions  
 That the giving famishes the craving. Gives too late  
 What's not believed in, or if still believed  
 In memory only, reconsidered passion. Gives too soon  
 Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed with  
 Till the refusal propagates a fear.

How difficult, therefore, to be wise, except after the event, and how every leap is a leap in the dark! To be wise only after the event is accounted a failing in men of action; but to be wise after the event is a virtue in historians. To leap in the dark requires strong muscles, steady nerves, a taste for adventure, and not too great a fear of the consequences. "I am not responsible for the consequences" Salisbury used to say, and he meant that having acted to the best of his knowledge and judgement, he could not but let the events take their course as the fates in their caprice decreed.

Shall academics then presume to instruct a man how he shall leap? Presumption is the pride of fools, and it ought to be the scholar's pride not to presume. It is pursuit of knowledge and increase of learning which gives scholars renown and a good name. How then should they, clothed as they are in the mantle of scholarship, imitate this lobby or that pressure group, and recommend this action or that, all the time knowing full well that in politics one is always acting in a fog, that no action is wholly to the good, and that every action in benefiting one particular interest will most likely be to another's detriment. Scholars, of course, are also citizens, and as such jealous for the welfare and honour of their country. Equally with

other citizens they can recommend and exhort, but they should take care that a scholarly reputation does not illicitly given spurious authority to some civic or political stance.

Of what use then are academics? The impatient, mocking question seems to invite the short, derisive answer, which men of action and men of business have not seldom been disposed to give. But the scholar's existence and activity does not have to be justified by his usefulness. Who, in the first place, shall be the judge of usefulness, who can tell whether the useful will not turn out to be useless and worse, and in the second, a world in which people shall live or die according as they are useful or not is one which men must feel to be totally estranged and hostile. The question therefore cannot be, of what use are academics, but rather what is it that they do. Unlike the earlier question, this one does not plunge the enquirer into the metaphysical depths, and the answer to it is very simple. Academics seek to transmit and to increase learning, one had almost said useless learning—but one does not wish to provoke. Foreign policy they leave to those who make bold to know how to leap in the dark.

First published in *The Princetonian*, January 4, 1961; republished in Elie Kedourie, *The Crossman Confessions and other Essays in Politics, History, and Religion* (London: Mansell, 1984).

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Josef Joffe (2009-04-17 14:30:53)

There was a time in the early 'sixties, so the lore goes, when Harvard professors did not measure time by the clock but by plane departures from Boston Logan to Washington National. In those days, academics were *tres recherches* in DC, and the dean of Arts and Sciences, McGeorge Bundy, even became the first National Security Adviser. JFK took them all—economists, historians like Arthur Schlesinger, political scientists. But these would be people like, a bit later, Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski, who were first and foremost political, and not scientific. They had prepared all their academic lives for a public career. The more important point, though, is this: Political science in those days was a lot more politics and a lot less science. In fact, none of the social sciences were so number-crunchy and model-mad. In those days, this author could read the *American Economic Review*; today, he no longer can. Too much matrix math. In other words, the gap between the public and the thinking life was a lot smaller then. And so, the complaint of Nye et al. should be directed not to Obama, who, by the way, has populated half his administration with luminaries large and small from Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, etc. The proper target is contemporary social and, above all, political science. Henry Kissinger would never get tenure today, not with books like *A World Restored* or *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* or *The Troubled Partnership*. This blend of history, analytical thinking, political theory and readable English is "high-class journalism" today. If you want to move from assistant to tenured professor, you would have to write *To Nuke or Not to Nuke: A Rational-Choice and Co-Variance Model of Soviet-American Behavior in the Age of Attriting Bipolarity*. Academics who aspire to science will by definition be unable to act as political advisers. In today's political science, as practiced by the best universities, the "politics" has been taken out of the "science." But unless our basic rat-chooser or multiple-regression maven can shed the role that made him full professor, he will not be able to advise. "Mr. President, I cannot tell you what to do. I can only tell you that Kim Jong Il's aggressiveness rises with the number of slasher movies he has watched, with a correlation coefficient of .3." Larry Summers, a theoretical economist in his younger days, has bridged the gap. In fact, more economists seem capable of jumping from academia to politics than political scientists. Why? Try this for an explanation: Economists have

learned that their models and regressions don't carry very far; the rage now is behavioral economics which relies not on models (and finding data that fit them), but on observation. Political science must yet loosen the apron strings. The paradigm remains rational choice, taken straight from 19th-century microeconomics, but with an admixture of high-speed computing. "Brother, can you paradigm?" is the motto. Try figuring out a policy on Iranian or North Korean nukes by laying out paradigms and factor analyses. Whatever you want to say today has to fit on a Blackberry screen. [1]*Josef Joffe is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef\\_joffe/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef_joffe/)

Bruce Jentleson (2009-04-20 04:47:41)

Two main points come through in Joe Nye's valuable [1]op-ed. One is that U.S. foreign policy could benefit from more contributions from academics. It's not that we in the academy are smarter than those in the policy realm. It's that each of us brings to bear a particular type of knowledge and perspective that could be constructively complementary. Some of the responsibility for converting the "could be's" to "is" lies with the policy community and its institutional culture and processes. But a lot lies with the academic community—the political science discipline and international relations subfield, to be more precise—which, as Joe and I and others have argued, is excessively oriented to abstract theory, formal models, methodological wizardry and the like. And this gets at Joe's second main point. Greater policy relevance in political science-IR is not some altruistic appeal. It's in our self-interest as a subfield, as a discipline and as universities. That was also the main point of my 2002 *International Security* [2]article, "The Need for Praxis: Bringing Policy Relevance Back In"—which was less a lament as Martin Kramer describes it in [3]his post than a tough-love exhortation. Greater policy relevance makes for greater intellectual pluralism. It leads to the kind of research that can lead to theories that are more reliable, valid and resonant. It can enhance teaching of undergraduates in the best liberal arts traditions. It can strengthen and broaden the training of graduate students, all the more important in a world in which the academic job market is even more squeezed and Ph.D.s would do well to have skills that also fit policy track opportunities in government. I'm not yet as [4]optimistic as Mark Katz, but am hopeful. As 2009 Program Co-Chair for the American Political Science Association, I [5]made policy relevance one of the themes for the Annual Meeting:

We are challenged by the era in which we live to bring our knowledge to bear beyond the academy. How do we encourage greater policy relevance in ways consistent with our scholarly roles? What can departments, universities and the APSA each do in this regard? More particularly, what do we as scholars have to contribute on such broad concerns as social justice, nonviolent political change, and international peace, as well as a host of more particular issues at the local, national and international levels?

Thomas Weiss, current president of the International Studies Association, is [6]going even further with the ISA 2010 conference, making "Theory vs. Policy? Connecting Scholars and Practitioners" the overarching program theme. With the strong support of Steve del Rosso, who heads the Carnegie Corporation of New York's International Peace and Security Program, my Berkeley colleague Steve Weber and I have a grant for helping foster "Next Generation Policy Relevant Political Scientists." We've been running a number of initiatives. We'll soon be launching a website for our overall project; I'll post the link on MESH when we do. One of the main initiatives, now in its fourth year, is a conference designed to bring together and continue building a network of Political Science graduate students who are policy-oriented and interested in U.S. foreign policy and international politics. We ran this year's conference last month at George Washington University's Elliott School in collaboration with Jim Goldgeier. We had over 80 applicants from a number of the top Pol Sci Ph.D. programs in the country for about 15 slots. And the conference was run by Berkeley, Duke and GWU grad students and newly minted assistant profs. I came back from those two days feeling inspired by these grad students, many of whom had some policy experience prior to coming back to grad school and who do want careers that have policy components but are primarily based in universities. I wished I could have been more bullish on how well this will work—and along with Joe Nye, some MESH colleagues and others will continue to try to be able to be so. [7]*Bruce Jentleson is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/12/AR2009041202260.html>

2. [http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/337/need\\_for\\_praxis.html?breadcrumb=%2Fexperts%2F1153%2Fbruce\\_jentleson](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/337/need_for_praxis.html?breadcrumb=%2Fexperts%2F1153%2Fbruce_jentleson)

3. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/04/foreign-policy-a-practical-pursuit/>

4. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/04/foreign-policy-a-practical-pursuit/#comment-2006>

5. [http://www.apsanet.org/content\\_56599.cfm](http://www.apsanet.org/content_56599.cfm)
6. <http://www.isanet.org/neworleans2010/call-for-papers.html>
7. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bruce\\_jentleson/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bruce_jentleson/)

Walter Laqueur (2009-04-18 13:38:17)

Academics (intellectuals, philosophers) and politics: I am not sure whether much that is new can be said about the subject. Plato wrote that philosophers should be kings in his ideal city state, but for him philosophers were seekers of the truth, wisdom-lovers concerned with eternal truths. Max Weber dealt with politics as a vocation in his famous lectures soon after World War One as did countless others. The relationship is not illicit. Part of the problems is that the qualities needed for the study of foreign policy are not necessarily those required for its successful conduct. Furthermore, as has been so often noted, political science since the days of Elie Kedourie's [1]essay has been preoccupied more and more with topics which, however fascinating, are not those of foreign policy makers. Students were advised to get familiar with Bayesian statistics and game theory, but how to quantify fears and ambitions, religion and nationalism—or, as Hans Morgenthau early noted, the struggle for power? When two people want the same country (such as in the case of Israel/Palestine), this is not a case of cognitive dissonance. Being engaged in theory-building (grand theory, middle-range theory, etc.), the nets were cast admirably widely. The innovators borrowed from social psychology (decision-making), management (operations research), communications theory, anthropology and even biology (general systems). They immersed themselves with enthusiasm in such classics as *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, *sabungan* (Balinese cockfights), and "exit, voice and loyalty." I shall not even mention the various sub-disciplines (such as postcolonial studies) of postmodernism and their impact on some political scientists. All this intellectual curiosity was very admirable and certainly contributed to a broadening of cultural horizons. But the urgent problems facing us were on a different level: how to deal with the cold war, proliferation, China, Putin, Islamism, Africa or terrorism and so on. With only a little exaggeration, political science could say, paraphrasing Jesus Christ, "Our kingdom is not of this world..." Of course there were always individual scholars following different paths, and some of them found their way into the practice of politics, but these were the exceptions. There was also the field of area studies; their expertise was certainly needed and they faced certain specific problems of their own. (I try to deal briefly with some of them in a forthcoming book *Best of Times, Worst of Times*.) Is there much point in calling on political science to become more relevant? This, I suspect, is bound to happen anyway, not as the result of intellectual debate but as a consequence of economic crisis. [2] *Walter Laqueur is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/04/foreign-policy-a-practical-pursuit/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_laqueur/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_laqueur/)

Mark N. Katz (2009-04-19 06:57:14)

Have political science professors really forsaken the policy realm in order to spend more quality time with their children (models and theories)? Have the think-tankers taken advantage of their distraction to whisper sweet policy nothings into the ears of the powerful and thereby gain the political appointments that could have and should have gone to political science professors? And to the extent that this is happening, is it really something new? I believe that the concern [1]expressed by Joe Nye and others about these matters may be overblown. While political science professors may not be getting many top-tier appointments, I know plenty of political science professors—some of whom are members of MESH—who consult for the U.S. Government. Nor is the U.S. Government shy about seeking out political science professors for advice. (And needless to say, many accept the call to be paid to pronounce, no matter how much they might criticize American foreign policy to their colleagues and students.) Nor have the modelers and theorizers been left out. Several offices in the Defense Department and other U.S. government agencies have paid them big bucks to develop models of various political phenomena for policymakers to make more informed policies. Yes, think-tankers seem to be a lot more visible than they were in previous decades. On the other hand, there appear to be far more think-tanks than there used to be. And many of these think-tankers are...political scientists! And as annoying as this may be to those of us who are professors and not think-tankers, surely this is better than in previous decades when Washington sought advice more from lawyers whose training had less relevance than that of the modelers and theorizers for understanding contemporary international relations. I have heard many complain that assistant professors are pushed to produce increasingly esoteric and inaccessible research in order to gain tenure and acceptance in the political science field. But are they really being forced to do this? I know of, or have heard of, several assistant professors who actively consult for the U.S. Government—and even corporations—while also having books accepted by respected university presses and well regarded journals. Indeed, I have heard tell that some assistant professors of political science have brazenly cited policymakers' demand for their advice as an excuse for avoiding the mundane academic tasks of attending committee meetings, advising undergraduates, or even showing up for lectures. Far from

being increasingly divorced from the concerns of the U.S. Government, it seems to me that the period since 9/11 has marked an upsurge in opportunity for political science professors to advise the U.S. Government—if they want to do so. Just how valuable this advice has been, of course, is another matter altogether. [2]Mark N. Katz is a member of *MESH*.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/04/foreign-policy-a-practical-pursuit/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_n\\_katz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_n_katz/)

Michael Horowitz (2009-04-20 09:25:15)

I actually think the link between political science and policy is becoming closer once again. Many political scientists served in government during the last administration, including Aaron Friedberg, Peter Feaver, Victor Cha, Stephen Krasner, Tom Christensen, Condi Rice, and others. Within some parts of the intelligence community, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita's models, love them or hate them, have played an important role for a few decades. Other political scientists have also been contracted by various government agencies to do a variety of modeling tasks, both quantitative and game theoretic. Now, it is important to recognize that there are limitations to these methodologies like there are limitations to all methodologies. What matters is the knowledge of the researcher and their ability to explain, cogently, their research to a policy audience. More importantly over the long run, there are generational issues at work. The newer generation of international relations scholars, especially, are increasingly interested in doing work that is *both* academically rigorous and policy relevant. This generation of scholars is comfortable both running regressions and stepping back from their statistical software to explain what their results suggest for the real world. In this regards, the initiative Bruce Jentleson [1]mentioned in a previous comment seems quite promising indeed. This also relates to the question of why is there a closer link between economics and policy than political science and policy. Josef Joffe [2]posits that it is because political scientists are more wedded to their models than the economists:

In fact, more economists seem capable of jumping from academia to politics than political scientists. Why? Try this for an explanation: Economists have learned that their models and regressions don't carry very far; the rage now is behavioral economics which relies not on models (and finding data that fit them), but on observation. Political science must yet loosen the apron strings. The paradigm remains rational choice, taken straight from 19th-century microeconomics, but with an admixture of high-speed computing.

Raj M. Desai and James Vreeland, professors at the Georgetown School of Foreign Service, who posted on Dan Drezner's *Foreign Policy* blog, have actually made the [3]opposite argument, writing:

Staffers at the US Treasury, the Fed, the National Economic Council (to name a few places) are comfortable reading cutting-edge economic analyses because they have been trained to understand mathematical models and statistical results. If people at the State Department or the National Security Council have not been comparably trained, however, they will not understand contemporary political science or its capacity to inform policy. Academic political science can do a much better job of reaching out to policymakers. But governmental agencies need to focus some effort on recruiting individuals who have the background and skills needed to apply modern political science to their daily work. Both sides need to make an effort.

I think it is important to remember that rigor does not necessarily imply dogged adherence to rational choice principles. More generally, Desai and Vreeland argue that the links between economists and policy have flourished not due to a shift by economists away from rigor, but because economists in the government are more rigorous, in a relative sense, than their national security counterparts. This seems like a clear factual disagreement. Thoughts on who is right? I don't know of any real data that would allow us to resolve this question, but hopefully someone else can shed light on this question. Finally, Mark Katz [4]is correct: an upswing in interest by political scientists in policy relevance and interest by the government in hearing from political scientists does not mean political scientists are giving good advice. Or bad advice, for that matter. But it does mean the opportunities for involvement are growing and very well may continue to grow over the next generation. [5]Michael Horowitz is a member of *MESH*.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/04/foreign-policy-a-practical-pursuit/#comment-2007>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/04/foreign-policy-a-practical-pursuit/#comment-2000>
3. [http://drezner.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/04/17/the\\_academy\\_strikes\\_back](http://drezner.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/04/17/the_academy_strikes_back)
4. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/04/foreign-policy-a-practical-pursuit/#comment-2006>
5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_horowitz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_horowitz/)

Michael Mandelbaum (2009-04-20 09:26:22)

The increasingly distant relationship between public policymaking and the academic study of international affairs has, I think, three distinct aspects. The first involves what Joe Nye [1] describes as the tendency for the work of academic political scientists to concentrate on "mathematical models, new methodologies or theories expressed in jargon that is unintelligible to policymakers." While this disqualifies such political scientists from any influence on public policy, as both Joe and Mark Katz [2] observe, their place has been taken by people in think tanks, who produce policy-relevant research that is impressive in its quantity and (to a somewhat lesser but hardly negligible extent) quality, and who regularly shuttle in and out of government. The character of present-day political science penalizes not the foreign policy process but rather the unfortunate undergraduates whom academic political scientists teach, who are forced to read books and articles and listen to lectures in which few of them can have any interest and that contribute nothing to one of the purposes of the education they are supposed to be receiving: helping them become well-informed citizens. The second aspect of the issue involves the imposition of a strident, misguided, anti-American political orthodoxy, which seems, from the evidence of Martin Kramer's *Ivory Towers on Sand*, to be a particular problem in the field of Middle East studies. Here, too, think tanks have begun to supply what the academy apparently will not: the evidence for this trend is the growing prominence of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (of whose Board of Advisors I am a member), the Middle East Forum, and the Saban Center. The third aspect of the relationship between universities and the policy process concerns the fitness of people with professional training in international relations or area studies to serve as policymakers. This cannot, of course, be done by kibitzing from the academy: to shape a policy requires being in the room, or the building, or at least the organization in which that policy is being made. But some of the qualities that advanced academic training should and often does cultivate are useful in the policy world: knowledge of a particular country or region, or a subject such as nuclear proliferation, and the capacity to think analytically and write succinctly and clearly. True, academics tend to take longer views and deal with broader subjects than do policymakers, but experience at thinking, as it were, strategically can surely be helpful in addressing the tactical maneuvers that are the stuff of day-to-day policy. On the other hand, successful policymakers must operate effectively in large organizations, and academics usually have little experience at this. Indeed, the academy can attract people precisely because they have no talent or taste for such activity. In the end it is, I think, legitimate to wonder whether the presence or absence of a background in the scholarly study of the issues with which policymakers must grapple makes any difference at all. Consider that Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Paul Wolfowitz and Madeleine Albright all earned Ph.D.s in political science, while John Quincy Adams, William Seward, Edward Stettinius and Warren Christopher did not. If any systematic connection between skill at policymaking and the possession of a particular kind of academic credential emerges from that list, I cannot discern it. [3] *Michael Mandelbaum is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/12/AR2009041202260.html>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/04/foreign-policy-a-practical-pursuit/#comment-2006>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_mandelbaum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_mandelbaum/)

### After the charm offensive, what next? (2009-04-17 13:02)

From [1] Walter Laqueur



President Obama in his charm offensive in Europe and Turkey said all the right things—about a new peaceful world order, about a world without nuclear weapons, about Turkey's greatness, about America's responsibility to take a lead solving the global financial crisis because it began in the United States, about America not being at war with Islam, about the Czech velvet revolution helping to

bring down an empire without a shot been fired and so on. Public relations are of considerable importance in international affairs as in other fields of human endeavor. It would be churlish to complain about the lack of specifics—public appearances were not the occasion to deal with them.

But it is not too early to ask what will follow next, to what extent will the charm offensive make it easier for America to cope with the major international crises ahead. As this is the subject of a book rather than of short comment, I would like to single out one issue: Afghanistan/Pakistan.

The establishment of stable conditions in these countries is of critical importance. They should not become failed states, safe havens for the preparation of terrorist attacks in various places. Nor do I believe that Afghanistan is the graveyard of empires, and that the war against Taliban cannot be won. It can be won on two conditions: that the border with Pakistan will be effectively sealed and that several hundred thousand NATO soldiers will be stationed in Afghanistan.

Closing borders is of decisive importance as historical precedents have shown time and again. The Greek communist guerrillas had the upper hand in the years after World War Two. They collapsed almost overnight the moment Tito defected from the Soviet bloc and closed the border between Yugoslavia and Greece.

But America is not in a position to dispatch substantial forces to Afghanistan and NATO Europe even less so, and the border will not be closed. The 3,000 soldiers promised in Strasbourg, most of them for non-combatant service, are a symbolic gesture. In the circumstances, present U.S. policy of trying to win the war with insufficient means does not make sense—unless it is part of a wider exit strategy.

Afghanistan and Pakistan will remain sources of major danger, but not only to the West. They will be a threat for India, China, Russia (with its interests in Central Asia) and even Iran. They will have to deal with this problem once the United States and NATO will have left.

But what about further proliferation and possibly, even likely, attacks with weapons of mass destruction? There is no answer as long as the concern about this danger is limited to the West, manifesting itself in little more than hand wringing. It will probably take a military conflict (or even two) fought with such weapons until the major powers (perhaps even the United Nations) will understand that there are certain common interests and a need for common action in this respect.

In the meantime, following the successful trip to Europe and Turkey there should be a moratorium on press conferences and speeches. Too frequent appearances are bound to lead to repetition, wear and tear, even disenchantment. I do not suggest President Obama should follow the example of General de Gaulle (one press conference a year with questions submitted three weeks before). But it ought to be possible to find a compromise between the two extremes.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_laqueur/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_laqueur/)

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### Iran symposium at Harvard (2009-04-20 15:06)

From [1]Stephen Peter Rosen and [2]Martin Kramer



Middle East Strategy at Harvard (MESH) is a virtual reality every day of this semester—except one. On Thursday, April 30, MESH will sponsor an afternoon symposium under the title "Iran: Threat, Challenge, or Opportunity?" The event will offer the Harvard community a sample of current thinking from a selection of MESH members and others. In a rapid sequence of short presentations—inspired by the blog format of MESH—eight authorities will address one of the most pressing issues on the U.S. strategic agenda.

The symposium will begin at 4:00 pm, and will proceed in two panels:

- Analogies

- [3] Michael Mandelbaum, SAIS, Johns Hopkins University
- [4] Martin Kramer, Olin Institute, Harvard University
- [5] Jacqueline Newmyer, Long Term Strategy Group
- [6] Alan Dowty, Kroc Institute, University of Notre Dame

- Engagement

- [7] Robert Satloff, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy
- [8] Mark N. Katz, George Mason University
- [9] Michael Singh, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy
- [10] Michael Doran, New York University

Venue: Belfer Case Study Room (S020), CGIS South, 1730 Cambridge Street ([11]map). Open to the public. Symposium ends at 6:45 pm.

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There are a limited number of places available to Harvard faculty and graduate students in a MESH-sponsored working session on possible Iranian nuclear doctrines. This session immediately precedes the public symposium described above, and will run from 2:00 pm to 3:45 pm. Opening presenters:

- [12] Stephen Peter Rosen, Olin Institute, Harvard University
- [13] [14] Vipin Narang, Belfer Center, Harvard University

If you wish to attend, write to this [15]email address.

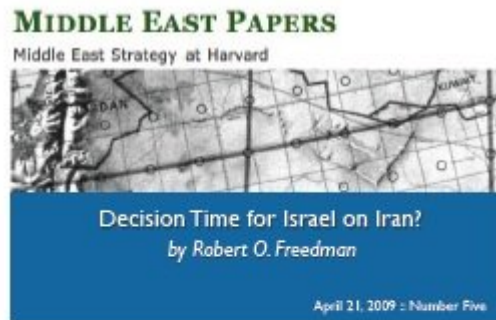
1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_mandelbaum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_mandelbaum/)
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5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jacqueline\\_newmyer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jacqueline_newmyer/)
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8. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_n\\_katz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_n_katz/)
9. <http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com/blog/2199>
10. <http://wagner.nyu.edu/faculty/facultyDetail.php?whereField=facultyID&whereValue=641>



11. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/09/cgismap.jpg>
12. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)
13. <http://www.gov.harvard.edu/student/vnarang/>
14. [http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/experts/1817/vipin\\_narang.html](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/experts/1817/vipin_narang.html)
15. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2007/10/email.JPG>

## 'Decision Time for Israel on Iran?' (2009-04-21 16:49)

From MESH Admin



**Israeli leaders, both military and civilian, have begun to consider... a preemptive attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, including the centrifuge site at Natanz and the heavy water reactor now under construction at Arak.**

The prospect of an Israeli attack has been heightened by Iran's recent conduct. Iran has increased the number of its nuclear enriching centrifuges to 7,000 (only 4,000 are needed to enrich Uranium 238 to bomb-grade Uranium 235), has tested increasingly sophisticated long-range missiles, and has put satellites in orbit. It continues to refuse to provide information to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) about its suspected nuclear weaponization program.

At the same time, however, the Obama administration has jettisoned the headline "Axis

of Evil" approach to Iran of its predecessor and has embarked on a new policy of engagement, while at the same time publicly warning Israel not to attack Iran.

Russia and China, with major economic interests in Iran, have downplayed the fear that Iran has been seeking nuclear weapons, making it very difficult for the United States, if it chooses to do so, to secure UN Security Council approval for major economic sanctions against Iran—a possible alternative to a military attack on Iran's nuclear installations.

Robert O. Freedman :: Decision Time for Israel on Iran? | Middle East Papers :: Middle East Strategy at Harvard

[1] The [2]latest contribution to Middle East Papers is by [3]Robert O. Freedman, who blogs about Israeli affairs at MESH. As Iran's nuclear drive continues unimpeded, and the Obama administration pursues a policy of "engagement," Israel approaches a moment of decision. Freedman explains why diplomacy and sanctions are unlikely to succeed, and considers plausible scenarios of an Israeli resort to military action against Iran's nuclear facilities. Download [4]here.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/04/freedman\\_israel\\_iran.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/04/freedman_israel_iran.pdf)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/04/freedman\\_israel\\_iran.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/04/freedman_israel_iran.pdf)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/04/freedman\\_israel\\_iran.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/04/freedman_israel_iran.pdf)

## Measuring Iraq (2009-04-24 07:45)

From [1]Mark T. Kimmitt

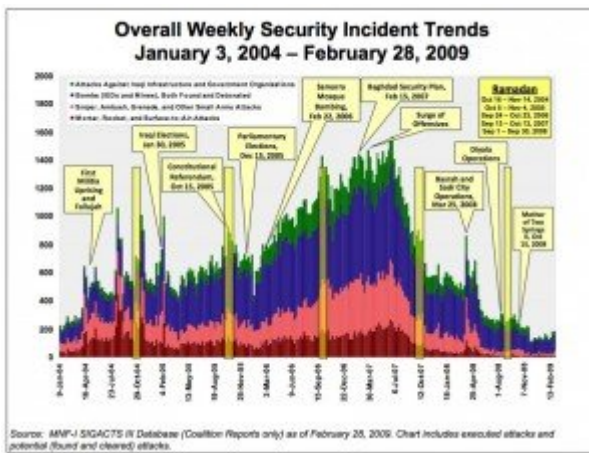
For those who follow Iraq closely, one of the more anticipated government documents is the quarterly "9010" report. This report, colloquially named after the requirement established in section 9010 of the 2006-2008 DOD appropriations acts, has been produced quarterly since July 2005 and serves as a historical

record for operations conducted over 90-day periods in Iraq. (All past issues are available [2]here.)

The 9010 report maintains data and graphs that go back years, often to the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Trends are graphically portrayed across a wide spectrum of areas ranging from the number of security incidents to the "hours of power" delivered to each province. Accompanied by fifty or so pages of text, the report is comprehensively focused to provide "the details behind the numbers." It leans heavily towards the security aspects of the mission, complimented by stability and reconstruction statistics, while its Department of State [3]counterpart (the "1227" report), reverses the emphasis by focusing on non-security and stabilization aspects.

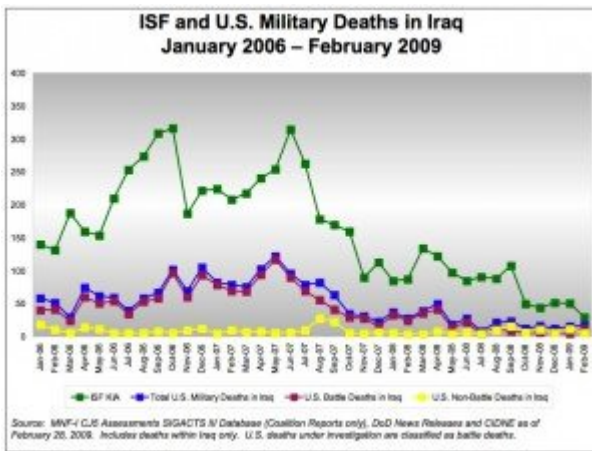
MESH proposed this post to me, based on my previous Iraq-related commentary and former position in DOD which involved responsibility for producing the 9010 reports in 2007 and 2008. With an interest in brevity, a quick examination of the graphs and selected commentary in the latest report provides room for optimism, but tempers that optimism by acknowledging that it's far too soon to declare success. Much has been accomplished, but much work—and risk—remain. (Click on any graph or map to enlarge.)

Five sets of graphs from the report illustrate this point: Overall security trends and fatalities (pp. 19-24); handover/transition of responsibility to the Iraqis (p. 31); economic progress (pp. 13, 14, 15); delivery of services (p. 16); and public perceptions (pp. 28, 29).



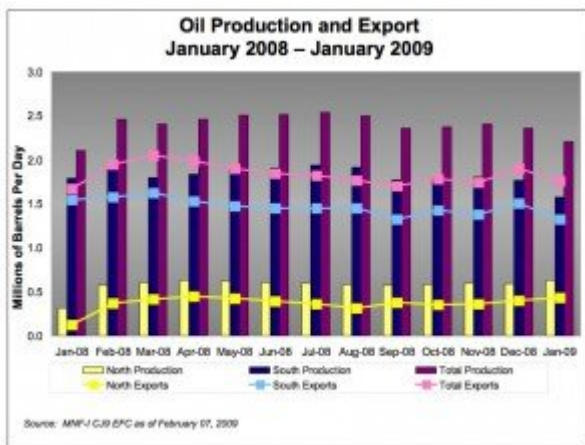
[4]

Within the security graphs, one is struck by the reduction in violence in Iraq. Violent incidents and attacks are down as are fatalities. U.S. military, ISF, civilian, and even ethno-sectarian fatalities have plummeted. The reduction is dramatic: at the height of the violence in 2006 and 2007, there were well over 1,500 incidents weekly, which included attacks against Iraqi infrastructure and government organizations, IEDs, mines, grenades, sniper attacks, ambushes, and other small arms attacks such as mortar, rocket and surface-to-air missiles. Tragically, those incidents were accompanied by fatalities and these are displayed in graphs on pages 20, 21 and 23. For example, in the period May-July 2007, the ISF was losing nearly 275 soldiers per month and the United States was losing between 75 and 100 soldiers per month. Civilian fatalities in late 2006 numbered in the thousands and most of those were attributed to ethno-sectarian violence. This is in depressingly stark contrast to the halcyon days of early 2004, where a 300-incident week was normal, fewer than 20 U.S. troops lost their lives each month, and records for civilians and ISF fatalities were so small they did not exist.



[5] While 2004 to 2006 saw a significant increase in violence, the decrease in violence over the next two years is equally dramatic. From numerical highs in 2007, the precipitous drop in all categories of violence is encouraging, but should be viewed with concern. Violence is not an end in itself (except for the nihilist) but a consequence of environmental conditions. Steady and consistent improvement in conditions is needed to institutionalize stability in Iraq and the efforts of the Iraqis and the United States is central to those improvements.

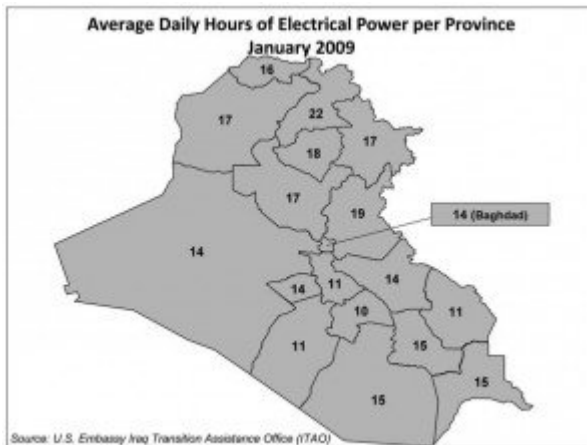
The next sets of graphs illustrate this point. One of the most important conditions leading to long term stability is economic progress, and in Iraq that means oil. Despite efforts to diversify the Iraqi economy, the country depends on the oil industry for the majority of government revenue and follow on private economic activity. The significance of oil production to economic progress is central, and is brought out in graphs on pages 13, 14 and 15.



[6] Unfortunately, the graphs demonstrate near-flat production rates of 2.0 to 2.5 million barrels per day for the past few years, and the recent fall in oil prices has taken its toll. The lack of production growth coupled with the return of sub- \$50 per barrel oil prices places significant pressure on government budgets and government services. The notes to the report highlight an improvement in infrastructure repairs, an increase in technical service contracts and the beginning of the long-awaited Southern Export Redundancy Project, all of which will improve consistency and quantities of oil production and could double (at least) oil output in years to come. The challenge, however, is whether that improvement in output and the realization of increased oil prices will be soon enough in the future so that the rising expectations of the Iraqi people are correspondingly met by a rising standard of living. If not, diminished expectations and standards of living could be a catalyst for renewed tension and corresponding violence.

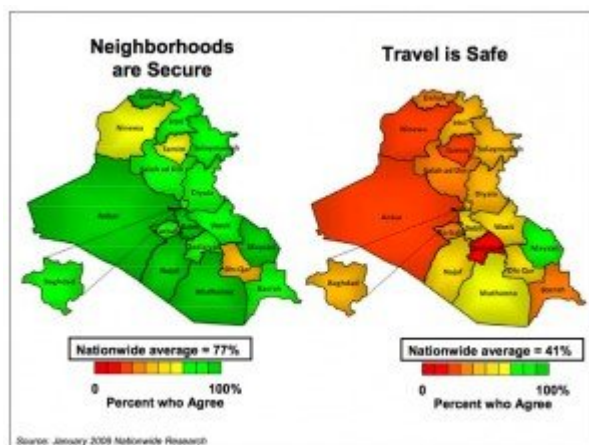
Rising expectations are reflected in many ways, not the least in an expectation of employment op-

portunities and basic services. Our troops and diplomats know that one should never underestimate the importance of steady employment, clean water, dependable electricity, clean streets and safe kids. Existential debates regarding the optimal balance of power sharing between provincial and federal authorities may rage in the coffee houses, but rarely at home.



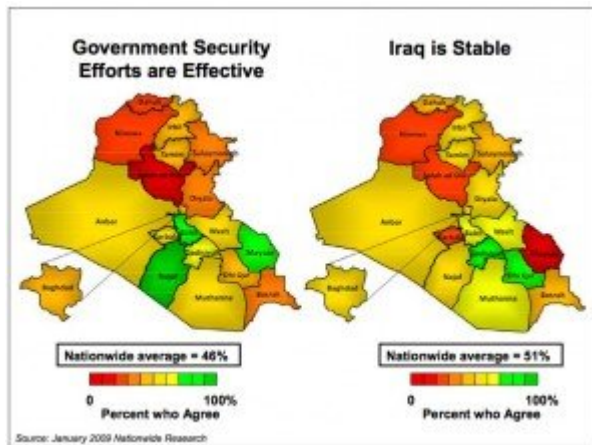
[7] One measure in the 9010—electricity supply and hours of power per province—illustrates this point. While delivery of electricity is improving, it has not grown as fast as the expectations of the Iraqi people. These expectations are manifest in the comment, “Only 18 % of Iraqis are somewhat or very satisfied by the amount of electricity they receive, down from 34 % who felt satisfied in November of 2007.” Yet, during this same period the average citizen received more hours of electricity, more reliably, every day. Despite this, the average citizen feels shortchanged by the Iraqi government’s inability to deliver the goods. One wonders if the recent increase in violence can be traced to these and other similar perceptions as to the effectiveness of the Iraqi government.

The text in the report indicates similar trends in access to clean water, sewage disposal, and health-care, and there is little to suggest that outside research would not find similar findings in other areas such as education and local governance. The report is candid about this challenge and notes: “The provision of essential services remains a key component of national reconciliation and a significant factor in building popular support for the GoI.” There is probably no better way to articulate this challenge, and demonstrates why these statistics remain so important to monitor.



[8] Nonetheless, the citizens of Iraq appear optimistic about the current situation and the future. Perhaps it is because of the challenges of 2006 and 2007, perhaps it is a cultural norm, but despite rising (and generally unfulfilled) expectations, they remain upbeat on the future. Few doubt the improvement measured in security trends translates directly to improvements in perceptions shown in the graphs on page 28. The most striking observation is not the belief that neighborhoods are very safe (they can see that with their own eyes), but the belief that travel

outside of their province is generally safe. While the second measure has much room to improve, the graph (or a similar measure) was consistently red (no travel is safe outside of my province) in earlier iterations of the 9010 report. This bodes well for a belief in a unified and national Iraq.



[9] The second set of graphs is less sanguine: perceptions on government security efforts and overall stability. Here, the slides are far improved over previous years and reflect a measure of optimism that was absent in earlier polls. Nonetheless, as a referendum on the government, the numbers are not a rousing endorsement. This should be tempered by our own American experience: government officials and government rarely earn high numbers from the American population.

Nonetheless, the general sense one takes away from the graphs and the accompanying text is that the Iraqis feel better about their individual circumstances than any time in recent years. They remain fairly optimistic about the future, they have a higher regard for the military and police, but they still expect more from the government. Their patience is not everlasting and the Iraqi government, quite simply, needs to pick up its game. Time is not on its side and one can only hope that the referendum on the government will play out in the voting booth and not on the streets.

And here lies the rub. As President Obama has stated, it's time for the Iraqis to make the hard choices and control their own destiny. The President is right, but one wonders about the timing. As shown in the 9010 report, much has been done in a short while, but there is much more to do. The report acknowledges this conundrum in the Executive Summary:

Despite the continued progress, these gains remain fragile and uneven throughout the country, and their durability has not been seriously tested. Iraq remains fragile, primarily because the underlying sources of instability have yet to be resolved—the nation's major power brokers do not share a unified national vision, they disagree on the nature of the state, and they are reluctant to share power and resources. As security has improved, underlying political disputes have risen to the forefront, and political tension remains a problem.

The Iraqi government, its security forces and its own people should take great pride in the accomplishments outlined in this report. The Iraqis do need to control their destiny and they should be given as much responsibility as they can handle as quickly as they can handle it. That said, the success of the enterprise is in no small measure due to the blood and treasure provided by the American people, and that blood and treasure will be needed in 2009, in 2010, in 2011 and beyond to institutionalize that success. Perhaps our support need not be in the same amount or in the same mix as prior years, but we will need to support the Iraq enterprise for years to come. The latest 9010 report illustrates this point in detail. While it may give one pride in what has been accomplished, it also provides a clear-eyed appreciation of what remains to be



done.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark-t-kimmitt/>
2. [http://www.defenselink.mil/home/features/Iraq\\_Reports/](http://www.defenselink.mil/home/features/Iraq_Reports/)
3. <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rpt/c27954.htm>
4. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/04/weeklysecurityincidenttrends.jpg>
5. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/04/isfusdeaths.jpg>
6. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/04/oilproduction.jpg>
7. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/04/electricityhours.jpg>
8. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/04/safety.jpg>
9. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/04/securitystability.jpg>

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Charles W. Dunne (2009-04-24 16:17:33)

My former colleague Mark Kimmitt provides a very useful [1]overview of the Defense Department's latest 9010 report on Iraq, and makes a number of excellent points. The progress in Iraq, particularly on the security issue, has been extraordinary over the last two years. Iraqi optimism toward the future is on the rise. And Iraqis feel safer not only in their own neighborhoods but, generally speaking, in traveling elsewhere in the country, a very risky proposition just a few short years ago. Still, a number of worrisome trends that could lead Iraq in a very different direction are not fully developed in the report. I examined some of these in my recent paper "Iraq Going Forward" ([2]click here). While overall deaths in ethno-sectarian and terrorist violence are, blessedly, far below what they were in 2006, the trends of the last two months—not to mention the last two days, in which over 140 people [3]were killed by suicide attackers—suggest another possible future for Iraq: that of a weak or failed state. The Iraqi government's continued failure to effectively integrate the Sons of Iraq militia into the Iraqi Security Forces (and trust, respect, and pay them) lies at the bottom of a significant portion of this spike in violence. This has raised once again the possibility of a resurgence of Al Qaeda and/or an active Sunni Arab insurgency. Likewise, the apparent inability of the Iraqi government to make progress on the pressing issues that would constitute the basis of a stable, unified state—a law on petrochemical revenue-sharing, the balance of political powers between the national government and the provinces, and resolution of territorial disputes, such as the status city of Kirkuk—may threaten Iraq's political viability. These failures could lead to a progressive weakening of the central government or, perversely, a return to authoritarianism, neither of which would bode well for the future of Iraq as a stable democracy. These are the issues that, I believe, will determine Iraq's direction going forward, and as such are more important than the provision of electricity, clean water, and other services that the 9010 report examines as measures of stability. Without a political framework that gives people confidence in the rule of law, economic justice, and a share in political decision-making, a sense of unity and shared national purpose will be very difficult to achieve. The lure of ethnic and sectarian politics, partially discredited in the recent election cycles, could quickly return. Mark makes another very important point at the end of his post: the United States must remain engaged in Iraq in order to help steer the country in the right direction and consolidate the gains Americans have paid for in blood and treasure. I couldn't agree more. Active American military and political involvement, whether in a counterterrorism or more active capacity, will need to continue for some time to come. I would like to caution, however, that the United States is fast losing influence within the ecosystem of Iraqi politics. While we remain very influential, the success of our own efforts to construct democratic institutions has already ceded a good deal of power to the sovereign Iraqi people themselves. Elections for a new national parliament later this year are likely to accelerate this trend. We find ourselves today in much more of an advisory capacity than we have in the past. That is good for Iraqi democracy, but it does mean we will have to find new and perhaps more creative ways to help Iraq succeed. [4]*Charles W. Dunne was adviser to the Director for Strategic Plans and Policy at the Joint Staff in the Pentagon from 2007 to 2008, and served as Director for Iraq at the National Security Council from 2005 to 2007.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/04/measuring-iraq/>
2. [http://irtheoryandpractice.wm.edu/publications/Iraq\\_CD\\_Draft\\_rev\\_04-13.pdf](http://irtheoryandpractice.wm.edu/publications/Iraq_CD_Draft_rev_04-13.pdf)
3. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/25/world/middleeast/25iraq.html>
4. <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/b/739/637>

**Reminder: MESH symposium on Iran (2009-04-29 20:13)**

From MESH Admin



We've been preoccupied at MESH with our Thursday, April 30 symposium on "Iran: Threat, Challenge, or Opportunity?" at Harvard. The symposium will begin at 4:00 pm, and will proceed in two panels:

- Analogies

[1] Michael Mandelbaum, SAIS, Johns Hopkins University

[2] Martin Kramer, Olin Institute, Harvard University

[3] Jacqueline Newmyer, Long Term Strategy Group

[4] Alan Dowty, Kroc Institute, University of Notre Dame

- Engagement

[5] Robert Satloff, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

[6] Mark N. Katz, George Mason University

[7] Michael Singh, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

[8] Michael Doran, New York University

Venue: Belfer Case Study Room (S020), CGIS South, 1730 Cambridge Street ([9]map). Open to the public. Symposium ends at 6:45 pm.

For those who can't attend, we will do our best to have some of the proceedings posted here over the next couple of weeks.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_mandelbaum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_mandelbaum/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jacqueline\\_newmyer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jacqueline_newmyer/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)
5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_satloff/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_satloff/)
6. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_n\\_katz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_n_katz/)
7. <http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com/blog/2199>
8. <http://wagner.nyu.edu/faculty/facultyDetail.php?whereField=facultyID&whereValue=641>
9. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2008/09/cgismap.jpg>

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## 3.5 May

**The China-Iran comparison (2009-05-05 09:49)**

From [1] Jacqueline Newmyer



The People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Islamic Republic of Iran are two of the trickiest countries with which the United States now has to deal. I'll begin by covering two commonly discussed points of comparison and then turn to what I think are as important, the differences, before concluding with a brief look at Sino-Iranian relations and a question for U.S. policy makers. As a preview, I will argue that Iran and China, notwithstanding their distinctive strategic approaches and very different levels of power, have overlapping interests and are likely increasingly to cooperate in ways that create challenges for the United States. This is because China is seeking to expand its "international mobilization capacity" and Iran is disposed to work with external actors to enhance its perceived strength.

Perhaps the most obvious point of comparison between China and Iran is that both are revolutionary regimes, although one is Shi'ite and the other began as Maoist and remains nominally Communist. A classical political science approach would suggest that we examine the two from a generational perspective. Iran, therefore, would be in the same category of "revolutionary regime" as China, but just behind the PRC, or, if you will, younger in terms of its stage in a revolutionary regime cycle, only having emerged or been born in 1979. In China's case, there was huge tumult, from the end of the Civil War in 1949 through the Korean War and Great Leap Forward to the Cultural Revolution, before Deng initiated the Reform and Opening period and welcomed trade and investment from the West. If the revolutionary regime perspective were illuminating, then, we could expect a kind of "calming down" effect, as a young Iranian revolutionary regime transitions into a more bureaucratized adolescence or even middle age.

This is connected with another common line of comparison that argues that in both the case of China and the case of Iran, engagement is the wisest course for the United States. Through engagement, it is argued, we can hasten the day when both powers act as "responsible stakeholders," socializing the regimes through our interactions with them.

Would it be best for us to engage? Is Iran's period of "calming down" just around the corner? Both perspectives are problematic. At the very least, proceeding on either basis should be done with an understanding of the very real, important differences between the Iranian and Chinese strategic traditions, and between the current geopolitical positions of Iran and China.

The differences between the Chinese and Iranian strategic traditions flow from the internal logics of their respective regimes—internal logics that seem to have staying power. To be sure, the leaders of both states share an overriding concern with domestic stability and the maintenance of their own authority. Both traditions also feature classic texts—the Sunzi Bingfa and other texts dating back to the Warring States period in China's case, and medieval mirrors for princes in the Iranian case—that prescribe indirect approaches to conflict. These texts and the strategic traditions they reflect place a common emphasis on information, managing perceptions, and deception. Finally, both the Chinese and Iranian regimes may be characterized as legitimacy-deficient by comparison with Western liberal representative governments.



Nonetheless, important differences should not be overlooked. China's strategic tradition is based on the perspectives of Daoism, bureaucratic Confucianism, the Mandate of Heaven, and Marxism, all of which point to a need to monitor global trends and try to be in synch with them. What stage of history are we in? or what is the trend of the time? The tradition teaches that when a regime appears to be out of step, seizing the initiative and acting boldly at such a decisive moment can not only head off disaster but guarantee victory. Therefore, China has often seen fit to initiate war, typically through surprise attacks. The Harvard political scientist Iain Johnston has pointed out that given China's place in the international system, the PRC was especially likely to be involved in militarized interstate disputes in the latter half of the twentieth century. So there is an element of insecurity that leads China to be war-prone from our point of view. But, at the same time, compared with Iran, China has more ingrained institutions or trust among elites. A set of families qualified by wealth or scholarship or local status in a particular region form a fairly stable class of power-brokers invested in the maintenance of the current regime.

By comparison, the Iranian strategic outlook looks at once more mistrustful and more superstitious, and this inclines Tehran to rely on third-party actors or proxy forces to implement its strategic agenda. Like China's, this agenda is founded on the need for regime survival, but what is interesting is what is considered necessary to ensure the regime and the measures that are deemed appropriate to take to that end.

Reflect briefly on recent Iranian history. Regimes came and went with some alacrity in the last century, and outside powers had a hand in their rise and fall. For instance, Reza Khan, the Shah's father, ascended quickly but was then pushed aside by the British, who backed his son, the Shah, before he was overthrown by his own prime minister, Mossadegh. And then we played a role in ousting Mossadegh, only for our choice to be overthrown by Khomeini, in part, it was argued, because we failed to show enough support for him.

Iran's salient historical experiences center on intervention by other powers and the upheaval that this has provoked—not only in recent decades but also longer ago, from the conquests by Arab and Turkic tribes to wars with Europeans and Russians in the 18th and 19th centuries. Of course, other countries have suffered external intervention in their internal affairs (as the Chinese would say), and been subject to Western colonialism. But in Iran's case, these experiences proved especially resonant because they overlay much deeper, older Zoroastrian Persian and Shiite traditions of crediting unseen forces with agency and efficacy in earthly political matters.

Iran has its own history of not only blaming outside powers but also of entrusting proxies, or third-party forces, and working through them to achieve strategic aims. The regime can take credit, and benefit from plausible deniability in the event of failure, if enemies are attacked by third-party groups. And operating this way makes sense in light of the generally paranoid state of the leadership. Why are the leaders chronically concerned? It's not just because some unseen celestial force could act to eliminate them. But, to modify the old saying, even paranoids have earthly enemies. In all the above cases of regime change with foreign involvement, local actors conspired or cooperated with the external powers. There is a chronic domestic loyalty problem in Iran.

Why might this be the case? As the economist Homa Katouzian has pointed out, Iran does not have a tradition of the rule of law or of any other stable institutional infrastructure within which stable classes are formed and individuals can engage in repeated interactions that create reputations, which require maintenance, so that honesty is rewarded. Therefore, alliances and power are fragile. Infighting prevails, as was demonstrated in the wake of the Iranian Revolution, and it is no accident that in Iranian literature, one's closest relatives can cause the most damage through their betrayals. Accordingly, the tradition prescribes deception, the magnification of capabilities to create an appearance of strength, while preempting conspiracies and operating through third parties wherever possible. The expectation that others will deceive

and conspire, meanwhile, reinforces the belief that political ascendancy is very fragile.

Given the relative fragility and insecurity of the Iranian regime, perhaps the most important China-Iran question for American policy makers to consider is how Iran figures in China's calculus. Beijing, as a measurer of trends and an aspirant to superpower status, would like to improve what it calls its "international mobilization capacity," according to the writings of senior Chinese Communist Party intellectuals. Given energy considerations, the Middle East is a region in which China has been seeking increased influence. The PRC has a history of supplying arms (missiles) and other kinds of technology to both Saudi Arabia and Iran, a way of improving ties, even rendering these states dependent on relations with China, which, in turn, depends on their energy supplies. The logic of my argument is that China might also aid Iran with its internal security. All of which suggests a final question for consideration: If we already speculate that nuclear weapons will embolden Iran and increase its coercive power, what ought we to expect from a nuclear Iran in receipt of Chinese aid and support?

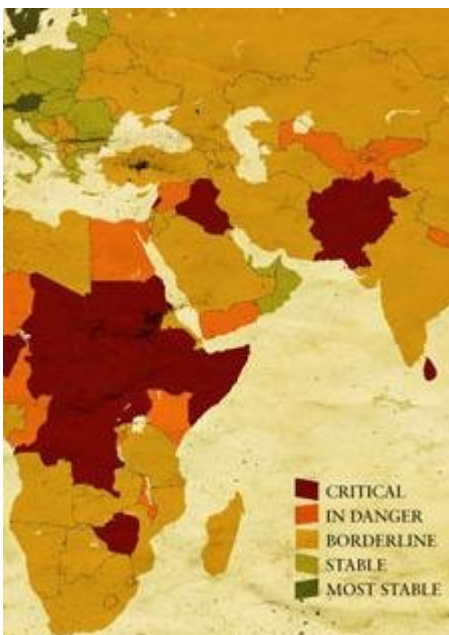
Jacqueline Newmyer delivered these remarks at a symposium on "Iran: Threat, Challenge, or Opportunity?" convened by MESH at Harvard University on April 30.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jacqueline\\_newmyer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jacqueline_newmyer/)

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## Global financial crisis and counterterrorism (2009-05-06 14:50)

From [1]Daniel Byman



[2] The threat of terrorism has faded from the minds of Americans as the unemployment soars and our IRAs shrink. Even though I specialize on counterterrorism, this is a welcome corrective: terrorism remains an important issue, but it should not always be the top priority for policymakers.

Yet as the Obama administration and American allies overseas focus on how to get the world's economic wheels spinning again, they should recognize that the financial crisis is likely to have a dramatic impact on terrorism. Most obviously, though perhaps most difficult to specify, the economic crisis and the attendant misery will make many people around the world more willing to believe that the current system is corrupt

and more open to radical ideologies—first steps toward embracing violent extremism.

More concretely, however, are the problems the crisis poses for effective counterterrorism. Strong governments usually have few terrorism problems, even if (like, say, North Korea today), they are brutally repressive and bring economic woe, not prosperity, to their citizens. However, weak governments, even if benign, are prone to domestic strife—and the financial crisis will further weaken many regimes. So looking around the world, it is not surprising that countries like Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Yemen suffer terrorism and civil strife and that less-governed regions of a country (e.g. tribal parts of Pakistan) are more prone to violence.

The financial crisis will lead new countries to join this unhappy club. In some countries, security services may not be paid, increasing their incentives for corruption and reducing their loyalty to the regime. In other instances, the government may curb the security services as part of regime change or to win over potential political opponents—and in so doing, weaken the services' ability to stop terrorism.

Economic collapse may also lead to outright regime change as citizens demand new leadership in response to current regimes' economic failures. As most governments around the world cooperate with the United States on counterterrorism, the prospect of a new regime taking power is of concern. In many countries (e.g. Iceland and Latvia), the impact will be negligible, but it is plausible that new leaders may replace current partners.

To offset pressure for regime change, some governments may reach out to different factions and power brokers in their own country. For the most part, this is positive as it widens the circle of democratic inclusion. However, not all these actors are positive from a counterterrorism point of view. Egypt, for example, has tried to coopt (largely successfully) the Muslim Brotherhood, and in so doing greatly weakened more radical groups like the Islamic Group and Egyptian Islamic Jihad. This cooptation, while effective in the short-term, empowers a group that, while avoiding a direct endorsement of violence, shares some of the teachings of the salafi jihadists and legitimates some of their actions. In other cases, such cooptation or autonomy may allow sympathetic local regimes to abet terrorists. Outside of terrorism, this cooptation has contributed to the rise of a more Islamicized Egypt, with upsetting consequences for non-Muslims in the country and women's rights, among other issues.

The United States must also worry that the crisis will decrease local regimes' willingness to cooperate openly with the United States. Despite the bump in favorable views of the United States with a new administration, the United States remains deeply unpopular in the Muslim world. As governments scamper for legitimacy to offset their losses for economic reasons, they may try to reduce, or play down, cooperation with the United States. High-profile counterterrorism measures that are unpopular with allies' citizens (e.g. Predator strikes in Pakistan) may be particularly difficult to sustain.

So even as Obama administration officials press allies to step up their support, they must recognize how new economic pressures will complicate our efforts.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel\\_byman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel_byman/)

2. [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=4350](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4350)

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## Iran and the bomb: Israel's analogies (2009-05-08 12:07)

From [1]Alan Dowty



Israeli public discourse over Iran's nuclear weapons program is dominated by two analogies: the Holocaust and the 1981 Israeli attack on the Osirak nuclear reactor in Iraq.

The prominence of the Holocaust—the most horrific genocide in human history—should be no surprise. Jewish history seen through the Zionist lens is a chronicle of powerlessness and tragedy, embodying a "gevalt syndrome": if things can get worse, they will. Gloomy premonitions are extracted from even the most propitious turn of events—and recent developments in Iran are far from propitious.

This tragic history culminates in the Holocaust, which continues to be ever-present in Israeli public life. It was a central element in Israel's critical decisions on its own nuclear weapons program, in the 1950s and 1960s. As recounted in Avner Cohen's authoritative [2]Israel and the Bomb, David Ben-Gurion's private communications on this issue returned to the Holocaust, then only a few years in the past, again and again. In the current debate, the fact that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is a Holocaust denier serves to strengthen the hold of the analogy.

To take a sampling of the most recent statements:

- Prime Minister [3]Binyamin Netanyahu: "We will not allow Holocaust deniers to carry out another Jewish Holocaust. This is... my supreme commitment as Prime Minister of Israel."
- Knesset Speaker [4]Reuven Rivlin: "This time [Hitler] has a beard and speaks Persian.... But the words are the same words and the aspirations are the same aspirations and the determination to find the weapons to achieve those aspirations is the same menacing determination."
- President [5]Shimon Peres: "As Jews, after being subjected to the Holocaust, we cannot close our eyes in light of the grave danger emerging from Iran.... If Europe had dealt seriously with Hitler at that time, the terrible Holocaust and the loss of millions of people could have been avoided. We can't help but make the comparison."

In this light, a nuclearized Iran is regarded by both policymakers and the public as an existential threat to Israel, as an ideologically-driven state capable of irrationality and suicidal behavior—an image strengthened by the incidence of suicide bombings. [6]Poll data show that Israelis believe, by overwhelming majorities ranging from 66 to 82 percent, that Iran would use the bomb to try to destroy Israel. Frequent reference is made to the 2001 [7]statement by former Iranian President Ali Rafsanjani that "if one day, the Islamic world is also equipped with weapons like those that Israel possesses now, then the imperialists' strategy will reach a standstill because the use of even one nuclear bomb inside Israel will destroy everything. However, it will only harm the Islamic world. It is not irrational to contemplate such an eventuality."

The second major analogy in the debate, the 1981 attack on Iraq's nuclear plant, seems obvious since it involves a neighboring state, with a similar threat, similar conditions, and (so far) a similar failure of the international community to stop the program. It is also noted that while the 1981 attack was almost universally condemned by other governments, no effective sanctions against Israel resulted, and it was clear that many states privately welcomed the action. The analogy also lowers expectations, in that the Iraqi nuclear weapons program was not ended but only delayed for several years (which turned out to be adequate).

At the same time, some participants in the debate underline differences: an attack on Iranian facilities would be much more difficult militarily, and the Iranians, unlike Iraq, would be ready and able to retaliate on a number of fronts. But some differences, others point out, would work in the other direction: offensive capabilities have also improved considerably over the last three decades, and there is considerably more international attention and support directed toward blocking an Iranian bomb than was the case with Iraq.

It is also important to note some analogies that are not featured in this debate, but are either ignored or downplayed by Israeli policymakers and analysts. For example, little mention is made of the fact that Saddam Hussein did not use the weapons of mass destruction (chemicals) at his disposal in 1991, during the SCUD attacks on Israel, despite his earlier use of such weapons against Iran. Likewise, the Cold War model of the U.S.-Soviet nuclear balance is not a major focus, and when discussed it is often with the focus on the differences that would obtain in a Middle East context: the lack of invulnerable second-strike capability, shortcomings in command and control, and above all the lack of any clear "rules of the game."

Some of the analysts in academia—particularly from the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv, including Ephraim Kam and Yair Evron—have, along these lines, [8]examined the consequences of an Iranian bomb in terms of deterrent theory and the requirements of a stable balance. But even in these analyses, the emphasis remains on preventing the Iranian program from coming to fruition. And elsewhere, in the public debate and in the utterances of policymakers, attention is focused almost entirely on prevention.

Israeli policymakers obviously have a strong incentive to make an Israeli attack appear inevitable if sanctions fail to stop Iran, since it strengthens the chance for these sanctions to succeed. But a close reading of policymakers and press in Israel today leads clearly to the conclusion that Israel will in fact act if the sanctions fail.

Alan Dowty delivered these remarks at a symposium on "Iran: Threat, Challenge, or Opportunity?" convened by MESH at Harvard University on April 30.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0231104839>
3. [http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Anti-Semitism+and+the+Holocaust/Documents+and+communiques/Address+by+PM+Benjamin\\_Netanyahu\\_Holocaust\\_Remembrance\\_Day\\_20-Apr-2009.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Anti-Semitism+and+the+Holocaust/Documents+and+communiques/Address+by+PM+Benjamin_Netanyahu_Holocaust_Remembrance_Day_20-Apr-2009.htm)
4. <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3704350,00.html>
5. <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1083222.html>
6. [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society\\_&\\_Culture/ispoiran.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/ispoiran.html)
7. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/iran/2001/011214-text.html>
8. [http://www.inss.org.il/upload/\(FILE\)1216203568.pdf](http://www.inss.org.il/upload/(FILE)1216203568.pdf)

Walter Laqueur (2009-05-10 12:13:37)

The road to understanding current international problems is paved with doubtful and sometimes dangerously misleading [1]analogies. The Holocaust was an unprecedented disaster and remains a trauma, but it is no analogy for Iran and the bomb. On June 7, 1981, the day of the Israeli attack against Iraq's Osirak reactor (Operation Opera), we were invited to tea in a garden in Zahala north of Tel Aviv. My neighbor at the table—a major figure in the defense establishment, though at that time he was a mere member of the Knesset—was smoking more than usual, and looked at his watch every five minutes. From which I drew the conclusion that he knew something I did not. Only the next day we knew. The *New York Times* wrote editorially that the Israeli attack was "an act of inexcusable and short-sighted aggression," and other comment was in a similar vein: Israel had to be punished for a blatant breach of international law. But Israel was forgiven and hardly punished. It is seldom remembered that most leading figures of the Israeli defense establishment and Intelligence (except the air force) were against the action at the time. Menachem Begin was suspected of pressing for it for party political reasons, what with a general election coming up soon after. These suspicions were unjust; it was a gamble, but it succeeded. But what was gained in a perspective of almost thirty years? It certainly added greatly to Israel's military prestige, but would the general situation in the Middle East today be radically different if Operation Opera had failed or if it had not taken place in the first place? I do not think so. According to all we know with the benefit of hindsight, Saddam would not have been able to produce nuclear bombs within the foreseeable future, and if he had, he would not have dared to use them against enemies capable of retaliating massively. In any case, there is no analogy with the present situation. True, there would not be deep and prolonged mourning all over the world if Israel managed to damage or even destroy the Iranian capacity to produce nuclear bombs. But Israel is not in a position to stem the global wave of proliferation; facilities that were destroyed can be rebuilt relatively quickly, and nuclear bombs in the contemporary world can be stolen or bought. I am not altogether pessimistic concerning effective international countermeasures against weapons of mass destruction. But this will probably happen only after the first (or second) conflict in which such weapons have been used. Will deterrence work against Iran? One should not rule it out. Iranian intentions concerning Israel are known, but its leaders do not wish to pay too high a price, such as losing the means to achieve their main ambition of becoming the predominant power in the Middle East, or perhaps endangering their very existence. True, clients could be used in offensive actions, hoping that the hand of Iran would not be easily detected. But this may not work, and in any case, it may mean losing control in a very dangerous game. Deterrence as far as Israel is concerned would mean strengthening its defensive (anti-missile) and offensive capacity. It would mean, most painful for many, a fundamental reorientation of Israeli foreign policy as practiced since 1967. There is fog of war and an even more impenetrable fog in pre-war situations. Decisions may have to be taken, but there are no certainties concerning enemy intentions, about the capacity of one's own side and the opposing. In such situations, analogies are of very limited help, because each situation is essentially unique and unprecedented. [2]Walter Laqueur is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/iran-and-the-bomb-israels-analogies/>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_laqueur/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_laqueur/)

### The moment of maximum danger (2009-05-11 02:33)

From [1]Stephen Peter Rosen



The prospect of being hanged, we are told, wonderfully concentrates the mind, but on what? The prospect of an Iranian nuclear weapon now concentrates our attention on the possibility of Israeli preventive military action or on American sanctions, both of which might prevent Iran

from acquiring nuclear weapons. These are important policy options, but concentrating on them diverts us from what may be the moment of maximum danger, which will take place one or two years after Iran tests a nuclear weapon.

I am assuming that Iran will openly test its weapon, for the psychological impact the test will have, both in Iran and abroad. Given the uncertainties that other nations have about the ability of Iran successfully to construct a workable weapon on the Chinese/Pakistani model, only a successful test will yield the political benefits for which Iran has paid so heavily. Iran may test the weapon above ground, to minimize the chances that preparations for the test are detected, and to achieve the maximum visual impact, something the regime has sought and exaggerated in its ballistic missile test program. On current projections, this test could come in 2010 or 2011.

After the test, what will Iran do? It is noteworthy that many new nuclear powers (but not India) have offered nuclear weapons technology, not the bomb itself, to allies and clients. The technology is valuable, and easily transmitted covertly, for money or for diplomatic influence. Iran may not make explicit nuclear threats. It is hard to find any new nuclear power that has done so. But Iran is likely to feel more secure against American and Israeli military action on Iran in retaliation for Iranian actions short of nuclear weapons use, because it will in fact be riskier to proceed with such retaliation once Iran has the bomb.

Iran's friends will also be emboldened. Hezbollah and Hamas may feel that Iran is better able to protect them against Israeli or American military action once Iran has a nuclear arsenal. The hard core of the Revolutionary Guards and their counterparts in Hezbollah will feel free to pursue a more aggressive agenda against Israel by military but non-nuclear means, once Iran has nuclear weapons. Iran may warn Israel that attacks by her on Lebanon or Gaza would be "dangerous." Another Lebanon war or more attacks from Gaza are hardly unlikely under such circumstances. If so challenged, Israel will call Iran's bluff, and use all the non-nuclear force at its disposal against targets in Lebanon or Gaza.

In that case, will Iran sit by and do nothing? At moments of intense non-nuclear crisis, facing defeat or political reverses, the United States, the Soviet Union, Pakistan, and even Israel have taken actions designed to convince foreign observers that they were getting their nuclear weapons ready to use, in order to persuade foreigners to be more cooperative. It is not necessary to attribute any eccentricity to the leadership of Iran in order to suggest that they, too, may seek to avoid the defeat of their allies in an intense crisis by increasing the readiness of their nuclear weapons. Seeing Iranian preparations for nuclear weapons use, what will Israel do?

In other words, it is not an Iranian nuclear bolt out of the blue that will be the problem, but Iranian-Israeli interaction in an intense crisis in which Israel sees Iranian nuclear forces becoming more ready for action, and in which Iran fears Israeli pre-emption. That will be the moment of maximum danger.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)

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Chuck Freilich (2009-05-14 08:15:30)

I am largely in agreement [1]with Steve Rosen. The "bolt out of the blue" scenario is probably not the most likely one for the emergence of a concrete Iranian nuclear threat. Iran is certainly extremist, but does appear to be fundamentally rational in its behavior, in terms of an ability to weigh costs and benefits in a calculating manner. Since Israel is thought to be a nuclear power in its own right, it is hard to imagine that Iran would be willing to undergo the devastation of its own cities in an Israeli counterstrike. I have no doubt that Iran would be more than willing to pay a heavy price for the "divine joy" of Israel's destruction. After all, it lost over 400,000 people in the war with Iraq

during the 1980s. A "Tehran for Tel Aviv" exchange "alone," however, would lead to the death of 10 million Iranians. The Iranian threat is thus not likely to prove truly "existential" for Israel, but there is no doubt that it is a grave one in a variety of less than fully existential scenarios. And because there is absolutely no room for error when one's national existence is at stake, Israel does have to treat it as if it is an existential threat and prepare accordingly. There do appear to be elements of irrationality in Iranian policy towards the United States and especially Israel, and since the Islamic regime does have "God on its side," we cannot be confident that it will indeed behave as other countries do. As Rosen correctly points out, however, the far greater threat, in terms of likelihood, is in the far greater ability to project influence that a nuclear capability would provide Iran, and the prospect that both Iran and its regional allies, Hezbollah, Hamas and Syria, would be emboldened to act in far more aggressive ways. Even if Iran does not adopt an open declaratory posture, or adopts just a "Japanese model," this would undoubtedly have a major impact on Israel's thinking in crisis situations and potential responses. I am not so sure that Israel, or any country facing a nuclear threat, would act so quickly to "call Iran's bluff." The minute nukes are invoked, even in a veiled and implicit manner, it is a new ballgame, an existential one, in which different rules apply. I am also not confident that Iran will conduct a nuclear test to demonstrate its capability, and I believe that it may adopt a more ambiguous posture. Even an implicit hint would provide Iran with most of the domestic support and legitimization that the regime seeks, as well as the deterrent value vis-à-vis the United States, Israel and the Sunni states. While there may initially be some skepticism regarding Iran's capabilities, and clearly not all of its claims regarding its missile and satellite capabilities have been fully substantiated, no one would wish to put a nuclear claim to the test, and any reasons for skepticism would presumably dissipate within a relatively short period of time. The danger that Iran would engage in nuclear proliferation, whether of technology or even an entire bomb, however, is indeed a source of great concern. Though unlikely, one cannot dismiss the possibility of Iran proliferating capabilities to Hezbollah (or even less likely to Hamas or the Palestinian Islamic Jihad) for purposes of nuclear terrorism. While these groups are presumably fundamentally deterrable, because they would stand to lose a great deal, a true nightmare scenario is of Iran proliferating nuclear capabilities to Al Qaeda. Though no love is lost between Shi'ite Iran and the Sunni Al Qaeda, both share a similar "affection" for Israel, the United States and the West. It is not inconceivable that they could make common cause in this regard. A nuclear Iran thus remains an unacceptable prospect. Engagement, combined with a concrete prospect of severe sanctions, is by far the preferable option. Iran, like other countries, will respond best to a combination of carrots and sticks, and engagement must therefore be backed up by the certainty that Iran will pay a heavy price. Iran, however, is deeply committed to its nuclear program, and it is unlikely that any combination of carrots and sticks will suffice to change its strategic calculus. Moreover, Iran will undoubtedly use the talks as a means for playing for further time, so any engagement must carry a clear deadline. In addition to the alternative option of a direct military strike, it is also worth considering the option of a naval blockade. Given Iran's total dependence on its exports of oil, a blockade would bring the Iranian economy to its knees, and may ultimately prove to be the only means of putting an end to the nuclear program, short of actual military action. Iran, again a basically rational actor, is unlikely to respond against the United States in a significant manner. It may have to fire a few shots in response, or undertake some terrorist act, to make it look good, but Iran will not wish to engage in a real "shooting war" with the United States. [2]Chuck Freilich is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/the-moment-of-maximum-danger/>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck\\_freilich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck_freilich/)

Stephen Peter Rosen (2009-05-14 09:37:22)

Chuck Freilich [1]makes two points with which it is difficult to disagree, but I will try. • First, engagement plus strict sanctions, including a naval blockade, should be seriously considered. • Second, an overt Iranian nuclear weapons test will create problems for Iran, so Iranian leaders might wish simply to hint that they could have a bomb if they needed it, like the Japanese. I have for some time been puzzled by the second idea. Whatever else we may argue about, surely we can agree that the Iranians are not the Japanese. Iran is not a wealthy, old, stable, pacific country protected by the world's only superpower, with a desire to have a nuclear hedge against the day they might be foresaken. Iran has a massive demographic bulge of youths aged 10-20, hungry for instant gratification. Iran is led by men who have subordinated the economic welfare of their subjects to a policy of confrontation and support of insurgencies, and who have a deep and conflicted attitude toward western technology, which they alternately disdain and covet. They are more like Khrushchev—who felt he had to display massive missiles and super bombs to redress the technological inferiority he felt the Soviet Union had—than the Japanese. The temptation will be strong to display the fact that they have equaled the west in the only area where they worry that the west is their better. The two points are not unrelated. I am curious whether one thinks strict sanctions plus a naval blockade increase or decrease the incentives Iran would have to test a nuclear weapon. To me, an executed blockade seems to make a test more likely, since it is



the prospect of a blockade that may be part of what deters the test. So for me, the blockade should be prepared along with actions to be taken in the event of a nuclear test. [2]Stephen Peter Rosen is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/the-moment-of-maximum-danger/comment-page-1/#comment-2091>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)

Chuck Freilich (2009-05-14 15:49:28)

In order to avoid an unending escalatory cycle with a distinguished colleague, with whom I am basically in agreement, I will make one more comment, but then allow Steve Rosen to achieve "escalation dominance" by having the last word. I most certainly did not wish to indicate any similarity between Iran and Japan for all of the reasons [1]Rosen notes. I meant merely to suggest that like the Japanese, they might wish to remain a "turn of the screwdriver" away from an explicit capability. I believe that the most likely outcome is that Iran will indeed adopt an explicit nuclear posture, most likely without testing, but the "Japanese model" remains a possibility nonetheless. I certainly agree that a blockade would be an appropriate response in the event of an Iranian nuclear test, but again wish to cast doubt on whether Iran will indeed decide to test. Even in the context of a "provoked test," following imposition of an embargo, an Iranian act of this sort would simply serve to prove what the United States and others have charged from the beginning, that Iran has indeed pursued a military nuclear program, despite all of its protestations to the contrary. If Iran were to act in such an audacious and provocative manner, I believe that most Western allies would have little choice but to fully support the American move, even if some would accuse the United States of having provoked the crisis unnecessarily. In any event, the option of a naval blockade is one which I do not raise lightly. It will undoubtedly create a host of problematic responses and should only be pursued if and when a combined "engagement and sticks" approach has failed. It would, however, likely be the only truly effective option short of direct military action and is thus worthy of consideration, in order to assess the various possible consequences. [2]Chuck Freilich is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/the-moment-of-maximum-danger/comment-page-1/#comment-2092>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck\\_freilich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck_freilich/)

Stephen Peter Rosen (2009-05-15 07:53:56)

Chuck Freilich's [1]arguments are reasonable, and he may be right. I very much doubt that there will be either an air strike on Iran or a blockade, so the appropriate response then is to ask, "if Iran does not test, what have we learned about the character of its regime?" Basically, if Chuck is right and I am wrong, the Iranian government will have shown itself to be more sensitive to international sentiment, the welfare of its people, and its long-term interests than I think it is. This will be very good news, and we can proceed to work with Iran, not as a friendly power, but as one that may increase the stability of the region. If Iran does test, I think, as I first argued, that we will then face very serious problems of intra-war crisis stability between Israel and Iran. [2]Stephen Peter Rosen is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/the-moment-of-maximum-danger/#comment-2094>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)

Efraim Inbar (2009-05-18 21:17:28)

The assumption of stable nuclear deterrence between Israel and Iran is questionable before both states acquire second strike capabilities. As Albert Wohlstetter noted fifty years ago in "[1]The Delicate Balance of Terror," securing second-strike capabilities to ensure a modicum of stability is an ongoing expensive process which is dependent upon geographical, technical, doctrinal and political parameters. Assuming Iranian rationality and reasonable sensitivity to cost is simply not enough. Moreover, it is not clear the opaque Israeli posture is sufficient for creating stable nuclear deterrence. Jerusalem will have to augment its launching capabilities and take additional steps to protect its nuclear force. Therefore, Stephen Peter Rosen has every reason to be [2]concerned about a nuclear exchange in the immediate period after Iran goes nuclear. I am not sure that an Iranian nuclear test will make a difference for Jerusalem, although I believe that Iran follows the North Korean path and will not hesitate to publicly go nuclear. After all, by that stage the despised and decadent West will have shown its impotency to prevent a nuclear Iran. Even if a nuclear Islamic Iran will show restraint versus Israel, conditions will change in the case of a successful counter-revolution. Under such circumstances, the fanatics who can push the button may decide to go down in a grandiose way, taking with them parts of the abysmally hated Jewish state. What worries me most in the debate over a nuclear Iran is the preoccupation with Israel, rather than with America and its national interests. A nuclear Iran will unquestionably become a stronger and more assertive international player, with a greater ability to project force. Since the use of

force is part and parcel of the Middle Eastern rules of the game, a nuclear Iran will wield more fear over its neighbors. Fear is one of the best political currencies in the greater Middle East, as political leaders share a realpolitik approach to international affairs and constantly engage in a power calculus. In most cases, the states of the Middle East will probably not try to create a counter-alliance to balance Iranian power, but will bandwagon. Such a posture might prevent a feared outright Iranian military aggression in the short term. Under these circumstances, the United States might offer a nuclear umbrella (extended deterrence) to its current pro-Western allies in order to keep them within its orbit and to prevent the bandwagon effect. This is unlikely to be effective. The French rationale for going for an independent *force de frappe*, which essentially questioned the credibility of American nuclear assurances in the 1960s, will prevail. The levels of suspicion toward Westerners in the Arab world are not conducive to believing American promises. Therefore, a nuclear Iran will bring about the collapse of Western influence in the greater Middle East. Countries geographically closer to Iran will feel a stronger Iranian influence. Such a process will be reinforced by the Shi'ite identity present in several neighboring political entities, such as Bahrain, Iraq and Azerbaijan. The eastern province of Saudi Arabia, rich in oil, is also predominantly Shi'ite, which means that this region will be susceptible to Iranian influence. The Iranian national strategy will focus on control over energy resources, which dovetails with the apparent Russian strategy. "Finlandizing" energy-producing countries could be a first step in Iran's denial of Western access to energy resources, or alternatively bringing about much higher prices for this strategic commodity. Iran's geographic location along the Persian Gulf as well as along the Caspian Sea will facilitate its control over the energy ellipse. A nuclear Iran will intensify its efforts to politically penetrate Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, both Muslim states rich in energy resources and adjacent to Iran. These states might decide to ask for protection from Russia, their neighbor and former ruler. In any case, it is unlikely they will preserve their pro-Western orientation for long. Another foreign policy thrust of a nuclear Iran concerns important Middle Eastern regional actors that compete over influence in the region: Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Israel. In contrast to the Jewish state—that has to be delegitimized, isolated and eventually annihilated—the other regional powers have to be changed from within. We have recently already seen Iranian attempts (via Hezbollah) to destabilize the Mubarak regime in Egypt. A nuclear Iran will be much more aggressive in helping radical Islamists take over Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. A nuclear Iran will be less intimidated to conduct terrorist activities directly or via proxies such as Hezbollah and Palestinian Islamist organizations ( Hamas and Islamic Jihad). This will result in a greater frequency of terrorist attacks against Western targets, particularly in the Middle East. Iran may even transfer nuclear technology and/or fissile materials to actors wanting to harm the US above all. In the long run, the major actors of the region, if not overrun by Islamists with links to Iran, will attempt to acquire similar capabilities, to prevent nuclear blackmail. This is particularly true of Egypt, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. Nuclear proliferation in the Middle East will constitute a strategic nightmare not only for the natives, but also for Europe and the United States as well. Unfortunately, the foreign policy of the current U.S. administration is characterized by unfounded optimism and naiveté. This is bad news for the world. [3]Efraim Inbar is director of the Begin-Sadat (BESA) Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University in Israel.

1. <http://www.rand.org/publications/classics/wohlstetter/P1472/P1472.html>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/the-moment-of-maximum-danger/>
3. [http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/efraim\\_inbar/](http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/efraim_inbar/)

## Engaging Iran: Cuban, Chinese, and Soviet precedents (2009-05-11 23:22)

From [1]Michael Mandelbaum



To engage or not to engage? That is the question hanging over American policy toward the Islamic Republic of Iran—or at least it was the central question for the United States until the advent of the Obama administration, which appears to have settled on proceeding with engagement. That decision, however, raises another important question: what can engagement be expected to accomplish?

Stating the question that way leads immediately to two problems. First, the word "engagement" is a vague, slippery one. In the matrimonial context it refers to a promise (to marry) that may or may not be fulfilled—an apt description, it would seem, of American engagement with that other tyrannical regime that is ideologically hostile to the West and aspires to nuclear weapons, North Korea. Second, the United States has had, in the three decades since the mullahs came to power in Tehran, considerable informal, unofficial, and quasi-official contact with the regime and its supporters. Still, if engagement is taken to mean official diplomatic relations, there have been none since the overthrow of the Shah, and it is worth asking what pursuing such relations might now achieve.

Those who advocate engagement with Iran often invoke a particular kind of analogy in support of their preference: American relations with communist countries during the Cold War. The comparison is a fair one: Cuba, the People's Republic of China, and the Soviet Union—like Iran—are or have been countries with rulers committed to a radical anti-western ideology. While analogies cannot, of course, prove anything, they can be suggestive. What, then, do the histories of American relations with these three countries suggest about the prospects for engagement with Iran?

The experience with Cuba is often cited as evidence of the futility of non-engagement. For five decades the United States has shunned formal ties with, and indeed has maintained an economic embargo on, Cuba. Yet the Castro brothers remain in power. As with Iran, the Obama administration apparently plans to expand contacts with Cuba, and while this may turn out to bring some benefit to the United States and the people of the island, the Cuban case does not demonstrate the general utility of engagement, because Cuba has not been isolated from the world, but only from the United States. Other Western countries have long maintained diplomatic and economic ties with the Castro regime—there has been, that is, plenty of engagement—without noticeably expanding the freedoms or enhancing the economic welfare of the average Cuban.

It is worth noting that despite what they publicly proclaim, neither the Castros nor the Iranian mullahs seem actually to want political and economic normalization with the United States. If this is, in fact, the case, it is the most persuasive argument for such normalization of which I am aware.

If Cuba is often cited to demonstrate the folly of avoiding official contact with a hostile communist country, American relations with China are just as frequently offered as evidence of the virtues of having such contacts. After two decades of estrangement following the communist conquest of the mainland in 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, the United States launched a diplomatic initiative to Beijing that led, ultimately, to the Nixon visit of February 1972 and the establishment of formal diplomatic relations in 1978. The result was a strategic alignment helpful to both countries in containing the Soviet Union and the growth of economic ties to the point that China has become a major American trading partner.

Over the last three decades, moreover, China has undergone considerable liberalization in its economy and some, although far less, in its political system. Sino-American ties are not ideal, but they are far better than relations between the United States and Iran. If engagement can achieve with the mullahs in Tehran what Washington's policies of nearly four decades have accomplished with the communists in Beijing, this would count as a substantial gain for American foreign policy.

The pattern of Sino-American relations does not, however, illustrate the virtues of engagement so much as it reflects the power of circumstances. Mao Zedong was willing to put aside his ideological aversion to the United States in the early 1970s because his country was severely threatened by the Soviet Union. The two communist giants fought a small-scale, two-stage border war in 1969 and in the second round China was the clear loser. Moscow proceeded to deploy a huge army on its border with China and suggested—to some members of the Nixon administration, at least—that it was seriously contemplating a strike on China's then-small stockpile of nuclear weapons.

In these dire circumstances, China behaved the way classical international relations theory would predict: it moved closer to the United States to offset Soviet power on the principle that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." If the mullahs were comparably threatened—by, say, a resurgent, neo-imperial Russia—they might well reach out to Washington as did the Chinese in the 1970s. But they are not so threatened and will not, in the foreseeable future, face any such threat. Even if they did, alliances of convenience often prove to be ephemeral. The American alliance with the Soviet Union during the Second World War did not, after all, prevent the Cold War after Germany had been defeated.

As for the close economic ties between the United States and China, these have their roots in economic decisions made by Mao's successor, Deng Xiaoping, primarily for reasons of domestic politics rather than international security—decisions of a kind the rulers of the Islamic republic show no sign of making. The American experience with China has, therefore, little or nothing to teach us about the prospects with Iran.

That is not the case, however, for the history of Soviet-American relations. The United States remained aloof from the Bolshevik regime from its seizure of power in St. Petersburg in 1917 until 1933, when the newly installed Roosevelt administration established diplomatic relations with the communist government that had moved its capital to Moscow. The two countries were allies during the Second World War, but from the mid-1940s to the end of the 1980s they were as estranged and hostile as the United States and Iran are today.

Throughout the Cold War, however they maintained regular diplomatic contact, arranged cultural exchanges and athletic contests, staged summit meetings, and conducted elaborate and protracted negotiations about armaments, particularly nuclear weapons. All this contact comes under the general heading of engagement; in Soviet-American relations there was a good deal of it. I believed at the time and believe in retrospect that some of this engagement was useful; the end-of-Cold-War arms control agreements were, in my judgement, exceedingly useful. (Those interested in the reasons for this evaluation may wish to read

Chapter 4 of my 2002 book *The Ideas That Conquered the World: Peace, Democracy and Free Markets in the Twenty-first Century*.)

Yet the cumulative impact of all that engagement on the overall relationship between the two nuclear superpowers was, while certainly not trivial, at best marginal. Two separate features were central to the relationship: post-1945 Soviet-American relations may be divided into two unequal parts, each with a single defining feature: from the mid-1940s to the late 1980s, deterrence; from the late 1980s to December, 1991, regime change.

So I suspect it will be with American relations with Iran, with or without engagement. The United States will have to rely mainly on deterrence in its relations with Tehran (and deterring a nuclear-armed Iran will be more difficult than deterring the Iran of today) unless and until the Islamic Republic falls and is succeeded by a regime less hostile to the United States and the West. This is not to say that establishing diplomatic relations with Iran is necessarily wrong, or removing the mullahs from power is feasible or that trying to do so is desirable. It is rather to say that what its advocates hope to achieve with engagement will probably only come about through regime change.

Michael Mandelbaum delivered these remarks at a symposium on “Iran: Threat, Challenge, or Opportunity?” convened by MESH at Harvard University on April 30.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_mandelbaum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_mandelbaum/)

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Adam Garfinkle (2009-05-12 10:35:30)

My old friend Michael Mandelbaum makes some fine points in [1]his post, rising, as he usually does, above all the noise and chatter to see the essence of the situation. He makes three unassailable observations: all analogies limp, and some fall flat on their faces; context defines the character of “engagement” opportunities and hence their desirability; and in any event, process cannot trump the substance of what a regime believes to be its vital interests. When it comes to Iran, it is my view that few if any historical cases of U.S. engagement or non-engagement with ideological hostile regimes offer us much insight. Iran is in many ways *sui generis*. Its decision system is a black box for the most part, even to those who study the regime most closely. It may well be that the Iranian regime, modeled as it seems to be on a clutch of Shi’a clerics discussing theological and other issues (I wish I knew more Safavid history), could not take “yes” for an answer even if its inner, closeted majority wanted to. It is very hard for U.S. decisionmakers to dope out a sequence of events that may issue from a U.S. initiative to engage, because we do not have a very good grasp of what Imam Khamenei thinks or how his relations with other senior clerics affect the decision process as a whole. It’s not just a problem with a person or an inner sanctum of decisionmakers, either. In this case, I think it is even harder for us to anticipate where an initiative would end up because the strategic cultures of our two countries are substantially different. The streamlined historical narratives we all carry around in our heads, and which we use to assess the potential actions of others, are shaped by certain assumptions about human nature and history itself. If a person grows up believing that we are all conceived in sin and must rely on the strict religious instruction given by those who understand sacred texts in order to guide us away from our natural dispositions, his or her way of understanding history is going to differ from that of a person who believes that people are born free to construct their moral personalities in a world that is full of hope and possibility. Without belaboring the point, which some will accept and others reject (foolishly), most senior American decisionmakers know little of how Iranian Shi’a clerics see the world. We had a vastly better idea of how an assortment of Communists did. So in fact we don’t know if the Iranian leadership will read American actions as an indication of weakness, as some fear. Or whether they will view it as an act attempting to establish symbolic equality, the prerequisite in Arabo-Muslim culture for serious dealing. Or whether they will interpret it as a discrete act, or only in the context of what the United States does varyingly in the region and the world (very likely). We can, if we try hard, know a lot more about likelihoods in this regard, but we are unlikely ever to be sure how the Iranians are reading our intent. And that, of course, makes all the difference when it comes to judging if, and more important maybe, how, to pursue “engagement.” I think the Cuban, Chinese, Russian and, just by the way, the apartheid South African cases, have little of certain value to teach

us in this case, but plenty of potential to mislead. All that said, I would make only three other brief points about the Iranian "engagement" debate. First, just as the Bush administration wanted to be the un-Clinton, the Obama administration wants to be the un-Bush. This is silly but politically natural, and it happens all the time. In this case, it adds a certain carrying-capacity globally since, rightly or wrongly, the Bush foreign policy is marked low by most national elites. So here is a case where "change" buys the administration some chits and perhaps prolongs its honeymoon. This is regardless of the actual efficacy of any initiative, of course. Second, any such engagement initiative will cause laundry problems among several of our Sunni Arab associates. It already has, and that's why Secretary Gates went to the region carrying the diplomatic equivalent of "fresh wipes." They don't believe him, and they don't trust the new President. So while an engagement initiative might or might not yield benefits, it will certainly exact some costs (which, however, can sometimes themselves be put to good uses). And third, for all I know (and I don't know), Obama administration principals are pretty damned determined to take a hard line on Iranian proliferation dangers, up to and including using force if the Iranians cross the red-line, which I would define as actually moving to a test. If so, they may read the timeline in such a way as to move them to show the world—the so-called non-existent international community—that they have done all they could, gone the extra mile, done the multilateralist drill, and been oh so slow to anger, before they lower the boom on the mullahs. They may think, too, that all this "optical" preparation work will deter the Israelis from acting prematurely on their own, but that depends on what gets said in private on this score, and I am not privy to it. In my case, then, not only do I strain to imagine what the Iranians may understand by an American engagement initiative, I am not even sure what my own government intends by it. [2]Adam Garfinkle is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/engaging-iran-cuban-chinese-and-soviet-precedents/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)

Michael Singh (2009-05-15 19:48:03)

In his May 1 sermon, Tehran Friday prayer leader Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami proclaimed, "You do not want talks!" Khatami was addressing the United States, but the remark would have more appropriately been directed to his own leaders in the Iranian regime. If one thing is clear about the Obama administration's Iran policy, it is that the United States does indeed want talks. However, as Michael Mandelbaum [1] suggests, it is very likely that Iran's rulers do not. Prof. Mandelbaum's examination of the Cuban, Chinese, and Russian analogies casts doubt on the prospects for U.S.-Iran engagement. Further doubt is raised by an examination of the extensive record of such engagement already logged by U.S. administrations since 1979. Every U.S. president has reached out to the Iranian regime, to no avail. This outreach has failed, in my view, not because of insufficient U.S. effort; to take one example, the Clinton administration made nearly one dozen unilateral concessions despite receiving no reciprocation from the government of Mohammad Khatami. Nor is it, as is often claimed, due to historical grievances or mistrust. In response to President Obama's Nowruz message to Iran, Majles Speaker Ali Larijani scoffed, stating that the U.S.-Iran dispute was not an "emotional issue" that could be solved with "fine words." The frequent citation of these two explanations for the lack of progress in U.S.-Iran relations reflects a certain solipsism—a belief that Iranian policy is a function of U.S. policy, and that changes to U.S. policy would therefore bring corresponding changes by Iran. In fact, at the heart of the U.S.-Iran dispute are divergent interests. Tehran does not desire reconciliation with the United States. There are two reasons for this, both of which stem from the fact that the Iranian regime values its own survival above all. First, anti-Americanism is a pillar of the Revolution, and any acknowledgment by Iran's rulers that one facet of Revolutionary ideology is anachronistic risks challenging the entire system. Second, as Prof. Mandelbaum notes, autocratic regimes such as Iran's thrive on closure and are threatened by openness. While the regime may not desire reconciliation with the United States, it does desire talks with the United States. For Tehran, these talks are not a means to an end, but an end in themselves. They confer upon the regime a greater legitimacy and prestige than they would otherwise enjoy, and bolster Iran's hegemonic aspirations. Talks carry other benefits for the regime, and dangers for the United States; they risk disheartening advocates of reform in Iran and U.S. allies in the region, they may convey weakness to Iran's leaders and embolden rather than temper their nuclear ambitions, and, most practically, may give the regime the time it needs to perfect its nuclear capabilities. Put together, this paints a rather bleak picture for engagement: poor prospects for success, and significant risks to even trying. Yet every U.S. president has tried, for a simple reason: the alternatives are grim. Faced with the possibilities of a nuclear-armed Iran or a war with Iran, it is tempting to grasp at even the smallest chance of success in negotiations. This leads me to the conclusion that the Obama administration's efforts must be concentrated on increasing that chance of success. Doing this will require pressure, and lots of it, in order to convince Iran's rulers that a negotiated agreement, despite the threat it poses to the regime, will be less costly than either the status quo or further progress down the nuclear weapons path. War and peace in the Middle East hang on this simple geopolitical arithmetic. [2]Michael Singh is an associate fellow of The Washington

*Institute for Near East Policy and former senior director for Middle East affairs on the National Security Council.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/engaging-iran-cuban-chinese-and-soviet-precedents/>
2. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC10.php?CID=27>

## A responsible troop drawdown in Iraq (2009-05-13 01:00)

From [1]Raymond Tanter



A spike in violence against Iraqi civilians reinforces pressure on President Obama to maintain a force level that would allow for the maintenance of security during the drawdown.

President Obama announced a troop drawdown strategy from Iraq in February 2009, based on responsible removal of U.S. combat brigades. After removal of combat brigades, the U.S. mission is to change from combat to supporting the Government of Iraq (GOI) as it takes the lead in providing security. The United States, however, is to draw down from the approximately 142,000 troops in Iraq as of March 2009 and retain a transitional force of some 35,000-50,000 troops to train, equip, and advise Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), so long as they remain non-sectarian; conduct targeted counterterrorism missions; and protect American civilian and military operations within Iraq.

President Obama chose a 19-month phase-out over an option of 23 months or his campaign pledge of a 16-month drawdown, which he based on withdrawing one combat brigade per month when there were 16 U.S. combat brigades in Iraq.

In connection with the presidential goal of removal of U.S. combat brigades, field research in Iraq during October 2008 offers new insights, published in my 2009 book, [2]President Obama and Iraq: Toward a Responsible Troop Drawdown. Interviews with Iraqis across the political spectrum reinforce the President's decision to slow the pace of the drawdown, and suggest consideration of an even slower timetable. Political gains of the U.S. military surge and the Sons of Iraq (SOI) program, which took away about 100,000 Sunni Iraqi fighters from attacking coalition forces—a political surge—would be jeopardized with a 19-month drawdown.

Regarding reconsideration of withdrawal timetables, it is instructive to compare the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) Quarterly Reports to gauge security progress. The April 2008 SIGIR [3]report stated:

Progress on the security front this quarter was significant but uneven. No new provinces were transferred to Iraqi Security Forces control, but the overall level of violence was substantially lower as a result of the [U.S. military] surge.

Compare this 2008 assessment with the more negative April 2009 SIGIR [4]report, in the aftermath of the transfer of security responsibilities to the ISF for the entire country:

Although average attack levels are at post-invasion lows, recent upticks in violence in Baghdad, Diyala, and Ninewa provinces exemplify the fragility of the current security situation. Notably, bombs in Baghdad and Diyala reportedly killed more than 75 people on April 23, 2009, marking the highest one-day civilian casualty total in more than a year. Some of the recent attacks arose from arrests by Iraqi (Shia) police of (Sunni) Sons of Iraq leadership. These violent eruptions underscore the need to ensure that SOI personnel are re-integrated into new positions within the Iraqi system, pursuant to the GOI's agreement to do so.

President Obama stated in April 2009 that he has "a responsibility to make sure that as we bring troops out, that we do so in a careful enough way that we don't see a complete collapse into violence." But with the takeover of management of the American-sponsored SOI program by the GOI, it has not incorporated these Sunnis fighters into the ISF in the proportions anticipated. As of April 2009, only some 5,000 SOIs had been inducted into the ISF out of a planned 20,000 former fighters. And in late March, firefights broke out between SOI and ISF in Baghdad.

Indeed, American officers continue to be skeptical of the Government of Iraq's potential to integrate Sunni Sons of Iraq. Failure to do so jeopardizes the ability of the ISF to maintain stability, and it may be necessary to slow the U.S. troop drawdown further until the ISF makes progress integrating the SOI.

One particular group of civilians the United States is obligated to protect is comprised of approximately 3,500 Iranian dissidents with "protected persons" status under the Fourth Geneva Convention. My interviews with SOI tribal chiefs in Iraq provide conclusive evidence that these Iranian dissidents in Iraq helped form and expand the SOI. Accordingly, the tribal chiefs stated that they perceive their own security to be linked to the safety of the Iranian dissidents in Iraq.

The American military has protected these approximately 3,500 Iranian dissidents, housed in a compound in Ashraf, Iraq, since they voluntarily relinquished their arms in exchange for such protection in 2004. And despite the Status of Forces Agreement of January 2009, the U.S. obligation to continue such protection remains so long as the American military is present and combat operations are ongoing, or at a minimum, to monitor ISF operations around Ashraf.

At issue is whether the pace of the American troop drawdown is consistent with the requirements of continued protection of the Iranian dissidents, especially in view of their ability to counter efforts of the Iranian regime to subvert Iraq. These dissidents have provided valuable intelligence regarding Iranian regime infiltration of Iraq and operate as a political counter to Tehran's pressure on Baghdad. The dissidents have also acted as an interlocutor between Sunnis with influence over the insurgency on one hand, and the U.S. military on the other hand, helping to peel Sunnis away from the insurgency and encouraging their peaceful participation within the Iraqi political system.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_tanter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_tanter/)

2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0615281125>



3. <http://www.sigir.mil/reports/quarterlyreports/Apr08/Default.aspx>
4. [http://www.sigir.mil/reports/QuarterlyReports/Apr09/pdf/Report\\_-\\_April\\_2009.pdf](http://www.sigir.mil/reports/QuarterlyReports/Apr09/pdf/Report_-_April_2009.pdf)

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Mark T. Kimmitt (2009-05-13 18:48:25)

Ray Tanter provides a strong [1]reminder to MESH readers that, despite the priority shift in U.S. policy from Iraq to Afghanistan, our troops are still engaged in a hostile and unpredictable environment and will be for some time. However, I believe that Ray's point—that any drawdown over the next 19 months ought to be tied to the security situation—is too anemic. Our commitment to Iraq should be open-ended and conditions-based, and our policy should rise above the politics which created these timelines. Ray correctly notes that the next 19 months will be critical as the combat brigades withdraw and are replaced by a transitional force of 30,000-50,000 forces to train, advise, protect and conduct counter-terrorism operations. However, we should not forget that the transitional force will only remain for another 12 months when, according to the Status of Forces Agreement, all U.S. troops will be withdrawn. This key point—the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq by the end of 2011—should be renegotiated with the Iraqi authorities after the new government is seated in 2010. We need to remain in Iraq well beyond 2011 for a host of vital national interests—security, economic and diplomatic interests as a minimum—and any "responsible troop drawdown" should be adjusted accordingly. Anything other than that can hardly qualify as "responsible." Regarding his second point on the protection of the "Iranian dissidents," otherwise known as the Mujahadeen-e-Khalq (MEK) or the People's Mujahedin of Iran (PMOI), it would appear that their future is fixed. As someone who participated in the protracted Status of Forces Agreement negotiations, I would take issue with his point that the MEK enjoys "protected persons" status under Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and U.S. forces are required to "continue such protection... so long as the American military is present and combat operations are ongoing." In fact, Article 27 only prevents extradition or forced repatriation to Iran as long as the United States maintains a presence in Iraq. Security for the protected persons can transfer to the sovereign Government of Iraq, as long as the proscription against extradition or forced repatriation is observed. And, if Ray's advice on a responsible timeline is followed, there will be no U.S. forces in Iraq after 2011 to prevent their extradition or forced repatriation. Hardly responsible. [2]Mark T. Kimmitt is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/a-responsible-troop-drawdown-in-iraq/>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark-t-kimmitt/>

Raymond Tanter (2009-05-15 08:15:16)

Great points [1]raised by Mark Kimmitt. As a participant in the change of U.S. strategy for Iraq in 2006, he is one of those responsible for improving the security situation in Iraq. After reading his post, I agree with him that the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq by the end of 2011 should be renegotiated with Iraqi authorities after a new government takes office in 2010. But Washington would be in a much better position in negotiations with a new government in Baghdad in 2011 if the United States helps prevent the Iranian regime from dominating the political process in Iraq. To the extent there can be an "Iran-free" Government of Iraq post-2010, it may be possible to have enough U.S. forces in Iraq to preserve the gains of the counterinsurgency strategy that General Kimmitt helped to design with Generals Petraeus and Odierno. Minimizing Iran's influence in Iraq would also help achieve our security, economic, and diplomatic interests in Iraq. A second point at issue concerns the status of the People's Mojahedin of Iran (PMOI), the Iranian dissidents in Iraq. Mark's participation in the Status of Forces Agreement negotiations gives him a bird's eye view of the PMOI situation in Iraq. With respect to the "Protected Persons" status of the PMOI under Article 27 of the Geneva Conventions, there are two sides to the story. On one side, Tehran and its allies in the Iraqi government claim that the organization has no status, and enjoys virtually no protection since responsibility for protection of the PMOI transferred from the United States to Iraq. They seek extradition, repatriation, and forced dislocation of the PMOI. On the other side, there are those in the Government of Iraq who believe in observing international law and international humanitarian law. They hold that Article 27 of the Convention, as Mark stated, "prevents extradition or forced repatriation to Iran as long as the United States maintains a presence in Iraq." Mark's view is supported by many—and certainly not all—in the Iraqi government, and many more Iraqi politicians. In an interview on May 12, 2009 with the *Al-Ittihad* daily of Iraq, Iraqi Vice President, Dr. Tariq al-Hashimi, stated that "Iraq must guarantee security and safety of the PMOI individuals in the context of the Fourth Geneva Convention, because we are a civilized country committed to the International Law." Mark is correct that if my "advice on a responsible timeline is followed, there will be no U.S. forces in Iraq after 2011 to prevent... extradition or forced repatriation [of the PMOI from Iraq]." Hence, I modify my position and agree with Mark that "We need to remain in Iraq well beyond 2011 for a host of vital national interests—security, economic and diplomatic interests as a minimum—and

any 'responsible troop drawdown' should be adjusted accordingly." [2] *Raymond Tanter is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/a-responsible-troop-drawdown-in-iraq/#comment-2083>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_tanter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_tanter/)

## Obama chooses Egypt (2009-05-14 01:00)

From [1] Tamara Cofman Wittes



The selection of Egypt for President Obama's long-awaited speech to the Muslim world was not an easy choice, but it is an audacious one. There was no easy option among the various Muslim capitals proposed for the address: a non-Arab capital risked alienating Arabs who view their region as the cradle of Islam, while each Arab capital carried its own risks, from security problems to policy backlash. Egypt may in fact be the riskiest of the available options, because it embodies many of the policy dilemmas the United States faces in the Muslim, and especially the Arab, world. That's why the choice is so significant.

Egypt today is a crucible for challenges facing many Muslim societies:

- Egypt is a staunch U.S. partner on major foreign policy issues in the Middle East, but one whose population is overwhelming opposed to American policy and to their government's alliance with America.
- Egypt boasts a strong central government and a cohesive national identity—yet the government relies on a mix of repression and cooptation to stay in power, preferring to trust the iron fist (with velvet glove for some) than the test of popular legitimacy.
- Egyptian society has achieved many milestones in basic development—yet its economic performance has lagged far behind countries, like Brazil, that were once its peers. With one-third of its citizens under the age of majority, and one-fifth living in abject poverty, this underdevelopment breeds resentment and carries risks of instability.
- Egyptian society is more and more religiously observant, while debates over the role of religion in the public sphere are increasingly contentious, threatening social cohesion (in a country that is 10 percent Christian) and inducing state repression.

- Egypt faced Islamist terrorism in previous decades, and responded with brutal force. The crackdowns relieved the internal threat, but drove radicals like Ayman al-Zawahiri to other countries, where their impact has multiplied.

For the United States, Egypt also embodies the central dilemmas Washington faces regarding human rights and democracy in the wake of Bush's Freedom Agenda. Egypt's president, while formally elected through a competitive process, imprisoned his most recent opponent for three years. His regime continues to arrest and torture journalists, bloggers, and others who challenge government authority. Egypt's human rights failings don't stop at its own borders: Mubarak has been a prime sponsor of Sudan's Omar al-Bashir, and his diplomats have been among those subverting the UN Human Rights Council, which Obama now seeks to rehabilitate.

Obama's intentions on human rights and democracy remain unclear, but short-term exigencies (as well as a bitter Bush legacy) may militate against firm pressure for democratic progress. American policy makers worry that pushing Egypt's government to improve its human rights practices and open its political process will goad Mubarak into limiting his foreign policy cooperation with Washington at a time when regional challenges loom. American policy makers also fear those who might succeed Mubarak through a democratic election: Islamists resolutely opposed to American policy preferences in the Middle East. These two concerns ultimately doomed Bush's democracy push in the Middle East; will they prevent Obama from speaking up at all?

All these challenges make Egypt a particularly trying location from which Obama must speak to the Muslim world. But these same facts compel Obama to take the bull by the horns and articulate clear views toward these issues. Concerns over unpopular American policies, stagnant economies, repressive government and fraught mosque-state relations are all so obvious in Egypt that they cannot be ignored without vitiating the credibility of the speech—and rebuilding America's credibility with Muslim publics is really what this speech is all about.

By choosing Egypt for this address, the Obama administration has swung for the fences. It has set a deadline of one month within which it must decide upon and publicize its basic attitude on two profound questions:

1. How can America engage with governments of all types abroad, while simultaneously building trust and partnership with their citizens?
2. How can America pursue its long-term interests in democratic growth alongside its urgent interests in regional stability?

Obama's June 4 speech in Egypt cannot possibly provide full responses to these deep and important questions—but it must not fail to give some answer. It's going to be a speech to watch.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara\\_cofman\\_wittes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara_cofman_wittes/)

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## Shi'ite identity and Hezbollah (2009-05-14 19:30)

From [1]Michael Young

This interview with Timur Goksel (click [2]here if you don't see the embedded clip below), a former

political advisor to the United Nations Interim Force in southern Lebanon (UNIFIL), is interesting in two regards. Goksel is someone intimately familiar with Lebanon's Shi'ite community, and his observations (many of which I happen to agree with) are worth listening to. But he is also someone who, to me, often appears so taken up by the domestic narrative of the Hezbollah-Shi'ite relationship, one that he has witnessed from up close, that he underplays broader, equally significant, aspects of Hezbollah's behavior.

[kml \_flashembed movie="http://www.youtube.com/v/dohnfNjLvsE" width="425" height="350" wmode="transparent" /]

As I said, much of what Goksel says here is accurate. Don't expect the Shi'ites to push Hezbollah to disarm, because the party's weapons are tied into the community's sense of strength and revival. Hezbollah has also, for the moment, indeed taken a more pragmatic approach to the idea of an Islamic state. This no longer seems to be a priority, as the party has opted for a much more effective strategy, one it developed after it successfully participated in Lebanon's first postwar parliamentary elections in 1992: namely, integrating its supporters into the state and using this as a means of preserving its political, military, and geographic autonomy—in other words, and paradoxically, joining the state to better keep the state at arm's length away from Hezbollah's vital interests.

I also agree with Goksel that to truly understand Hezbollah, one must understand the sociology of the Shi'ite community. However, where I think he comes up short is in the larger picture (at least in this video), particularly with regard to the party's regional links, interests, and calculations. Only once, I believe, does Goksel mention Iran, in the context of the Amal-Hezbollah deal negotiated in Damascus in 1990 under Syrian and Iranian auspices. Otherwise, his tendency is to talk about Hezbollah as a largely Lebanese Shi'ite phenomenon.

Is there any real doubt, however, that Hezbollah, as a military and political organization, is an extension of Iran's security and intelligence apparatus and, more broadly, serves Iranian regional interests? Iran's achievement was certainly to anchor Hezbollah in the Lebanese Shi'ite reality, but it is not that reality that explains why Hezbollah is arming Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza and elsewhere; why it possesses a military capacity, including long-range missiles, that cannot conceivably be justified in a Lebanese context; why it is helping train the Mehdi Army in Iraq; why its youths are being sent to Iran for military instruction and political and religious indoctrination; and why Iran can rely on sympathetic Shi'ite networks in South America and West Africa.

Yes, Shi'ites fear that Hezbollah's disarmament will again lead to their marginalization, even if Hezbollah has been instrumental in heightening this utterly unrealistic existential fear. But let's reverse that. Would the community agree to surrender Hezbollah's weapons in exchange for greater political power in Lebanon? In fact, I believe Hezbollah would consider this excellent idea the kiss of death, which is why it has so strenuously sought in the past three years, after the 2006 summer war, to maintain the community in a state of near permanent hostility towards its political foes in the country—including a vast majority of Sunnis, the Druze, and a sizable portion of the Christian community. Hezbollah best retains authority over the community in times of polarization, allowing it to set the communal agenda and block out dissenting voices.

Repeatedly, Hezbollah has expressed its refusal to hand its weapons over to a sovereign Lebanese state. Those who criticize the state, particularly its past shortcomings with respect to the Shi'ites, may be justified in doing so. But this is really just a vicious circle, so you can turn back that question

against the critics by asking: What kind of state does Hezbollah desire when it has spent years politically, geographically, and ideologically separating Shi'ites from Lebanese society, even using their hold over certain state institutions to reinforce this? There is an overriding explanation: If Shi'ites embrace the Lebanese state, Hezbollah would lose much of its power, its justification for retaining its weapons, and its regional usefulness to Iran, which defines the party's strategy.

That's the other side of Goksel's comments, and one that somebody with his knowledge surely can tell us much more about. Perhaps he did; he just didn't happen to do so in this particular segment, which requires some necessary counterpoint to make the whole more intelligible.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_young/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_young/)
2. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dohnfNjLvsE>

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Timur Goksel (2009-05-15 10:01:38)

I agree with Michael Young's [1]criticism of my short TV interview for the World Focus. Indeed it was a focused, short chat with a few questions predetermined by the interviewer on certain aspects of Hezbollah. When it comes to a regional vision, Young is far far ahead of me. As he says, I came up short "with regard to the party's links, interests and calculations," as I always do. But he answers that on my behalf when he says "he is...someone who, to me, often appears so taken up by the domestic narrative of the Hezbollah-Shi'ite relationship." True, I am always taken up by that domestic narrative because that is the only one I feel qualified to talk about. I can talk endlessly about Hezbollah's first days in south Lebanon, its fledgling guerrilla efforts that evolved into a significant low-intensity warfare against a formidable enemy, and how it became a Shi'ite identity in Lebanon, because I know about those. I lived them. But, what I can say about the party's links, interests and calculations will be mere speculation. I wished I knew how Hezbollah had taken over the narcotics trade between the United States and Mexico, as one U.S. newspaper claimed recently. For example, I am constantly asked how will Hezbollah will react should Israel attack Iran. I have no clue. Does anyone? [2]Timur Goksel is former senior advisor of UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon). He is a security consultant and teaches courses on the UN and conflict management in the Middle East at the American University of Beirut.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/shiite-identity-and-hezbollah/>
2. [http://www.lb.aub.edu.lb/~webpspa/Faculty\\_Profile/Short\\_Biography/t\\_goksel\\_bio.html](http://www.lb.aub.edu.lb/~webpspa/Faculty_Profile/Short_Biography/t_goksel_bio.html)

## Obama and Netanyahu: the agenda (2009-05-15 20:27)

From [1]Robert O. Freedman



As Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin (Bibi) Netanyahu prepares to meet U.S. President Barack Obama on Monday, there are a number of issues on the table for discussion, including questions about Netanyahu's willingness to accept a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Israel's building of settlements and settlement outposts on the West Bank, and, of course, what to

do about Iran. In addition, there is the question of rapport between the two leaders, one on the right wing of the political spectrum and the other on the left wing. Depending on how the meeting goes, the future of U.S-Israeli relations and the future of the Arab-Israeli peace process could be significantly affected.

To be sure, Obama has made a number of gestures to Israel and to the American Jewish community to set a positive tone for the meeting. Thus the United States refused to participate in the Durban II anti-racism conference because it appeared to be taking an anti-Israeli position. This decision involved some political cost to Obama because the Congressional Black Caucus was pushing for the United States to participate. In addition, The U.S. Justice Department dropped its four year old case against two ex-AIPAC staffers, Keith Weissman and Steven Rosen, who had been accused in 2005 on the very vague charge that they had conspired to disclose national defense information to those not authorized to receive it. The fact that the case was dropped on the eve of the annual AIPAC conference in Washington could only be seen as another gesture to Israel and to the American Jewish community.

While these gestures were important, the fact remains that Netanyahu is a right-of-center Israeli politician and Obama is a left-of-center American one, and there is a real question as to how they will get along. Gone are the warm personal relations between the conservative politicians George W. Bush and Ariel Sharon, and between the slightly left-of-center politicians Bill Clinton and Yitzhak Rabin. Indeed, Netanyahu faced a similar problem when he was prime minister from 1996 to 1999, when he had to deal with Clinton. Fortunately for Netanyahu at that time, he had the support of the Republican-dominated U.S. Congress, and for most of the Netanyahu period, Clinton was bogged down with the Monica Lewinsky affair. Netanyahu has no such cover this time. Obama is a very popular president with a strong Democratic Party majority in both houses of Congress, so Netanyahu's room for maneuver is much more limited. The most Netanyahu can hope for, if he chooses to stonewall on the peace process, is that Obama will be so bogged down with the problems of the U.S. economy and the rapidly deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, that he will have little time to devote to the Middle East peace process.

These are the issues on the table for discussion:

1. The two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Obama has been pushing hard for Israel to accept the two-state solution, as has his special envoy to the Middle East George Mitchell. Vice-President Joe Biden, in comments to the AIPAC meeting stated, "Israel has to work for a two-state solution.... The status quo of the last decade has not served the interests of either the United States or Israel very well." So far, Netanyahu has been non-committal, and with his government's review of the peace process presumably now completed, it will be interesting to see how he responds to Obama's pressure. Up until now, Netanyahu has been arguing that with Hamas controlling Gaza and a weak and corrupt Mahmud Abbas running the West Bank, the time is not right for the creation of a Palestinian state.
2. Settlements and settlement outposts. Obama, as many U.S. presidents before him, is strongly opposed to the expansion of settlements and the construction of settlement outposts (often more than a kilometer away from the original settlement), arguing that the expansion of the settlements takes away land that the Palestinians want for their state, and causes despair among the Palestinians. As Biden told AIPAC, "You're not going to like me saying this, but don't build more settlements, dismantle existing (settlement) outposts and allow Palestinians freedom of movement." What is at issue currently is the so-called E-1 corridor between Maaleh Adumim and Jerusalem which would cut the West Bank virtually in half. Whether Obama will be willing to press Netanyahu on this will be an early test of their relationship.
3. Iran. This is perhaps the most difficult of the issues which the two leaders will face. Obama has been trying to use diplomacy to get the Iranian leadership to cease enriching uranium and answer IAEA

(International Atomic Energy Agency) questions about their nuclear weaponization program. For their part, the Israelis claim that the Iranian leaders are stalling, and will continue to string out the United States in the talks until their nuclear weaponization program is completed. It will be interesting to note whether Obama and Netanyahu will agree on a deadline for Iran to comply with US wishes.

A related question is the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Some in the Obama administration have been pressing Israel to sign the agreement so as to have its nuclear facilities inspected. The idea here seems to be that were Israel to sign, Iran would have one less excuse for its stalling. The problem from the Israeli perspective is that until Israel is at peace with all of its neighbors, including Iran, Israel needs its nuclear program as a deterrent against those countries, and especially Iran, that have sworn to destroy it.

Finally, in relation to Iran there is the question of timing. Netanyahu has been pushing for an Iran-first policy, arguing that if the Iranian nuclear program can be halted, that would weaken Hamas and Hezbollah, which are enemies of both Israel and the peace process. The Obama administration has countered that if there were a genuine Israeli-Palestinian peace process underway, it would weaken the appeal of Iran to the Sunni "Arab street," and thus facilitate the peace process.

4. The Arab Peace Plan. The Obama administration has been praising parts of the Arab Peace Plan, which basically calls for Arab state recognition of Israel in return for Israel's withdrawal to its pre-1967 war boundaries and a "just" settlement of the Palestinian refugee problem. The Israelis object not only to a complete withdrawal, which would conflict with Israel's need for "secure borders" as noted in UN Resolution 242, but also to the Arab interpretation of the solution to the Palestinian refugee problem, which involves the return of the refugees to Israel, not to a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza. The Obama administration has been pushing the Arabs to agree to aspects of normalization before a full Israeli withdrawal, but the Arab world is split on this, with Jordan favoring the U.S. idea and Syria opposing it.

5. Arab recognition of Israel as a "Jewish state." While Netanyahu has agreed not to push for this as a prerequisite for negotiations to begin, he wants it as part of a final agreement. The Arabs, citing the 20-percent non-Jewish Arab minority in Israel, oppose it. To Netanyahu, this is a case of Israel's legitimacy as a Jewish state and Israel's acceptance in the Middle East, so it will be interesting to see if the United States is willing to expend any political capital to try to bring the Arabs around to the Israeli position on this.

6. U.S. aid to a Palestinian national unity government that includes Hamas representatives. Netanyahu has been opposing such aid because it would serve to legitimize Hamas, even as the organization continues to refuse to recognize Israel and calls for Israel's destruction. The United States has gone back and forth on this issue, and Congressional pressure has limited Obama's flexibility on it. While at the present time this is just an academic question because Hamas and Fatah are far from forming a unity government, the issue may well come up in the Obama-Netanyahu negotiations.

In sum, Obama and Netanyahu will have lots to talk about when they meet on Monday. Whether anything substantive will emerge from the discussions, or whether the two sides will decide just to set up negotiating teams to deal with these six issues, remains to be seen.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)

## On every fridge in Israel (2009-05-19 23:12)

From MESH Admin



[1] From May 31 to June 4, Israel will conduct its largest country-wide [2]civil defense drill ever, code-named "Turning Point 3." At its height, on June 2, a siren will sound, and all Israelis will be expected to enter protected rooms and shelters for a few minutes. In advance of the drill, Israel's Home Front Command has distributed this color-coded map to all homes (click on image to enlarge), graphically depicting the amount of time residents of each part of the country have "to reach protected space." "Post this map on your refrigerator," the map says, "just to be on the safe side!" To lighten the message (for children?), the map includes playful figures such as a smiling camel and frolicking dolphins.

1. [http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3560/3465537338\\_ed89a76539\\_o.jpg](http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3560/3465537338_ed89a76539_o.jpg)

2. <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/131391>

## Barack and Bibi: starting the clock (2009-05-20 19:40)

From [1]Alan Dowty





The meeting between President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu has triggered a stampede of soothsayers. Every aspect of their encounter is scrutinized for clues to their personal chemistry and, by extension, the future course of U.S.-Israeli relations. But these relations are rooted in forces more fundamental than personalities, intriguing as these two iconic figures may be.

Predictably, the meeting produced no crisis and no breakthrough. It marked the beginning of a new phase in the relationship, one that will take time to play out. Two clocks have been started: one marks the passage of time before Iran unveils its first nuclear weapon, and the other measures progress in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations before the next explosion on that front. Indications are that Netanyahu has succeeded in gaining priority for the first clock, not because of any cleverness on his part but because of the simple fact the Iranian issue has a time-urgency that, in Samuel Johnson's words, "doth wonderfully concentrate the mind."

The Israeli estimate of the Iranian nuclear timeline was [2]revealed two weeks ago by Gen. Michael Herzog, chief of staff to the defense minister, speaking at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (surely the timing was not accidental). The estimate is that Iran now has about 1,000 kilograms of low-enriched uranium, which is about two-thirds of what would be needed for a first nuclear explosive, following further enrichment to bomb-grade level. There are various opinions about how long this further enrichment would take, and presumably it could not be done in the Natanz enrichment facility without attracting the notice of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors. Israel, according to Herzog, disagrees with the U.S. assessment that Iran has suspended weaponization efforts for now. Consequently, he projects completion of the first Iranian nuclear device by late 2010 or early 2011.

The dominant view in Israel, clearly shared by Netanyahu and all elements of the current government, is that an Iranian bomb would be an existential threat to Israel and accordingly must be prevented by all possible means. Diplomacy and sanctions would be preferred if they work, and U.S. military action would be preferable to an Israeli military operation. But there is readiness for Israeli action as a last resort,

the main hesitation being its military feasibility. There is recognition that such an attack would exact a high price in Iranian retaliation on a number of fronts, and that it would at best delay the Iranian program by a few years, but that it might still be a necessary choice. A delay of a few years proved to be enough in the Iraqi case.

This is the message that Netanyahu undoubtedly delivered in Washington, but it is the same message that any Israeli Prime Minister would have delivered, whatever the "personal chemistry" of the interlocutors. Israel will allow time for the new U.S. approach, of diplomacy combined with (intensified) sanctions, to be tried, in hopes of avoiding harder choices. To give this approach the best chance of success, any Israeli government will try to make a last-resort attack look as inevitable as possible, whatever its ultimate intentions. This is reflected in the series of signals sent by the Israeli government before Netanyahu assumed office: air exercises in the Mediterranean, attacks in Syria and Sudan, requests for particularly relevant munitions.

Netanyahu obviously pressed for a deadline in the diplomatic channel. Obama's public response was to reject the idea of a precise deadline, but to indicate that there should be a clear sense of success or failure by the end of the year. The clock will probably run, then, until sometime in mid-2010. By this time it will be clear whether Iran's enrichment program has been contained, and in particular whether any of the low-enriched uranium has been upgraded or not (one possible outcome is that Iran would remain in possession of low-enriched uranium, which is not illegal in itself and which fits the Iranian fiction that it is destined for use as fuel). If there is evidence of production of high-enriched uranium or active weaponization efforts, there would still be time before the first usable device could be tested. And, as it happens, the Israeli Iron Dome missile defense, against short-range rockets, is also scheduled for first deployment in mid-2010.

This, and not the Palestinian issue, is the more likely source of crisis in the U.S.-Israel relationship. It appears extremely unlikely that the United States would use military force, at least within this time frame—although recent statements by Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman and President Shimon Peres, minimizing the likelihood of Israeli action, seem to be part of an effort to encourage U.S. action. It is also clear from recent statements by Vice President Joseph Biden and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates that the United States currently opposes Israeli action. As in the 1981 bombing of the Iraqi reactor, an Israeli attack would probably evoke condemnation from all sides, including the United States, even though many would privately welcome the action—even more than in 1981.

The Palestinian clock, on the other hand, moves at a less harried pace and is much less likely to rock U.S.-Israeli relations. The Palestinian question, after all, has been "urgent" for decades. The central reality is that there is no Palestinian partner able and willing to conclude and implement a two-state solution in both the West Bank and Gaza. It is doubtful that the Palestinian Authority (PA) could even implement an agreement limited to the West Bank.

Once again, the fact that Israel is represented by Netanyahu is less critical than imagined. Even a left-wing Israeli government, continuously chanting the mantra of a two-state solution, would not be able under current conditions to achieve a final settlement, despite hyperactive support from the United States and moderate Arab regimes. Thus negotiators during the post-Annapolis round of talks floated the novel notion of a "shelf agreement" that would be negotiated then but implemented only at an undetermined future date.

Netanyahu's visit was marked by much unintentional comedy over the question of whether or not he would utter the two magic syllables "two-state." But clearly he will not speak these words and upset many members of his own Likud party, when there is no serious negotiation in the offing and thus nothing to be gained. On the other hand, it is clear that an overwhelming majority of Israelis are willing to accept

a two-state solution in principle: 74 percent in one poll, 78 percent in another. Even the platform of Likud in the recent election did not explicitly reject—nor endorse—the two-state formula, while Likud’s right-wing governing partner, Yisrael Beitenu, not only leaves room for a Palestinian state but would even add Arab-inhabited areas of Israel proper to it. In fact only two small parties on the right, which between them won a total of seven seats, explicitly rejected the idea of a Palestinian state.

If a two-state solution becomes a realistic possibility at any point, any Israeli government will either sit at the table or be replaced. For that matter, during his first term of office Netanyahu himself negotiated the Hebron and Wye agreements in the framework of the Oslo process, which was clearly (if not explicitly) premised on creation of a Palestinian state. As Netanyahu said in his joint press conference Monday, if satisfactory conditions for Palestinian self-government could be worked out, “the terminology will take care of itself.”

The major source of friction on the Palestinian track is likely to be the issue of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, to which Obama added a new emphasis in his own remarks. The issue of a freeze on settlements could become contentious, given that Israeli governments have frozen the creation of new settlements but not the expansion of existing ones. Pressure to freeze all settlement growth would add a new dimension to the latent U.S.-Israeli disagreement (going back to 1967) on this issue.

In the meantime, is it possible that frustration over lack of progress toward two states will generate emergence of a “three-state” solution? Given the deadlock between Hamas and Fatah in talks to reunify Palestinian territories, will there be a move to focus on nation-building in the West Bank with the prospect of a settlement limited to that area? Is this any less realistic than other options on the table? Time will tell.

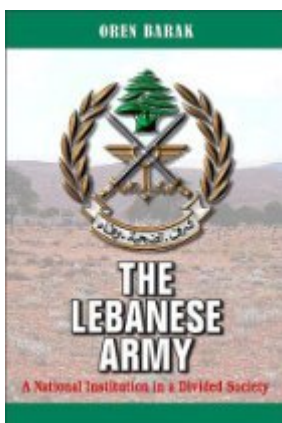
1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)
2. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/html/pdf/HerzogKeynote.pdf>

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### 'The Lebanese Army' (2009-05-22 12:39)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Oren Barak is senior lecturer in political science and international relations at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His new book is *The Lebanese Army: A National Institution in a Divided Society*.

From [1]Oren Barak



[2] The puzzle that my book grapples with might be familiar to those who have seen Monty Python and the Holy Grail, a movie that came out in 1975, the same year that Lebanon’s civil

war broke out:

Cart Master: Bring out yer dead.  
[A customer puts a body on the cart]  
Customer: Here's one.  
Cart Master: That'll be ninepence.  
Dead Person: I'm not dead.  
Cart Master: What?  
Customer: Nothing. There's your ninepence.  
Dead Person: I'm not dead.  
Cart Master: 'Ere, he says he's not dead.  
Customer: Yes he is.  
Dead Person: I'm not.  
Cart Master: He isn't.  
Customer: Well, he will be soon, he's very ill.  
Dead Person: I'm getting better.  
Customer: No you're not, you'll be stone dead in a moment...

The "Dead Person" is Lebanon and the puzzle is how did this state, which so many observers had referred to as a "non-state state" (or a "failed state," to use a more up-to-date term), manage to endure despite the long and devastating conflict (1975-90) and be resuscitated in its aftermath. The book suggests that the Lebanese Army has played a significant role in Lebanon's survival.

Initially, I planned to write a more general account of Lebanon's process of state formation, the causes for its "failure" in the 1970s and 1980s, and its reconstruction in the 1990s. But after some deliberation, I decided to focus on the Lebanese Army, which encapsulates these dramatic developments. After all, this was a military that was weak before the conflict, which had become paralyzed and nearly disintegrated along the lines of ethnicity, clan, and region in the initial stages of the war, but which managed to stay intact throughout this period and be successfully reconstructed in the postwar era. Indeed, today the Lebanese Army enjoys an unparalleled position in Lebanon, demonstrated not only by the widespread public support for its activities, such as the military operation that it launched against Fatah al-Islam, the radical Islamic faction in Tripoli, in 2007, but also in the election of the army commander, General Michel Suleiman, as Lebanon's president in 2008.

It is important to note that this trajectory is markedly different from that of other military institutions in divided societies that witnessed intrastate conflict. In Yugoslavia, for example, the Yugoslav People's Army disintegrated along with the state, and some of its men joined the various ethnic militias. Some of them, including high-ranking officers, soon perpetrated war crimes against their former compatriots. Although some Lebanese soldiers, too, joined various militias during the civil war, the bulk of the army's personnel did not.

In order to solve the puzzle of the Lebanese Army's endurance during the conflict, I decided to trace its origins from the creation of the first Lebanese military units by the French Army during the First World War until the attempts made by the Lebanese Army to restore Lebanon's authority in the postwar era. Yet, when going through the vast resources that I gathered—the army's bulletins, the Lebanese official gazette, memoirs and biographies of numerous Lebanese soldiers, Western archival material, the Lebanese and Arab press, and secondary works on Lebanon—I realized that any discussion of the history of the Lebanese Army (and of any military institution for that matter) must not limit itself to "objective" facts, but also relate to the ways that the army and its leaders—always conscious of the critical importance of history in the process

of state formation—wished this past to be remembered.

Writing about a military institution in the Middle East, a region where security matters are still paramount, is no easy task. Yet, in the Lebanese case, I was struck by the wealth of resources on the army, most of which were previously untapped. Among others, this enabled me to collect biographical material on 4,453 officers who served in the Lebanese Army from its inception to the present in order to identify change and continuity in patterns of recruitment and military service. In this way, I was able to show that the Lebanese Army has gradually become more representative of the various sectors of Lebanese society—ethnic groups (or communities), large families (or clans), and regions—and this transformation preceded the political reforms that facilitated the ending of the conflict. Military institutions in divided societies, in other words, can be, and perhaps ought to be, representative institutions! I [3]believe that this finding is relevant to other divided societies, including present-day Iraq.

In *The Lebanese Army*, I hope to achieve three main goals. The first is to call attention to the significant developments that have taken place in Lebanon in recent decades, and especially to the strengthening of the state's institutions not only in the coercive sense but also in terms of their legitimacy. In my view, this process has considerable implications for Lebanon's close neighbors, and especially for Israel, where many still treat Lebanon as a "non-state state." A second goal is to encourage additional studies on military institutions—and on the realm of security generally—in divided societies, including most Middle Eastern countries. Finally, the book challenges scholars to rethink existing explanations for the "weakness" and "strength" of states in our times, as well as these concepts themselves. Lebanon, for one, is certainly not "dead" and there are many lessons to be learned from its experience.

[4]Order from Publisher | [5]Amazon | [6]Excerpt

1. [http://ir.huji.ac.il/Segel\\_pages/orenbaralfinal.htm](http://ir.huji.ac.il/Segel_pages/orenbaralfinal.htm)
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51felhuCp2L.jpg>
3. [http://politics.huji.ac.il/OrenBarak/Barak-Security\\_Dialogue\\_\(2007\).pdf](http://politics.huji.ac.il/OrenBarak/Barak-Security_Dialogue_(2007).pdf)
4. <http://www.sunypress.edu/details.asp?id=61755>
5. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0791493458>
6. <http://www.sunypress.edu/pdf/61755.pdf>

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## Israeli leverage over Russia vis-à-vis Iran (2009-05-26 03:06)

From [1]Mark N. Katz



There has been an ongoing debate here at MESH and elsewhere about whether Israel can, will, or should launch an attack against Iran to prevent Tehran from obtaining nuclear weapons. One possible method by which such an attack might be degraded or even deterred is if Russia sells the advanced version of its S-300 missile defense system to Iran. But while Tehran has actively sought this weapons system from Moscow and press reports pop up from time about how Russia has agreed to provide it to Iran (or even that Moscow is doing so), the Kremlin has not yet done so. Further, there is reason to believe that it will not do so in future either.

Moscow now has good relations with Israel, which the Kremlin values for several reasons: the growing Russian-Israeli trade relationship, Israeli security assistance in dealing with Muslim opposition forces inside Russia, and the addition of Israeli technology which greatly enhances Moscow's ability to sell arms to India in particular. In addition, with over a million Russian-speakers now living in Israel, there are close cultural contacts between Russia and Israel—which the Israeli government sought to increase in 2008 when it ended visa requirements for Russian tourists.

One of Israel's highest priorities in terms of what it wants from Russia is for Moscow not to assist Iran in ways that could help it to harm Israel. The suspicion that Iran is attempting to acquire nuclear weapons, combined with Iranian President Ahmadinejad's repeated statements expressing the desire to wipe Israel "off the map," have had an especially powerful impact on the Jewish state. Many conservative Israeli political leaders—including the current prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu—have expressed the belief that Iran will attack Israel with nuclear weapons if Tehran develops them, and have indicated that Israel will use force in order to prevent Iran from doing so.

Israel has long wanted Russia to halt all actions helping Iran acquire nuclear weapons or missiles that could deliver them. But while any such move on Moscow's part would be welcome, Israeli intelligence has basically concluded (as [2]noted by Romen Bergman in *The Wall Street Journal* on May 16) that it is now too late to dissuade Iran from acquiring the bomb. What Israel wants most urgently from Moscow, then, is not to provide Tehran with the S-300 missile defense system which might thwart or minimize the effectiveness of an Israeli attack against Iranian nuclear facilities.

For many years, Russia has hemmed and hawed about its willingness to sell S-300s to Iran. At times, the indications that Moscow would sell them have been so strong that Tehran has announced that an agreement had been reached and even that Moscow had begun to deliver the weapons. Whenever this has occurred, Moscow has stated that it has not sold or delivered S-300s to Tehran, but insisted that it has the right to sell defensive weapons not prohibited to Iran by the Security Council.

On December 17, 2008, for example, RIA Novosti reported not only that Moscow and Tehran were negotiating over the sale of medium-range SAMs, but that Russia was "fulfilling the contract" to supply S-300s to Tehran. The deputy head of the Iranian Majles's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee also claimed that Moscow and Tehran had finally reached an agreement over the delivery of S-300s. On December 22, however, Russia's Federal Military-Technical Cooperation Service (the agency overseeing Russian arms sales) stated that reports about Russia selling S-300s to Iran "are wrong."

Just how much Moscow's desire for good relations with Israel has in the past affected its reluctance to sell the S-300 to Tehran is unclear. There is reason to believe, though, that maintaining good relations with Israel has recently become a very important consideration for Moscow. In April 2009, Israel reportedly agreed to sell \$50 million worth of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to Russia. At about this time, Russian sources made clear once again that Moscow was not selling S-300s to Iran. While Moscow did not give Israel a firm promise not to sell these weapons to Iran, an informed Israeli source indicated that Russian officials did give "a vague assurance that the deal is not going ahead" ([3]according to Reuters).

Why would the Russian military's purchase of a mere \$50 million worth of UAVs from Israel influence Moscow not to sell S-300s to Iran? An unattributed commentary published April 20, 2009, in *Nezavisimoye voyennoye obozreniye* pointed toward a powerful incentive. After noting that the \$50 million deal was for 10 Israeli UAVs, the article indicated that Moscow might buy as many as 50 to 100 UAVs from Israel, plus other weapons systems from it. The reason for importing these Israeli products, the article made clear, is because the Russian "military cannot wait indefinitely until our highbrow designers condescend to the army and cease to pull money from it, supplying the field with, instead of modern combat-support systems, merely promises and unsubstantiated advertising arguments."

The Russian Defense Ministry, then, appears to be purchasing weapons and other materiel from Israel because the Russian defense industry either cannot produce them as well, or cannot produce them at all. To the extent that this \$50 million deal represents the beginning of Russian acquisition of—and dependence on—Israeli military technology, Israel is very likely to be in a stronger position than before to discourage Moscow from providing Tehran with S-300s or similar goods that could deter or degrade an Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear facilities.

Whatever other obstacles there may be to Israel launching an attack against Iran, it does not appear that the Russian S-300 missile defense system will be one of them.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_n\\_katz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_n_katz/)
2. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124243059842325581.html>
3. <http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSTRE53C20P20090413>

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## Who will command Lebanon's arms? (2009-05-27 03:18)

From [1]David Schenker



On June 7, Lebanon goes to the polls to elect a new government. Just over a week out, the race is too close to call. The stakes couldn't be higher. Either the pro-west March 14th coalition, in power since 2005, retains power; or the Iranian- and Syrian-backed March 8th coalition led by Hezbollah gains de jure control over the state, and with it the Lebanese military.

The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) is an important, understudied and perhaps the sole respected [2]national institution in a divided country. The LAF possesses a legitimacy and widespread support that are virtually non-existent in other Lebanese institutions. That said, there are serious questions regarding the potential of the army—and of other domestic security agencies—for enhancing state sovereignty.

Despite my reservations, since the end of the Syrian occupation of Lebanon in 2005, I have supported U.S. efforts to build a strong LAF that is loyal and accountable to the state, a project I worked on while I served at the Pentagon. Since 2005, Washington has provided over \$400 million to improve the capabilities of the force, which languished during the years of Syrian suzerainty. Despite the significant infusion of U.S. assistance, however, there is little indication that, to date, the LAF—or other U.S.-funded security institutions—are moving in this direction. At best, it's going to be a long-term project.

The LAF remains a consensus institution, only able to implement the decisions of the Lebanese government with the tacit approval of Hezbollah. A few examples provide insight into the nature of the problem, with both the LAF and other national institutions:

- Perhaps the best example of this dynamic is what happened following the Fatah al-Islam takeover of Nahr el Bared in May 2007. Hezbollah leader Hasan Nasrallah initially opposed the operation—terming LAF entrance into the camp as a "red line"—but he later relented, according to Hezbollah sources (likely due to overwhelming Lebanese popular support for a military response following the massacre of two dozen LAF troops), allowing the operation to proceed.
- There is some pretty convincing evidence of freelancing within the LAF in support of Hezbollah during the 2006 Summer War between Israel and the Shi'ite militia. While the LAF was largely a non-combatant in the hostilities, Hezbollah fired a Chinese-made, Iranian-provided C802 land to sea missile that hit and nearly sank the Israeli SAAR 5-class missile cruiser, the Hanit. According to Israeli sources, the missile provided no early radar signature—allowing the ship to employ countermeasures—because it relied on LAF naval radar. Israel responded by destroying LAF naval radar stations.
- The LAF did not implement the government's decision in May 2008 to remove LAF General Wafiq Chucair, the Hezbollah-sympathetic officer in charge of Beirut airport. Hezbollah had responded to



the personnel decision, and the edict of the government to dismantle the organization's dedicated fiber optic network, by invading Beirut. The government's decision was in fact later overridden by then-COS Michel Suleiman, who later became President of the Republic.

- During Hezbollah's May 2008 invasion of Beirut, the LAF did not oppose the organization's military assault on the capital. In fact, evidence suggests the LAF colluded with Hezbollah in the operation, leaving areas as Hezbollah entered and returning to accept transfer of responsibility after Hezbollah withdrew. Moreover, there were complaints that the LAF did not arrive early to protect March 14th ministers from the onslaught.
- More recently, and equally problematic if true, were reports recently leaked by Cairo that Lebanon's Sureté Générale (Al-Amn al-'Aam) provided the doctored passports to Hezbollah operatives apprehended by Egypt.

Washington's provision of weapons is an important factor in the development of LAF capabilities. In the long term, however, it might be equally if not more useful if the United States and other western states provided civil affairs training geared toward building unit cohesion and developing a primary allegiance to the state, a loyalty that trumps sectarian allegiance.

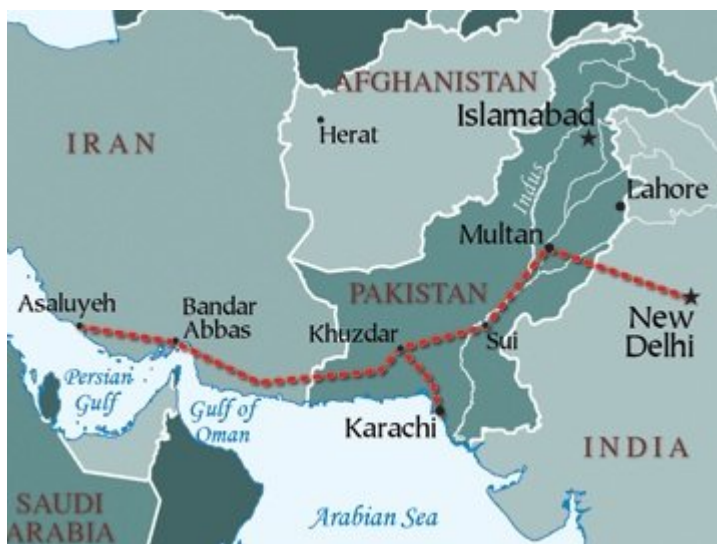
Of course, depending how the June 7 elections turn out, the discussion could be moot. Hezbollah already exerts a preponderance of influence over the LAF, and has long been believed—in coordination with its Syrian allies—to have significant sway within the military intelligence (G2). However, should March 8th win, the U.S. Congress and the Obama administration should rethink the current level of funding for this "national institution."

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david\\_schenker/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david_schenker/)

2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/the-lebanese-army/>

### Iran-Pakistan pipeline: Iran's new lifeline (2009-05-29 12:31)

From [1]Gal Luft



While the world's eyes are focused on Iran and Pakistan, little attention has been paid to the two countries' decision from last week to move ahead with their plans to connect their economies via a natural gas pipeline. What may seem like a standard energy

project could have profound implications for the geopolitics of energy in the 21st century and for the future of south Asia, as well as for America's ability to check Iran's hegemony in the Persian Gulf.

For both Iran and Pakistan, the pipeline project would be highly beneficial. Iran sees in the pipeline not only an economic lifeline at a time when the United States and its European allies are trying to weaken it economically, but also an opportunity, should the pipeline be extended to India, to create an unbreakable long-term political and economic dependence of one billion Indian customers on its gas.

Pakistan, for its part, views the pipeline as the solution to its energy security challenge. Pakistan's domestic gas production is falling and its import dependence is growing by leaps and bounds. By connecting itself with the world's second-largest gas reserve, Pakistan would guarantee reliable supply for decades to come. If the pipeline were to be extended to India it could also be an instrument for stability in often tense Pakistan-India relations as well as a source of revenue for Islamabad through transit fees.

For the Obama administration, the signing of the pipeline deal is a diplomatic setback which could undermine its policy of weakening Iran economically. Unlike the Bush administration, which vocally opposed the project, the Obama team chose to remain mute, either in order to facilitate rapprochement with Tehran or due to its reluctance to burden U.S.-Pakistan relations at a volatile time when the Taliban is at Islamabad's gate. Should the worst happen and a Taliban-style regime take over Pakistan, the economies of the world's most radical Shiite state and that of what could be the world's most radical Sunni state would be connected to each other for decades to come, like conjoined twins.

But all's not lost for the United States. Years would elapse between the signing of the deal and the actual running of gas in the pipe. Baluchistan, where the pipeline is supposed to run, is one of Pakistan's poorest and most restive provinces. In recent years it has been a battleground of militias belonging to Baluch tribes who [2]hate the government of Tehran as much as they hate the one in Islamabad. Taliban or Al Qaeda members who have reportedly moved from the tribal border region to Baluchistan and who are known for their dislike of both governments may find common ground with the Baluch. One can rest assured that the Baluch Liberation Army (which for years has conducted sporadic attacks against water pipelines, power transmission lines and gas installations), and Al Qaeda members (who perfected the art of pipeline sabotage in Iraq) would not spare the Iran-Pakistan pipeline, causing delays in construction and perhaps even termination of the project altogether.

Open U.S. support for those opposition groups is unthinkable, as any collaboration—overt or covert—would severely cripple our relations with Islamabad. What the United States can do is minimize the pipeline's damage to its strategic objectives by ensuring that it ends in Pakistan and does not extend further into India, as both Iran and Pakistan wish. To date, India has been hesitant to join the project and entrust its energy future in the hands of its unstable neighbors. The deterioration in the India-Pakistan relations following the terror attacks in Mumbai has effectively taken the project off the table. But this could easily change in the future as India's energy crunch deepens: some 400 million Indians already suffer from energy poverty. This is what the Obama administration should preempt today, by increasing energy cooperation with India. Pressure on India to curtail its use of coal for power generation may help reduce carbon emissions, but it could force India to shift to cleaner burning natural gas and hence drive it right into the welcoming arms of Iran.

It is in the interest of the United States to help India increase its share of nuclear power and renewable energy while constructing liquefied natural gas terminals along the coasts of the Indian subcontinent to allow diversity of supply. Without active U.S. participation in the effort to alleviate India's energy poverty, Iran could soon become to India what Russia is to Europe.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal\\_luft/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal_luft/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/politics\\_and\\_change\\_among\\_the\\_baluch\\_in\\_iran/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/06/politics_and_change_among_the_baluch_in_iran/)

## Ditching democracy in Egypt? (2009-05-29 22:23)

From [1]J. Scott Carpenter



Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's [2]meeting yesterday with a group of young Egyptian activists at the State Department was a welcome and long-overdue development. These young people somehow managed to elicit the words "democracy" and "human rights" in the same sentence from the Secretary, something that until yesterday she had managed only once before, on Wednesday in a response to a question from reporters when she was meeting with Egyptian Foreign Minister About Gheit.

Of course, in both instances the words were uttered in a rather casual way. She said yesterday, for instance: "Well, we always raise democracy and human rights. It is a core pillar of American foreign policy." Not exactly a ringing policy defense.

In fact, over the course of the past few months there have been a number of occasions that have caused democracy and human rights activists to wince. First, there was Clinton's confirmation testimony in which she made clear that U.S. foreign policy under an Obama administration would center on the so-called three "Ds": diplomacy, development, defense. For many there was a fourth obvious D missing: democracy. Next, there was the conscious downplaying of human rights by the Secretary during her travels to China, Egypt and elsewhere. Then there was the State Department's decision to move the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor out of the main State Department headquarters after 32 years. Perhaps this is one of the reasons the administration has failed, until now, to find anyone willing to head that bureau.

So, why is this? The first reason is obvious and understandable. The Obama administration wanted to distance itself from the tone and perceived baggage of the Bush administration's "Freedom Agenda." The rhetoric did need to be toned down perhaps, but it did not need to be thrown out altogether. A well-placed source at the State Department recently told me that in his bureau, they were no longer to use the words "freedom and democracy" in speeches. "Those are Bush words," he was told. No. They are not. They are American words as Secretary Clinton herself makes clear.

The second and more important reason seems to be that this administration believes democracy and

development are two entirely different things. When asked at her press availability yesterday about the democratic progress Egypt has made, Secretary Clinton avoided the question by talking instead about what the United States was doing and would do with development assistance in Egypt. Specifically she said: "We are very committed to doing what we can to promote economic opportunity inside Egypt. We consider that a key part of our providing assistance to Egypt." She then added the following breathtaking sentence: "We've spent, as you know, many billions of dollars over the last years promoting NGOs, promoting democracy, good governance, rule of law. And I want to stress economic opportunity because out of economic opportunity comes confidence, comes a recognition that people can chart their own future."

Perhaps not coincidentally, a variation of this line of argument was first advanced in print yesterday by Steven Cook for the June 1 issue of Newsweek. In [3]his article, he argues for eliminating all democracy promotion programs in Egypt (and by extension all authoritarian regimes) and reprogramming them into agriculture, pre- and post-natal health and disease prevention programs. Doing so, he writes, would better win hearts and minds and, more importantly, "reduce tensions between Washington and Cairo." (And Beijing, Minsk, Rangoon, Harare, etc., I suppose.) This is pretty disappointing stuff from the drafter of the Council of Foreign Relations [4]task force report, "In Support of Arab Democracy: Why and How."

What Secretary Clinton—and Steven—seem to be saying is, "Look, the Bush administration spent a boatload on promoting democracy and look where that got us; let's spend more on economic development. At least we can make some folks happy." The trouble with this is that it is both factually incorrect and kowtows to the regime-inspired idea that first you help us develop economically and then, if it suits us, we can think about developing institutions of accountability (aka democratic institutions) later.

The fact is the United States has spent many billions of dollars in Egypt on arms, commodities, and Egypt-defined "development" but not on democracy and NGOs. During my time at the State Department we had to wrestle the Egyptian government (and our own!) to the mat to squeeze out a few million dollars to support international organizations like the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, and Freedom House, among others. The direct grants to local non-governmental organizations were even smaller. Most were below \$100,000. Although I don't have the time now to sum up all that was spent by the Bush administration on non-Egyptian-government approved democracy programs in Egypt, I'd make an educated guess that the entire sum wouldn't amount to more than \$100 million over the seven fiscal years from 2002 to 2008. The entire budget for the Middle East Partnership Initiative during those years averaged only \$70 million per year—and that was for the entire region from Morocco to Iran.

But the statement is wrong in another way as well. One of the key innovations of the Bush administration—which created a lot of friction, I can assure you—was to stop working with the Egyptian government on their self-described development programs and instead do something that would really impact the economy: the reform of the financial sector. Working with a talented group of new ministers—not a true democrat among them—we found innovative ways of using "development assistance" to incentivize reforms in the financial sector. In a negotiated Memorandum of Understanding with Egypt, the government committed to, among other things, strong and independent central bank management, developing a functioning government securities market, and implementing a comprehensive program to reform the Egyptian banking sector that included privatization. Against benchmarks in the MOU, the Bush administration committed close to \$700 million with an additional \$2.3 billion in loan guarantees, also tied to performance benchmarks. The results, as the IMF tells us, have been remarkable. Egypt has been growing at an average annual rate of between 5 and 7 percent per year. This is real "development."

The main point to make here is that actually doing something important required changing the way things were done. The United States had to risk changing the way it spoke about our economic support funds to Egypt. Egypt treated these funds as theirs; they earned them. They made peace with Israel, the

argument went, and deserved this annuity in perpetuity for their amazing sacrifice to the United States. The Bush administration looked at what the funds were producing for the Egyptians and for us, and concluded that they needed to be reviewed and reshaped, whatever the original intent of the funding some 30 years ago. Moving economic and political reform together at the same time was crucial in this.

To take a step backwards now is a mistake, but the Obama administration is taking it. Already they have reversed the hard-fought agreement not to allow Egypt to veto democracy programs and have agreed that from now on all programs will be negotiated with the Egyptian government as part of the bilateral agreement. This sends exactly the wrong signal, and soon other governments in the region will be demanding the same sort of agreement. Moreover, the Egypt desk officer at State calmly explains that this administration is only correcting what the Bush administration screwed up. This is Egyptian money, the explanation goes, and we have to eliminate the cause of the friction in the relationship. Some people at USAID tell me that it is all part and parcel of a broader effort to separate democracy assistance more broadly from what USAID does.

Ironically—and sadly—the program that brought in the activists to meet Secretary Clinton yesterday is an early casualty of this leap backwards. Freedom House’s “New Generation” program has seen its project de-funded since the agreement went into force. They had had a three-year agreement with USAID that was terminated only one year into the agreement after the Egyptian government objected to it. It was good the Secretary met with the young people now; she won’t be able to do so next year.

Perhaps we’ll win more hearts and minds with pre- and post-natal care—if anyone knows we’re providing it—but returning to the status quo ante, eliminating core democracy programs, toning down rhetoric to the point that it is seen as a green light to regimes to repress their people, all guarantee we’ll lose some as well. A [5]recent publication by the Project on Middle East Democracy, “Looking Forward: An Integrated Strategy for Supporting Democracy and Human Rights in Egypt,” proposes a much more thoughtful way forward. The Obama administration would be wise to consider many of its sensible recommendations. In the meantime, as these young Egyptian men and women, bloggers, journalists and activists head for home tomorrow, they leave confused about what the United States stands for. This shouldn’t be. Let’s hope that their meeting with Secretary Clinton was for more than just show. Their young lives will depend on it.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j\\_scott\\_carpenter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j_scott_carpenter/)
2. <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/05/124037.htm>
3. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/199105>
4. [http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Arab\\_Democracy\\_TF.pdf](http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Arab_Democracy_TF.pdf)
5. <http://pomed.org/aftandilian-egypt-may-2009/>

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Michele Dunne (2009-05-30 11:53:43)

I could not agree more [1]with Scott Carpenter. So far the Obama administration has had a tin ear on the issue of democracy and human rights in the Middle East. Secretary Clinton’s meeting with the Egyptian activists was the first glimmer of light, though the “billions” comment shows distressing ignorance. The Obama administration needs to move beyond reacting to Bush and formulate its own policy on these important matters. The fact is that, whether or not it is justified, many Arabs hold the United States at least indirectly responsible for their inability to choose their governments and express themselves freely. And we will bear the consequences if we do not try to stand on the right side of these issues. I hope that President Obama and Secretary Clinton will be wise enough not to be satisfied with the few economic and women’s rights initiatives that Arab governments are likely to offer. If they take that bait—well, I can just hear the autocrats chuckling. [2]*Michele Dunne is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/ditching-democracy-in-egypt/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele\\_dunne/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele_dunne/)

Steven A. Cook (2009-06-01 12:30:35)

Scott Carpenter [1]found me out: I hate freedom. Seriously, I do not understand why Scott is disappointed. It is true that I was the project director for the Council on Foreign Relations independent task force on reform in the Arab world, but that does not obligate me to remain committed to a series of conclusions and recommendations developed four years ago. The world has changed since then. As a political scientist and analyst who takes my training seriously—especially one who has not been a Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) of State responsible for democracy promotion, who is not campaigning to be a DAS, and who has no intention of running for elected office—it is perfectly reasonable for me to alter my views and assumptions about the way the world works as circumstances change and new evidence becomes available. Count me as a proud flip-flopper. Since Scott referenced “the facts,” let’s review them. After President Bush announced the “forward strategy of freedom” in November 2003, the administration that Scott served poured unprecedented amounts of resources into “democracy and good governance” programs. As the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) reports, funding for these initiatives increased 133 percent between 2004 and 2007. At the same time, funding for other programs within the Economic Support Funds (ESF) account, with the exceptions of education and economic development, fell anywhere from 44 to 100 percent. Yet, what did any of the democracy and good governance programs produce? There were probably some really great meetings in the cool, hush conference rooms of the Four Seasons Nile Plaza, but other than that very little. To be sure, there was a brief period when the Bush administration’s public support for political change put the Egyptian leadership on the defensive, allowing activists to pursue their agendas in novel ways. Yet, Mubarak and company quickly regained their footing. Democracy promotion initiatives aside, bloggers, journalists and editors were arrested, harassed and, in one instance, raped in custody. Police beat demonstrators protesting anti-democratic changes to the constitution and cracked down on supporters of the rule of law and an independent judiciary, security thugs engaged in widespread voter intimidation and violence during parliamentary elections, and the Ministry of Justice brought charges against two judges who had the temerity to suggest that agents of the regime engaged in electoral fraud. I am thrilled for Saad Eddin Ibrahim—whose courage and honor are inspiring—but civil society capacity-building did not drop the trumped up charges that were keeping him in self-imposed exile; the cynical politics of the Egyptian leadership did. I would like to focus for a moment on the question of money. Scott recalls that it was not much and it was difficult to grease the bureaucratic wheels to get it flowing for worthy causes. According to AID, by fiscal year 2007, \$86 million of the ESF account was devoted to democracy and good governance. Scott’s correct that it is not that much in the grand scheme of things. Although democracy and good governance initiatives represented almost 20 percent of the economic aid, we probably spend \$86 million every half hour in Iraq. Yet, how much money does Scott believe is an appropriate level of funding for democracy and good governance? \$200 million? \$500 million? \$1 billion? \$10 billion? The implication that if only these programs were better-funded, democratic development in Egypt would be further along is erroneous. First, I am not aware of any evidence from the Middle East, North Africa, Latin America, Africa or any other cases that privileging democracy and good governance programs had a dynamic effect on authoritarian political systems. In the broader MENA region, one would be hard-pressed to point to results from, for instance, USAID/MEPI-funded legislative strengthening programs in Morocco, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, and the Palestinian areas. Political scientists have agreed upon ways of measuring the operations of legislative institutions (although it can admittedly be difficult to make comparisons across various types of presidential and parliamentary systems) and these include the strength of committees, ability to alter the budget introduced by the executive, the introduction of bills within the parliament, serious oversight of executive agencies/ministries and the ability to represent constituents’ regional concerns in a way that the executive cannot/will not. It is nearly impossible to point to any serious progress in these areas in the Middle East. Second, I believe Scott and others working on the issue underestimate the interlocking, multi-layered sets of formal and informal political institutions that maintain Egypt’s status quo. The Egyptian political order is not some Middle Eastern analogue to the old East Germany, which, despite outward appearances, was brittle to the core. On the contrary, Egypt’s authoritarian system is strong and surprisingly supple, permitting Mubarak to repress, de-legitimize, and deflect challenges to the regime. Given these circumstances, some of my colleagues might conclude that there is an urgency to fund even more democracy and good governance programs. I respect that, but I think we’re throwing good money after bad. Scott’s post and Michelle Dunne’s [2]endorsement of it represent the paradigmatic disconnect between those of us engaged in policy debates and those who actually manage and implement democracy and good governance programs. The development people in the field have a far better understanding of how parliamentary strengthening, civil society building, and rule of law programs actually work on the nuts and bolts level, and frankly some of them are quite skeptical. Yet, any discussion of the efficacy of these programs becomes a debate about democracy in the region and whether the United States should promote it. My point in the [3]*Newsweek International* piece was that our recent experience in Egypt does not seem to have borne fruit despite allocating

significant resources to democracy and good governance initiatives. Perhaps there is a better way. I am looking forward to reading POMED's new publication for some good ideas. Finally, I laughed when Scott implied that I was a supporter of Mubarak, the military junta in Burma, and China's communist party leadership. This is a discursive strategy that Scott's former employers often used against their political opponents. I will not take the bait. That said, if any of Scott's good governance/democracy promotion programs cause, correlate with, or are even remotely connected to democratic change in any of these places, drinks on me... in Rangoon. [4]Steven A. Cook is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/ditching-democracy-in-egypt/>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/ditching-democracy-in-egypt/comment-page-1/#comment-2153>
3. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/199105>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven\\_a\\_cook/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven_a_cook/)

Tamara Cofman Wittes (2009-06-01 09:25:11)

I couldn't disagree more with Steven Cook's argument that there is a tradeoff between promoting democracy and promoting development, and I disagree also with Scott Carpenter that the Obama administration is headed in Steven's direction. Both are contradicted by the available evidence. While Scott [1]correctly notes the unfortunate signals sent by Secretary Clinton's early statements, I think her words last week, and the upcoming trip to Cairo, suggest a change in course. Clinton's talk with the democracy activists sent a message that the issue of democratization is by no means off the table. Further, the administration is considering a meeting with Egyptian civil society activists during the trip to Cairo. If the secretary (or even better, the president) does [2]sit down with independent activists this week, that will be a great series of first steps. Moreover, the Secretary on Thursday announced the formation of a strategic dialogue with the government of Egypt: one overdue to redefine the purpose of a long-adrift partnership, but also necessary to advance democracy and human rights. Bush (between 2003 and 2005) treated democracy as an issue that trumped all others; his predecessors (and Bush after 2006), treated democracy as dispensable in the face of strategic imperatives. Neither policy was particularly effective at squaring the circle of promoting domestic liberalization by an autocratic ally. Democracy promotion will only be effective and sustainable if it is integrated into the broader framework of bilateral relations, and this is what a successful strategic dialogue will do. Like the strategic dialogue with Saudi Arabia, the U.S.-Egypt talks will include a human rights agenda. If successful, the new dialogue can follow the model of Scott's 2004 Financial Sector MOU in which Washington and Cairo defined shared objectives for reform, directed U.S. assistance toward those objectives, and then wrote accountability benchmarks into U.S. appropriations laws. The 2004 MOU produced aid conditionality that was accepted by the Egyptian government and produced concrete results in the form of real policy change in Cairo. It didn't bring democracy to Egypt, but it opened a long-closed door to American engagement with Egypt on domestic reforms. The 2004 MOU itself enshrined reform goals first discussed in the Clinton-era [3]Gore-Mubarak partnership on economic development. I see a new strategic dialogue as seeking to build on these successes, and I'm surprised Scott doesn't recognize the continuity between earlier work, his own achievements in office, and the efforts the Obama administration is now launching. The MOU model and the new strategic dialogue highlight what should be an obvious point, but apparently isn't, even to experts like Steven Cook: that there is no necessary tradeoff between promoting democracy in Egypt and promoting development (or other strategic goals). Steven's [4]Newsweek piece argues that there is a zero-sum relationship between democracy aid and development aid, that democracy aid only alienates the Cairo government, and that more spending on basic development would mend fences and open the way to progress on reform. But his argument rests on factual misunderstandings of U.S. aid to Egypt, and the facts prove his argument wrong on all counts. Steven's piece claims that an increase in USAID spending on democracy and governance (D &G) projects in Egypt resulted in cuts to core development projects. But throughout the period he discusses, overall U.S. economic aid to Egypt steadily declined, from \$815 million in 1998 to under \$412 million in 2008. In the context of these significant cuts, aid for some types of human development fell, but spending on education increased dramatically, and spending on democracy and governance held more or less steady. The biggest cut by far during this period was to spending directed at economic growth—because a large portion of this spending was a cash grant to the Egyptian government for budget relief, and this was whittled from \$200 million down to about \$20 million. Those overall cuts were agreed to by Cairo, which has sought for many years now to "graduate" from U.S. assistance to an economic relationship based on trade and investment; Egypt does not encourage more U.S. spending on basic health and agriculture. Given that the United States and Egypt agreed on an agenda of financial reforms and education reform to privatize Egypt's economy and create more jobs, it is very misleading to argue that an overemphasis on democracy led to cuts in money for human development; indeed, this privatization initiative, as well as the education investments, should both contribute substantially to human development. Given Cairo's stance toward U.S. aid, Steven's recommendation for more core development

projects is as likely to face Egyptian "intransigence" as anything the Bush Administration did with foreign aid to Egypt. Furthermore, the importance of good governance to progress in development is a matter of wide consensus among scholars and practitioners. If the US were to increase its development spending without attending to the problems of Egypt's corrupt and unresponsive bureaucracy, it would not likely produce many gains either in development or in long-term liberalization. The *Newsweek* article also contains a striking—but inaccurate—claim: that over the period 2004-2007 "the Bush administration increased the share of the economic aid for Egypt it devoted to democracy and governance by 133 percent, from \$37 million to \$86.5 million—or about a fifth of its entire annual economic-aid package to Cairo." I've been tracking U.S. D &G funding in the Middle East for more than five years now, and this figure is simply not accurate. Here are the figures USAID and the State Department provide for the amount of D &G spending within Egypt's bilateral aid package in recent years: FY2004 \$37,050,000 FY2005 \$35,900,000 FY2006 \$50,000,000 FY2007 \$50,000,000 FY2008 \$54,800,000 FY2009 \$22,000,000 (estimate) Of course, there was other USG spending on democracy in Egypt during this period, such as the MEPI spending Scott noted. But even adding in this modest amount of money would not get you to \$86.5 million; and in any event this other spending did not come out of the bilateral aid, and so was not spent "at the expense of" development projects. Putting the facts together reveals a clear picture: that democracy assistance does not come at the expense of development efforts; that development and good governance go hand in hand, and that Cairo does not necessarily object to U.S. government spending on domestic reforms and has even cooperated in efforts to condition U.S. aid on the performance of those reforms—when they are the result of dialogue and agreement on shared goals. That's why a strategic dialogue—with democracy and human rights clearly on the table for discussion—is the right starting point for the Obama Administration. A debate on the nature and efficacy of American aid to Egypt is long overdue. I certainly question the value of some of the programs USAID has funded under the label of "democracy and governance" in Egypt over the years. Some of the projects funded in the past several years, including the Freedom House program Scott cites, are relatively cheap, have been substantive improvements over a previously sorry record, and deserve closer attention in a discussion of how to advance reform and stability in Egypt through the use of American aid money. But bad facts get in the way of a good debate, and I hope we can proceed on a sounder basis. [5] *Tamara Cofman Wittes is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/ditching-democracy-in-egypt/>
2. <http://blogs.tnr.com/tnr/blogs/galston/archive/2009/05/28/obama-s-challenge-in-cairo.aspx>
3. <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2003/issue3/jv7n3a6.html>
4. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/199105>
5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara\\_cofman\\_wittes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara_cofman_wittes/)

J. Scott Carpenter (2009-06-02 14:11:04)

Last Friday I was on *Al-Hurra* with Ayman Nour. During the interview he was asked if reports that he had petitioned Egypt's prosecutor to put him back in jail were true. He was at first surprised that anyone knew of the request, but then admitted that he had done so. He explained that since he had been let out of prison, he had been prohibited from traveling, prohibited from opening a bank account, prohibited from buying or selling his own property, prohibited from reclaiming his party or political role and, just last weekend, had been attacked by someone on a motorbike who had thrown some sort of chemical at him that burned the side of his face. "I have been let out of a small prison where I was safe," he said, "into a massive one in which I am not. Why not go back?" Saad Eddin Ibrahim told a similar story on the same show. How could he return to Egypt where his family and grandchildren are if he has no guarantees that he would be allowed to leave again or would not go back to prison? "I am a 70-year-old man, in poor health, with former injuries from my time of torture. I can't risk going back to prison." The response from the administration to all of this so far has been silence. Until now. Last night, just two days ahead of the President's trip to the Middle East, the Obama administration announced it had notified Congress it plans to give AH-64D Apache Longbow attack helicopters to Egypt. The deal is worth a reported \$820 million. Others on MESH can answer the questions regarding how these attack helicopters fit into Egypt's force structure and overall mission but the political message couldn't be clearer: "Mr. Mubarak, we are returning to the status quo ante. Provide stability and govern as you choose." White House spokesperson Robert Gibbs confirmed as much during his Friday press call when he said the President's Cairo speech would be "returning to proven and effective policies and initiatives that have... served the national interest well in the past." There were other items in the press conference that could be spun slightly differently, of course, and I would like nothing better to be proven wrong on the administration's ultimate direction. Tamara Cofman Wittes puts together an excellent [1] alternative narrative from some of signals she's receiving from the Obama administration that are hopeful. But my experience as a DAS in both DRL and NEA demonstrates we should expect little from strategic dialogues on democracy and human rights. They are typically used to sweep unsightly issues under the carpet—especially when led by senior State Department officials who used to lead the Near East Affairs Bureau. (By the way, who will lead the



working group on human rights and democracy in the U.S-Egypt Strategic Dialogue? Without a political heavyweight in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor or a sympathetic Under Secretary for Global Affairs, the working group will quickly become vestigial. DASes matter at the State Department but they need top cover.) Still, if the president meets with political activists and gives voice to their aspirations; if he challenges Egypt's leadership to do the same; if he has a plan for going beyond these measures to work assiduously toward real reform, then I will become a cheerleader rather than a critic. Unfortunately, my experience again suggests it's nearly impossible for an administration to keep more than one or two sets of issues in their heads at a time. They simply don't have the people or resources to sufficiently staff multiple issues or run interference between them. The situation is made infinitely worse in the Middle East when one of those issues vying for the attention of an administration is the quest to end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. But again, I hope I'm wrong. Regarding Steven Cook's [2]critique, Tamara clearly, concisely and convincingly [3]demonstrates he is wrong about the numbers so I won't pile on here. Just one quick point: Since there were almost no democracy programs to speak of in Egypt in 2000 to say the Bush administration "poured unprecedented amounts of resources" into D &G programs may be technically correct but it's also extremely misleading. Also, as everyone knows, when you start from a low base and begin to ramp up spending levels, the percentage increases appear larger even if in comparison with other accounts they remain relatively small. In any case, as Tamara's correct figures indicate, USAID has tentatively set aside \$22 million in democracy and governance programming in Egypt in FY2009, and that likely includes a large program to support Egyptian decentralization. Nonetheless, this represents a 60-percent cut from FY2008, an unprecedented cut, and the total is a mere 2.8 percent of the amount involved in the Apache deal. But I don't want to get wrapped around the "amount of money" axle. Budget numbers always convey priorities and in this particular case they send a symbolic message to the Egyptian government that the administration is placing less stress on democracy and good governance. But to answer Steven's question directly, I have never been especially hung up on the level of democracy assistance. Policy direction matters more. Still, democracy programs are always relatively cheap compared to huge development or military hardware programs and should remain part of the mix. Supporting women's rights organizations in Morocco to lobby for and then spread the news about the new personal status law, for example, doesn't cost much. Supporting Shayfeen.com in Egypt to help develop greater accountability—and air evidence of police torture—costs peanuts. Establishing electoral observer capacity across the region so that Lebanese, Egyptians, Moroccans, Jordanians and Yemeni and others can seek to hold their governments accountable to international standards costs perhaps a bit more. Programs that work closely with independent newspapers—and an occasional broadcaster—across the region can be even more expensive. But unless a free press takes root, few other freedoms can be guaranteed. Bringing the next generation of young leaders to the United States is comparatively cheap but potentially invaluable. There are literally hundreds of other examples of programs, large and small, that are incrementally contributing to and reinforcing what few positive trends exist in the region. They may not change the world tomorrow but they can help change the world—and create alternatives both to Islamists and autocrats in the process. Ultimately, they also improve our national security. Each of these programs was funded by MEPI or USAID. None of them, incidentally, have used the Four Seasons Nile Plaza as a venue. What I find surprising in Steven's critique is his willingness after only four years to toss aside a set of policies and programs because they didn't lead to immediate democratic breakthrough. In the [4]report "In Support of Arab Democracy: Why and How," which he drafted, the point is made clearly and repeatedly that this must be a long-term effort:

U.S. support for democracy in the Arab world marks a historic change and represents a unique challenge. If the new policy is implemented in ways that are superficial, halfhearted, underfunded, and inconsistent, it will yield new allegations of hypocrisy and further damage relations between the United States and Arab populations. If the United States pushes reform in the region too hard, too fast, this could create instability and undermine U.S. interests. Washington's democracy-promotion policy must be implemented seriously and consistently with respect for democratic principles and a view toward evolutionary, not revolutionary, change. (p. 11)

And yet he now writes, "My point in the *Newsweek International* piece was that our recent experience in Egypt does not seem to have borne fruit..." That recent experience was developed only after 2001 and wasn't implemented till about 2003 before being sacrificed to other priorities in 2006. Did anyone really think that Egyptian society and politics were going to fundamentally change in five to seven years? Not those of us who are accused of underestimating Egypt. From my point of view, it is too early for him to have become "a proud flip-flopper." We saw the fruit of such dilettantism in the past. Following Oslo, the United States and Europe helped to establish and support democratic institutions in Palestine. The Palestinian Legislative Council, for instance, was for a time a strengthening institution that sought to constrain Arafat. When, however, the United States became convinced that it needed Arafat, it turned a blind eye while he crushed it. This, in part, contributed to the series of cascading reactions that created the situation

we're in today in Palestine. Failing to challenge autocrats as a matter of policy, whatever the programs, leads to poor outcomes. In any case, I want to close out this thread by agreeing with Steven, who may not be entirely sold out to his "flip-flopper" position just yet. Commenting for the *Washington Post* this past weekend on the President's upcoming speech in Cairo, Steven [5]wrote:

Obama should make clear that he rejects those voices that claim Muslims are not ready for democracy. It will not be lost on anyone that the president is putting Arab leaders on notice that democratic change remains on Washington's agenda, though he does not seek to impose it at the end of a tank....

Let's hope the President takes the advice. [6]*J. Scott Carpenter is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/ditching-democracy-in-egypt/comment-page-1/#comment-2168>
2. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/199105>
3. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/ditching-democracy-in-egypt/comment-page-1/#comment-2168>
4. [http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Arab\\_Democracy\\_TF.pdf](http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Arab_Democracy_TF.pdf)
5. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/29/AR2009052902976.html>
6. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j\\_scott\\_carpenter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j_scott_carpenter/)

Amy Hawthorne (2009-06-02 20:21:12)

This has been a very rich [1]exchange among people whom I respect greatly, but I noticed that some deeper issues relating to the challenges of democracy aid in Egypt haven't gotten enough attention in the discussion so far. Tamara Cofman Witttes [2]wrote, "Democracy promotion will only be effective and sustainable if it is integrated into the broader framework of bilateral relations, and this is what a successful strategic dialogue will do." In fact, though necessary, such policy integration is not what will determine the effectiveness of democracy promotion. More important are 1) indigenous demand for democracy and for its active promotion by outsiders—internal momentum and absorptive capacity, we could say—and 2) a government/regime that, even if not genuinely committed to democratic reform, does not consistently block meaningful democracy aid—an uninterested or a minimally resistant regime with respect to democracy aid, let's call it. First, the weak demand for democratic change and for U.S. democracy aid by major political actors in Egypt (both outside and inside the regime) leads to the dilemma of how to spend all that money wisely. And even at reduced levels, it is still quite a lot of money. By raising the issue of receptivity, I am not suggesting that most Egyptians do not want to live under a much freer, more effective, and more just governing system. I am pointing out that the organized demand for democracy in Egypt is quite weak, and that this makes a very challenging environment in which to promote democracy and spend aid funds well. On top of that, the most influential opposition political actors and forces in Egypt want little or nothing to do with U.S. democracy aid. Although this desire for very long arm's length from the United States is not shared by everyone in Egypt and may diminish a bit under the Obama presidency, in the main it's a pretty constant factor in Egyptian political life, connected as it is to deeply-held ideas of sovereignty, authenticity, and suspicion of Western meddling, in light of Egypt's colonial experience. (For a brilliant analysis of why many Egyptians are suspicious of outside efforts to aid civil society in their country, and why public campaigns against people like Saad Eddin Ibrahim resonate widely, read Nicola Pratt's chapter titled "Human Rights NGOs and the 'Foreign Funding Debate' in Egypt," in the 2006 edited volume [3]*Human Rights in the Arab World*). Others are afraid to accept U.S. support, cannot yet make good use of funds, or are too marginal to have much impact in Egypt anytime soon. The issue of impact underscores the need for appropriate short-term expectations (and for a long-term and flexible perspective) on the part of funders; some seeds we help plant really do bloom, but only after a long time and a lot of nurturing, and often not the ones we expect. In his second post, Scott Carpenter [4]correctly points to the need for patience in assessing results. But the fact is that most democracy aid projects today (not just in Egypt) are burdened with highly ambitious and often impossible requirements to achieve, measure, and document "tangible" outcomes, results, impact, and even "breakthroughs" in just a year or two (many MEPI recipients would love to have five to seven years!). I doubt this approach, which characterizes our democracy assistance worldwide, will change anytime soon. Seeking impact and being able to measure it is essential for democracy promoters, but read the results framework/outcomes/monitoring and evaluation sections of most proposals or grant agreements, and weep. Second, with or without an aid "veto," the Egyptian regime manages to block or neutralize, by formal or informal means, initiatives and programs it does not want, and goes to considerable lengths to do so. Suffice it to say that this is an area where the Cairo regime is highly effective and has a record of accomplishment, and that more than once, it has outsmarted and outlasted the donors. Those who have toiled deep in the trenches in Egypt have some great stories to share on this. I don't have any simple answers to these problems. I just wanted to point out that they are

real, and pre-date the George W. Bush administration. They do *not* lead to the conclusion that U.S. democracy aid in Egypt is futile—quite the opposite, it is vitally important, especially now. But they do demand unusually creative strategic thinking by our policymakers and democracy practitioners. [5] *Amy Hawthorne is the executive director of the Hollings Center for International Dialogue.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/ditching-democracy-in-egypt/>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/ditching-democracy-in-egypt/comment-page-1/#comment-2168>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0812220323>
4. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/ditching-democracy-in-egypt/comment-page-1/#comment-2173>
5. <http://www.hollingscenter.org/Staff.html>

Dina Guirguis and Maria Dayton (2009-06-02 22:30:16)

Steven Cook's [1] article in *Newsweek* must come as music to the ears of the Egyptian government. Cook claims that the Bush administration's attempts to fund democracy, civil society, and human rights in Egypt not only failed, but that American aid should be funneled solely into economic development efforts. Beyond the erroneous assumptions and conclusions, this article simply doesn't get it. Foreign aid has been buying Egyptians bread for decades, but an autocratic and corrupt regime has squandered economic aid without allowing for the genuine flowering of an open society welcoming to economic development and foreign investment and the kind of citizen engagement that would drive demands for reform that Cook speaks of. Not only is support for the legitimate democratic aspirations of the Egyptian people in the strategic interest of the community of democracies, but backtracking now and returning to an aid policy that promotes only economic development simply rewards the regime for its brutal crackdown against secular democracy activists. While the U.S.-Egyptian alliance is important and often mutually beneficial, Mubarak has been able to deliver very little in terms of substantive advancement on regional peace with Israel, not to mention the failure to deliver on internal development, and Egypt has witnessed regression on numerous development indicators under Mubarak's tenure. Obama's administration should not fall victim to false claims and propaganda of illegitimate authoritarian dictatorships—and to the sense of needing Mubarak at all costs—at the expense of regional U.S. interests. Without seriously re-defining the old paradigm that framed the U.S.-Egypt relationship, Mubarak is unlikely to deliver on his foreign policy commitments, just as he has failed to implement his domestic election promises for 28 years. Unfortunately, Cook's article buys into many of the false arguments offered by the Egyptian regime, such as the claim that development versus democracy assistance is a zero-sum game, and that external pressure on the government does not work. The truth is that the regime derives its international legitimacy from a false political dualism that offers the international community only two choices for Egyptian governance: the current regime, or Islamic extremists. In reality, more than 77 percent of Egyptians refused to vote in the last parliamentary election because they were not offered a middle way. The regime has destroyed all secular, liberal political parties that might present a stronger appeal to the population. Meanwhile, U.S.-backed autocrats like Mubarak continue to successfully drive and feed the ideology of extremists not just in Egypt, but across the region. If the American government wants a credible alternative to the religiously-inspired political movements in Egypt and a stable partner in promoting regional interests, it must support democratic forces in their efforts to organize and carve out political space. Here is where democracy assistance is vital; and here also is where Cook's numbers are to be questioned. Since 1998, overall economic assistance to Egypt has been steadily declining based on a U.S.-Israeli agreement in 1996 and also the Egyptian government's request to graduate to a trade based relationship. Cook claims that the United States gave Egypt \$450 million in economic assistance since 2005—the majority of which, according to him, was diverted to good governance—when in fact the total budget for economic aid in FY '09 was \$202 million and in FY '08 it was \$415 million, decreasing by \$40 million increments annually from \$815 million since 1998. To argue that democracy and governance funds have been increasing, to a whopping \$86.5 million (when, first, at no point since 2005 did these funds annually reach this number) at the expense of other programs, is specious and misleading in light of the overall decline across the board in economic assistance. While change can and is and will continue to come from within, giving up on democracy promotion programs in favor of "technical assistance" would simply consolidate the extremely unpopular status quo of the last twenty eight years. As Egyptians continue to fight and sacrifice—as Cook's piece correctly points out—for their basic freedoms, the United States cannot remain neutral on these issues; such neutrality amounts to a de facto endorsement of the status quo. External U.S. pressure on Egypt in 2005 did lead to a brief opening of political space and resulted in unprecedented citizen engagement, the opening of independent newspapers, a flood of new bloggers and other signs of a robust emerging polity—forming precisely the constituency Cook discusses that would drive positive change if permitted. It was not the failure of U.S.-funded governance programs, as Cook asserts, that led to the demise of this so-called "Arab Spring" and the ensuing government backlash that followed. In reality, it was the lack of U.S. consistency in its policies once it got cold feet in the aftermath of the Hamas election in

Palestine. The early success and ultimate failure of U.S. pressures on Egypt in 2005 has proven one very important fact: strong verbal support for political reform and for the efforts of activists, coupled with consistent action, is an effective tool for democracy promotion. It should also be noted that at no point during this brief opening was the Egyptian regime itself threatened, nor did Egyptian cooperation on U.S. regional interests stop. In order to avoid charges of intervention, the United States should not take the side of particular political actors, but instead support reforms that enjoy wide support among the population, including those that Mubarak himself pledged to undertake in his last presidential campaign: repealing emergency law, upholding the rule of law and an independent judiciary, lifting the restrictions on political parties and civil society, supporting a free media, and increasing government accountability. While programs that aid impoverished farmers are essential and should continue, no less critical are governance programs aimed at promoting basic rights and a peaceful transition to democracy in this pivotal country of 80 million. Cook is no doubt right that many of the democracy support programs under Bush were naïve and poorly designed. That is a weak argument for abandoning them completely, however, especially when many of Egypt's civil society activists are looking to the west to support them in their efforts to level the playing field. Well-crafted but tough incentives along the lines of the Helsinki Accords, which led to the fall of dictators in Eastern Europe, could make a real difference in the two years now remaining until the next elections in Egypt. *Dina Guirguis is executive director and Maria Dayton is program manager of [2]Voices for a Democratic Egypt.*

1. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/199105>

2. <http://www.democratiegypt.org/>

Steven A. Cook (2009-06-03 14:31:33)

I am glad that I have had a hand in starting a [1]debate on democracy in Egypt. Three quick comments: 1. The point of the [2]*Newsweek* piece was merely to raise questions about the efficacy of democracy and governance programs. There is a distinction between democracy promotion programs and the desirability of democracy in Egypt. 2. I concede defeat on the numbers. I confused "requested" and what was actually spent. I take 100 percent responsibility for the error and have requested that *Newsweek International* print a correction. 3. We should not let our distaste for the Egyptian regime cloud our strategic thinking about what is in the interests of the United States. Egypt is a difficult yet important ally. In the end, I believe the difference between me and my interlocutors is actually quite small. I too revile Egypt's human rights conditions, the regime's almost exclusive use of its coercive instruments, the torture and rape of activists, the hounding of sociology professors, the blind hypocrisy of the NDP with its ostensible emphasis on reform, while overseeing the narrowing of political space for activists. I just happen to be skeptical that democracy and governance programs are the best way to get us to a more democratic Egypt. [3]*Steven A. Cook is a member of MESH. This discussion thread is now closed. —MESH Admin Further unmoderated discussion continues at the MESH Facebook page, [4]here.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/ditching-democracy-in-egypt/>

2. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/199105>

3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven\\_a\\_cook/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven_a_cook/)

4. <http://www.facebook.com/topic.php?uid=22788098630&topic=9025>

Jennifer Windsor (2009-06-02 13:09:08)

I want to add my two cents to this discussion. I too was surprised—and frankly disappointed—by the arguments presented by Steven Cook in his [1]*Newsweek* piece. An uninformed reader could come away from the article (and his [2]latest response) thinking that the United States (and indeed all non-Egyptians) can do nothing to support a process of peaceful political reform in Egypt, and that all aid for democracy and human rights has been a complete and total waste. Egypt has certainly never been a model for effective democracy assistance—nor indeed for effective development programs. The "model" of the United States offering a guaranteed amount of assistance that must require approval by a government has led to millions upon millions of dollars in assistance going to waste for three decades in Egypt. That is true in all areas of development assistance, not only democracy assistance. Over the last three decades, the Egyptian government has been remarkably consistent in rejecting any programs that might impact the distribution of power—social, economic or political power—within Egypt. And the U.S. government, until a few years ago, refused to expend any diplomatic capital to encourage greater political space or reform in the country. As a result, it is certainly agreed that many of the programs considered as democracy assistance have been either window dressing or, most charitably, investments that may pay off only far into the future. So point taken that many of the programs that the United States has funded under the rubric of democracy assistance (which have, at

their peak, only represented 2 percent of the total aid package), including the program mentioned by Cook, have shown few results. But let's look at the \$50 million or so spent in 2008. Of the total amount, approximately \$18 million went to rule of law (a criminal justice program, the automation of the Prosecutors General office, and family law reform). Approximately \$5 million went to decentralization programs. The remainder, some \$30 million, was divided roughly as follows (these numbers are not published anywhere): \$5 million went to a media program, most (not all) of which was directed towards state-owned media; some went to NDI and IRI; and the remainder was split between Egyptian-government-approved groups (now indirectly through a new group comprised of appointees by the U.S. and Egyptian governments), non-government groups, and direct or indirect programs to support independent groups. The decision to support independent groups was an important break from that cycle of failure in Egypt. But let me assure Steven Cook, it was a very small amount. It is therefore disappointing that the State Department made the decision this year to return to the status quo that had resulted in little gains in the past. It is precisely the Egyptian government-approved democracy assistance programs that have been preserved in the cut of nearly 70 percent of the democracy assistance funds. According to the U.S. ambassador to Egypt, the decision to remove all of the assistance to independent groups out of the bilateral agreement, was to "facilitate" better relations with Egypt. As a consequence, programs that support independent civic groups and a new generation of leaders—directly or indirectly through international civil society groups—have been terminated. I think this is a terrible mistake. This is not because I used to be a DAS or want to be a DAS, nor even because Freedom House implements such programs, but because the most promising part of Egyptian society today is precisely the new generation of leaders who have emerged outside of the government. Having just returned from Cairo, what I found most heartening was the diversity of groups and individuals who seek genuine change—who want a government that is accountable to its people and allows its citizens to enjoy fundamental freedoms of expression and association. They are still too fragmented and disorganized, for sure. They still need more local support and in-country networks, absolutely. But their potential is demonstrated by the fact that the Egyptian security services have asked for a massive increase in funding. They know full well that once the people of Egypt are unified around specific goals and policy changes that will improve their lives, "the genie is out of the bottle." That is why the Egyptian Ministry of Interior has asked for a 153 million Egyptian pound ( \$27 million) increase in funds from the People's Assembly for their annual budget (roughly the same amount that the State Department cut from democracy assistance). They said they want this money for added "street control" in anticipation of "expected demonstrations and strikes" this coming year. Already, the Ministry of Interior budget far exceeds that of the education and health ministries, and it operates virtually without constraints under a state of emergency. So the advocates for oppression in Egypt will get more funds, and the advocates for freedom get less. I can't believe that Steven Cook would be in favor of such an outcome. The security services is where the action is. And they have already heard about the U.S. government action, and have warned activists that they will still be around, long after the international democratic civil society community is gone. Secretary of State Clinton's statement last week, and her decision to meet with a group of a group of young activists and advocates from Egypt, were encouraging steps to try to send a different message from the Obama administration. We hope that President Obama demonstrates through his words—and actions—that America supports the Egyptian people's aspirations for change, by restoring assistance to those who are on the frontlines of trying to make that change happen. That doesn't mean the United States should not do everything possible to help advance the development efforts that Steven Cook praised. But as Amartya Sen has so articulately stated, one should not have to choose between remaining poor and being free. Let's not make Egypt the exception to that rule. [3]*Jennifer Windsor is executive director of Freedom House.*

1. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/199105>

2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/ditching-democracy-in-egypt/comment-page-1/#comment-2169>

3. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=92&staff=35>

## 3.6 June

### Obama's grand strategy (2009-06-03 02:00)

From [1]Charles Hill



If you put yourself in the position of, say, the political counsellor of the British Embassy in Washington and you were required to send in a pre-Obama-in-Cairo speech analysis, you could draw upon a close analysis of Obama's words and those of his Middle East team over the past ten days to say something like this:

1. The first task that Obama has set for himself is to "regain the trust" of the Muslim world. That requires deeply felt expressions of respect, an attitude of humbleness, with apologies for the wrongdoings and arrogance of the president's predecessors, and "listening." This phase has largely been completed. The Arab regimes in particular are satisfied with this new U.S. approach, especially because it has legitimated the propaganda they have produced for their own people about American iniquities over the decades.
2. In addition, President Obama has enshrined the phrase "The Muslim World" in American foreign policy. Contrary to the late Professor Edward Said, who never let an opportunity slip by to denounce any American official who would use such a reductionist phrase to apply to such a multi-various reality as Islam, President Obama has re-defined the term so as to convey an understanding that The Muslim World (the Umma) is an alternative to the international state system. This has put in place the foundation for a new relationship of trust between these two, mutually respectful world systems.
3. Next, of course, is to place the United States in a position of "even-handedness" which so many friends of peace in the region—Europeans, American editorialists, UN officials, professors, etc.—have called for over these many years. In this regard, one anomaly stands out: Jewish settlements. The United States will make an absolute settlements freeze the unconditional requirement for future good relations between Washington and "Tel Aviv." And this of course will cement the new U.S. achievement of mutual trust between The Muslim World and that other international order led by the United States.
4. On the basis of this, the United States can move next to address, diplomatically and without senseless threats or harsh language, the issue of Iran's nuclear weapons program. The new level of mutuality naturally will dictate that all parties in the Middle East adhere to the same goal, which the United States at a later stage will reveal to be universal agreement to turn the region into a "Nuclear Weapons Free Zone" such as that established decades ago for Latin America by the Treaty of Tlatelolco. The first step in this achievement will be Israel's declaration of its possession of nuclear weapons and its willingness to have them inspected and destroyed by the IAEA.
5. With such positive momentum well underway, the United States may confidently turn to the final steps to end the Israeli-Palestinian problem. This will take the form of the Arab regimes and Iran prevailing upon Hezbollah and Hamas to turn themselves from non-state, anti-state actors into centrally significant participants in their respective states of Lebanon and Palestine. Negotiations between Palestine and Israel will then be relatively easy to wrap up in a short period of time, probably before the end of President Obama's first term in office.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/charles\\_hill/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/charles_hill/)

## Obama and the Muslims (2009-06-05 00:11)

[kml \_flashembed movie="http://youtube.com/v/6BlqLwCKkeY" width="425" height="350" wmode="transparent" /]

On June 4, U.S. President Barack Obama delivered a much-anticipated address to the world's Muslims, from a podium at Cairo University. (If you cannot see the embedded video above, [1]click here. The text is [2]here.) The following MESH members responded to an invitation to comment on the speech: Alan Dowty, Michele Dunne, Chuck Freilich, Bernard Heykal, Bruce Jentelson, Josef Joffe, Mark N. Katz, Mark T. Kimmitt, Martin Kramer, Walter Laqueur, Michael Mandelbaum, Michael Reynolds, Michael Rubin, Harvey Sicherman, Philip Carl Salzman, Raymond Tanter, and Michael Young.



[3]Michele Dunne :: What President Obama had going for him in this speech was at least the appearance of frankness, laying on the table the areas of difference—terrorism (repackaged as "violent extremism"), Afghanistan, Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, nuclear proliferation, democracy, religious freedom, women's rights, economic development—and giving his view of each one. That approach, along with the requisite expressions of support for Islam as a religion and a civilization, will get him some points.

What the speech did not do was tell us anything much about how his administration will follow up on these issues. The list of deliverables was exceedingly short. The only firm promise was to a pursue a two-state solution to the Palestine issue—which will be extremely difficult to achieve. There were hints of a softer approach to Hamas (now it's an organization with "support" and "responsibilities" instead of a terrorist group) and perhaps to Hezbollah ("we will welcome all elected, peaceful governments"), but it was unclear how serious that was and whether it would be sustainable in Washington.

If Obama considered "terrorism" a toxic word to be discarded, at least he did not do the same with "democracy." He stayed on the plane of theory but addressed the issue squarely, not ducking its political aspects, and this was the part of the address that got the most positive reaction from the Egyptian audience. It was the only part of the speech where he actually lectured a bit, issuing a series of "you musts" when it came to what "government of the people and by the people" meant. Frankly it was more than I expected. It was a good start to articulate principles for which the United States stands, but then again, there was no promise of follow-up. What, if anything, will the Obama administration do when the Egyptian government excludes most of the opposition from the next parliamentary elections or when Syria throws a bunch of democracy activists in jail? Obama told us nothing about that. Privately, administration people are saying that Bush promised much on democracy and delivered little, and that Obama plans to do the reverse. Let's see. We won't have long to wait.

The women's rights and economic development sections near the end had a cut-and-paste feel. These are Secretary Clinton's pet issues, and apparently she is inclined to try to substitute them for democracy and human rights overall in policy and assistance programs. At least that didn't happen in this speech. But the smallish economic and women's rights initiatives mentioned created a sort of imbalance. It would have been

better either to have Obama say what he was going to do in each of the major areas of the speech or none of them, perhaps saving the microloans for announcement in a fact sheet.



[4]Bernard Haykel :: I am writing from Riyadh where President Obama was cordially received but has left a bitter aftertaste among many here. His visit is seen as an attempt to get, not to say bully, the Saudi leadership to make concrete and positive gestures toward Israel, over and above the Saudi-led Arab Peace Initiative of 2002. Saudis have little desire or willingness to do this because of a widely held view that Israel, especially under its present Likud leadership and after the brutal war in Gaza earlier this year, does not deserve this. A number of Saudis have asked the following question: Why should the Kingdom reward an Israeli leadership that is not even willing to acknowledge the Palestinians' right to a state? Granting something additional now to Israel for nothing can only help make the Saudi leadership look weak-kneed.

As for Obama's speech in Cairo, all the Saudis I have spoken to have acknowledged its rhetorical power, but they insist that only facts will make a difference to their assessment of the President's true intentions.

My own view is that the speech was remarkable for its relative candor on a number of important issues (and for some notable omissions), but I am troubled by its framing which juxtaposes the United States and Islam as two equivalent entities, which they are not. In doing this, Obama has adopted unwittingly the framing of Al Qaeda's ideology, and this in turn might grant a degree of legitimacy to discussing Islam as a political reality rather than a faith. Surely, it is certain forms of Islamism and not Islam that pose the problem.

The second notable point in the speech is Obama's analogy between the plight of Palestinians and that of African-Americans under slavery and Jim Crow. The context here is Obama's advice to Palestinians to adopt non-violent means in resisting Israeli occupation. As before, Obama has taken a page from Al Qaeda's book, in which the alleged humiliation and oppression of Muslims are compared to the tribulations of African-Americans. Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al Qaeda's number two leader, often invokes this same history by drawing on the examples of Malcolm X and the Black Panthers to argue that only violence and rejection can lead to political change, and to convince African-American soldiers to desert the U.S. armed forces.

In short, the framing of the United States' relationship with the Muslim world as one based on friendship rather than enmity, while superficially and rhetorically laudable, is fraught with difficulties and pitfalls, not least because it can unwittingly give credence to the idea that there might in fact be a clash between the United States and Islam. I can imagine a long-bearded man now smiling in a cave on the Afghan-Pakistan border.



[5]Josef Joffe :: The problem laid out by President Obama in Cairo is an old one in America's international relations. It is foreign policy as psychotherapy. The diplomatist/strategist deals with conflicts of interest and the "correlation of forces," as our Soviet friends used to say. The therapist knows no such clashes, certainly no tragedies—only misunderstandings, fears, and neuroses. Obama-in-Cairo was Esalen-amidst-the-Pyramids. Or as he himself put it: "This cycle of suspicion and discord must end." It is an imaginary conflict, in other words.



There are several issues here. The first is that the therapist does not speak truth but reassurance. Obama recounts how Morocco was the first to recognize the United States in the Treaty of Tripoli of 1796. Unfortunately, the larger, though unmentioned, truth is less reassuring: that the first wars America fought after independence were with the "Barbary Pirates," the potentates of the Maghreb. To break their nasty habit of selling American hostages for money, the young republic fought intermittently from 1801 to 1815. No misunderstandings here, just the naked clash of our interests against theirs.

A larger untruth is the (implicit) idea that America is at war with Islam, as uttered in the *e contrario* phrase: "America is not—and never will be—at war with Islam." Of course not. Who ever said so? Only Al Qaeda et al. did—copiously and tirelessly. These folks also keep saying as insistently that they are at war with the "Jews and crusaders," with the West, and above all, America. Before the President reached Cairo, AQ's No. 2, Aymal al-Zawahiri, let it be known that Obama's speech would not at all change the "bloody messages" he was sending to Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Therapists make no judgments on truth and falsehood; for them, the process is the purpose. But a process that does not correctly unearth the roots of conflict will invariably run afoul of the realities. Islamist terror will not go away because Obama softly, softly establishes a kind of moral equivalence between the Holocaust and what Palestinians call the Nakba, their loss and flight in Israel's 1948 War of Independence.

Nor will the Arab world flock to America's cause because of all the niceties Obama has bestowed on it. Let it be said, though, that the harsh rhetoric on Israel plus slaps like no-state-dinner for Mr. Netanyahu at the White House have been replaced by the balanced cadences of the Cairo speech: The Israelis have to do this, the Palestinians and Arabs have to do that.

But the chickens have already come home to roost. The hope, a perennial one, obviously is that the Arabs will be so overjoyed by the U.S. manhandling Israel that they will rally to Old Glory en masse, doing America's bidding throughout the Greater Middle East. This is not how the Mideast works. To make the point, the spokesman of the Egyptian foreign ministry told the *New York Times*: "We will judge everything by the degree of Israeli commitments, and measures that are taken."

In so many words: "Mr. President, now that you have pressured the Israelis, we want to see more of it. And more. And then, perhaps, we'll do you a favor on other matters." We are back at the oldest game of the Middle East. It is called "Let the U.S. Deliver Israel, Then We Might Start Acting in Our Own Interest." Obviously, if it were in the Arab interest to push the Palestinians toward peace, and to engage in an alliance of containment and deterrence against Iran, they would have done so. But for lots of reasons, good and bad, the Arabs are not interested. And so the United States will keep weakening its only true ally in the Middle East without reaping any geopolitical fruit from its courtship of Araby.

Alas, a lot of damage will have been done before the United States learns that therapy is not grand strategy and changes course. But one bit of therapeutic advice remains apropos: Never treat your opponents and detractors better than your friends.



[6]Mark N. Katz :: President Obama gave a powerful speech in Cairo setting forth his vision of how the relationship between the United States and the Muslim world can be improved. In it, he called for change both in how the United States and its allies view and act toward the Muslim world. But he also

called for change in how the Muslim world views and acts toward America and its allies.

Early on in the speech, he pledged "to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear." In the very next sentence, though, he insisted that, "the same principle must apply to Muslim perceptions of America."

His remarks about how the U.S.-led intervention in Iraq began and about Guantanamo were obviously critical of Bush administration policies. His saying that, "The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements... It is time for these settlements to stop," is an unmistakable call for change in Israeli policy. At the same time, however, Obama made clear that America's bonds with Israel are "unbreakable."

And in one of the most important passages of the speech, Obama called for a change in Palestinian behavior toward Israel. "Palestinians must abandon violence," he stated bluntly. He noted that black people had suffered in America, but that, "it was not violence that won full and equal rights. It was a peaceful and determined insistence upon the ideals at the center of America's founding." He noted that non-violent resistance had overcome oppression elsewhere too. Non-violent resistance, he implied, would help the Palestinians achieve their goal of an independent state while violent resistance would not.

Later, Obama called for improved Iranian-American relations, but made clear that Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons is unacceptable.

Regarding the democratization of the Muslim world, Obama stated that this was not something that "can or should be imposed upon one nation by any other." On the other hand, he made clear that America wants to see progress toward democracy in the Muslim world, and that this is in the interests of Muslim governments since "governments that protect...rights are ultimately more stable, successful and secure."

Those in the Muslim world who do not want to cooperate with the United States will find—indeed, have already found—reasons to dismiss Obama's speech. Osama bin Laden dismissed it even before Obama gave it. However, those in the Muslim world who did not like American foreign policy in the past but would like to cooperate with America in the future can find in Obama's speech an American president who acknowledges their concerns and is willing to work with them.

Obama's Cairo speech represents a good faith effort to improve America's relations with the Muslim world. If this does not occur, it will not be for lack of trying on Obama's part.

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[7]Mark T. Kimmitt :: OK. The long-anticipated "major speech to the Muslim world" is over, and it is being parsed for messages, inferences, policy directions and reactions. The "let me tell you what the President should say next week" crowd is reviewing the text to see if their recommendations were embraced, rejected or reversed. The analysts and pundits on Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya and a thousand broadsheets in the region are assessing it to see how it aligns with editorial policy. The President is moving on, rhetorically and physically, to the next key administration challenge, be it North Korea, the 20th anniversary of Tiananmen Square, General Motors, Afghanistan-Pakistan or a host of other high-priority national security issues.

As for the speech, all the right messages were sent out. America is not at war with Islam, we have common interests in fighting violent extremism, Palestine is a problem, a nuclear-armed Iran is a threat,

and democracy is a form of human rights. So, let's push the reset button. Good, practical sound bites that reaffirm U.S. policy and increase our appeal on the street, but there was little in the way of tangible new initiatives or promises of outcomes. Perhaps it was too much to expect, but the speech seemed more of a conversation rather than a commitment.

It's fine to have a conversation. Perhaps it's helpful to tell the Muslim world that we will get out of Afghanistan when the job is done, and get out of Iraq by 2012 regardless. Helpful to note that the situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable. Important to clarify that Iran should have nuclear power, but not nuclear weapons. But what is the administration going to do about this? The only tangible "we shall" in the speech were easy and low-hanging fruit on education, science and technology, economic development and fighting violent extremists. No specific "we shall" on Iran, on Palestine, on Gaza, on Syria. Only aspirations and "we seek." Fine speech, but what's next?

Was this a speech to guide U.S. policy or enhance U.S. popularity? Will the speech prove to be the catalyst for reform, for moderation, for diplomatic breakthrough or simply words to calm the street? If nothing else, the speech has built up expectations, and expectations are that the United States wants to reset the relationship—and that there will be tangible results from that new relationship. The Muslim world will be looking for outcomes, for a change to the status quo, for breakthroughs in long-standing grievances. The speech raised expectations and the street is looking for results.

Among the billion or so who listened carefully to a well-crafted speech, many are sitting in taxis, sipping coffee in cafes, praying in mosques and arguing in universities. Many if not all of them are applauding the speech and many (if not all) are asking the same question: what's next?

So, congratulations on a great speech, well-written and well-delivered. It is certain to change more than a few minds about American intentions. But good words and good intentions have a rapidly depreciating value, and will make things worse if these words turn out to be false promises. Time will tell.

It's not what you say, it's what you do.



[8]Martin Kramer :: "Peoples of Egypt, you will be told that I have come to destroy your religion; do not believe it! Reply that I have come to restore your rights, to punish the usurpers, and that I respect more than the Mamluks God, His Prophet, and the Quran." So spoke Bonaparte when he arrived in Egypt, in a proclamation of July 2, 1798. Substitute "Islam" for Egypt, "we Americans" for I, and "violent extremists" for the Mamluks, and you've got the core message of President Obama's speech.

It's a very old drill in the annals of "public diplomacy." Supplementary gestures help. Obama was careful to pronounce the word Quran with the guttural qaf of the Arabic. (Too bad, though, he botched the word hijab.) Unless you're converting, you can't say Ich bin ein Muslim, so you come as close as you can. (Barack Hussein Obama—can we finally use his middle name now?—gets closer than most.) Some Muslims are wise to this, and so presumably they will discount it. But the great majority? Who doesn't love pandering?

I leave it to others to parse the sparse policy pointers in the speech. (Rob Satloff does a [9]nice job of it.) Some of the influences on Obama bubble to the surface. There is the Third Worldism: Muslims are victims of our colonialism (Obama has read Fanon) and the Cold War (has he been reading [10]Khalidi

again?) The primacy of the West is over: "Any world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will inevitably fail." There is the implicit comparison of the Palestinians to black Americans during segregation, a familiar trope (Carter and Condi went for it too). Israel comes across as an anomaly. There is no appreciation of Israel as a strategic asset—its ties to the United States are "cultural and historical," and thus not entirely rational. (That validates Obama's other former Chicago colleague, Mearsheimer.) All of this has the ring of conviction—and of a Third Worldist sensibility.

Maybe the most disconcerting line is this one: "We can't disguise hostility towards any religion behind the pretense of liberalism." The pretense? This discrediting of liberalism and its universal humanism is the classic stance of the Third Worldist radical. And did you know that the job description of the nation's leader now includes "my responsibility as president of the United States to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear"? Perhaps it's possible to disband CAIR. America now has a president who knows "what Islam is, [and] what it isn't," and who even has a mandate to insist on closing "the divisions between Sunni and Shia." Perhaps an emissary should be sent from Washington to the pertinent muftis and mullahs: the mission would certainly be more congenial than closing divisions of General Motors.

Indeed, not since Bonaparte has a foreigner landed on Egyptian soil and delivered a message of such overbearing hubris. Were I a Muslim, this 6,000-word manifesto would have me worried stiff. This man wants to be my president as much as he is America's.



[11]Walter Laqueur :: An excellent speech. Even before it was delivered, Wikipedia included it in its list of the greatest speeches ever, a list beginning with the Pericles funeral oration. If a religion has 1.3 billion followers, it was only natural that the emphasis had to be on a new beginning, on mutual interest and mutual trust, on partnership, on peace, on not being prisoners of the past, on breaking the cycle of suspicion, on Muslims having enriched America, on doing away with crude stereotypes, on diplomacy and international consensus, on all of us sharing common aspirations, on listening and learning from each other, on Andalus, algebra and on the 1,200 mosques in America, on all of us being the children of Abraham, on "any world order that elevates one people over another will inevitably fail," on education and innovation being the currency of the 21st century.

How much of this is genuinely believed? How candid can one (should one) be? I am sure that when the Prince of Wales said a few years ago that the Muslim critique of materialism helped him to rediscover sacred Islamic spirituality, he had never even heard about taqiya and kitman. I do not know the answer to the question; perhaps it was a mixture of the two.

Dissimulation may not be an admirable practice, but it could save lives. I recommend Macaulay's 1850 essay on Machiavelli, a strong believer in *Qui nescit dissimulare, nescit regnare* which, freely translated, means that he who does not know to dissimulate has no business to be in politics.

What of the impact of the speech? An unfair question: soft power, however desirable, has its limits. Pericles' funeral oration did not lead to the resurrection of the dead and there is still much sin in the world despite the Sermon on the Mount.

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[12]Michael Mandelbaum :: President Obama's Cairo speech continues two venerable traditions of American public life. One arises from the electoral politics of foreign policy. It is customary for the presidential candidate of the out-party to promise more skillful conduct of the country's relations with the rest of the world, either by adopting different positions—as with candidate Barack Obama's promise to end American participation in the Iraq war—or by doing better in pursuit of a goal on which all agree.

During the Cold War the standard version of this second tactic was the charge that the incumbent had, through crass insensitivity, botched relations with America's European allies, which the challenger promised to repair with more adept diplomacy. America's relations with Muslims served this electoral purpose in the 2008 presidential election, with the challenger promising to improve them by dint not so much of his policies as of his identity. The purpose of the Cairo speech was presumably to deliver on that promise.

Unfortunately, it will not do so. Muslims' attitudes to the United States will depend on Obama's policies—that is, on what he does—not on who his father was. Whatever the uses of identity politics within the United States, there is no good reason to suppose that they have any significant effect beyond the country's borders. As Anne Mandelbaum has observed, Dwight Eisenhower's German background did not win him approval among Germans during the years, from 1942 to 1945, when he had extensive dealings with them. Nor is it clear why people in Muslim-majority countries should be favorably impressed with the fact that the United States has a president one of whose parents shared their faith. They live, after all, in countries governed, for the most part, by men who by that standard qualify as twice as Islamic as Obama, and whose performances in office have been, to put it generously, unimpressive.

The second political tradition that the speech continues is the perennial overconfidence of all presidents of the United States in the power of their own oratory. Such overconfidence is not surprising. In the United States an individual becomes the most powerful person in the world through his speeches. It is one of the glories of the American political system that a presidential election is, in part, a debating contest. Foreign policy, however, is not. Here again, what is relevant is the fact that what Obama does will shape Muslims' (and others') opinion of him and his country, while what he says will not. His impact on Muslims and the countries in which they live will therefore come from the policies affecting them that he devises after words fail him.



[13]Michael Rubin :: Obama is a gifted orator, one in a generation. By nature of Obama's background—and the fact that he is not George W. Bush—he has a real chance to change the tone of discussion in the Middle East and among Islamic states. That said, rhetoric isn't enough. Policy matters. Here, there is cause for concern. The Obama doctrine appears to rest on twin pillars: One is a decision to dispense with demands for accountability, and the second seems to be moral equivalency or cultural relativism.

Both Bush and Obama spoke of Palestine and their desire to see the creation of a state for Palestinian Arabs to live beside Israel. But Bush conditioned U.S. support for Palestine's independence on a cessation of terrorism. Obama does not. And while he certainly condemned "violence" (perhaps terrorism is too loaded a term for Obama), he implied equivalence between this and the dislocation felt by some Palestinian Arabs.

Obama also cast aside demands for accountability when discussing elections, declaring "America does not presume to know what is best for everyone, just as we would not presume to pick the outcome of a peaceful election." This appears to be an allusion to the lack of U.S. support for the Hamas-led government in Gaza. The United States should be under no obligation, however, to befriend or assist governments which run counter to its interests. After all, U.S. foreign aid is not an entitlement. Hamas scrapped—and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt demands the scrapping of—agreements to which their entity and state have already obligated themselves. We should hold them accountable, not say we will embrace everyone.

As for cultural equivalency, I must object to his statement: "Given our interdependence, any world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will inevitably fail." Time and time again, however, it has been the superpower status of the United States which has prevented a far worse world order from taking root, be it in Europe, Asia, or even Latin America. The United States is not equal to Libya, nor should it ever be.

The cultural equivalency also permeated Obama's discussion of democracy. Backtracking away from democratization as a pillar of policy, Obama said: "No system of government can or should be imposed by one nation by any other. That does not lessen my commitment, however, to governments that reflect the will of the people. Each nation gives life to this principle in its own way, grounded in the traditions of its own people." But there are certain norms of good governance. On the 20th anniversary of Tiananmen Square, for example, we should not say, "Oh, well: That's just the way Chinese democracy works."

Let's hope for the best but, absent a clear articulation of what the United States stands for and what our vision is, rhetoric will not be enough to make a better, more secure world or build a solid foundation for U.S. relations with Muslim-majority states.

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[14]Harvey Sicherman :: President Obama's Cairo speech was Wilsonian. The lofty moral tone, keen detachment (all claims treated equally), and leap-of-faith rhetoric are all there. So is the religious overlay. And as befits the shorter attention span of the 21st century, Obama proposes to remake the world in seven points instead of fourteen, in 55 minutes instead of Wilson's 99-plus.

As president of a secular democracy, Obama's choice of location (Mubarak's Egypt) and audience (a "world" identified only by religion) offered minefields aplenty. He negotiated most of these with admirable dexterity but not always. One paragraph invoked "a partnership between America and Islam," and then declared that "I consider it part of my responsibility as President of the United States to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear." This was a bit much. Probably, as Theodore Roosevelt once said about a Wilsonian elocution, "as a matter of fact, the words mean nothing whatsoever."

Some of the other words do mean something. Obama vigorously asserted the dignity of America's civil religion, especially freedom of speech, religion, democracy, and women's rights. He refuted dangerous nonsense about 9/11 and the Holocaust; explained policy in Iraq and Afghanistan; and justified the two-state solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Coming from Saudi Arabia the day before, he instructed the Arab oil producers not to rely on "what comes out of the ground," and instead educate their people. Good luck!

Obama's "no sticks in sight" approach to Iran, including his apology on the Mossadegh affair (Madeleine Albright did this in 1998) was all open hand to which the Iranians thus far have responded with the middle



finger. But the President's framework ought to alarm the Israelis: will a U.S.-Iranian "dialogue" produce a demand that Israel yield its nuclear weapons in exchange for international guarantees that Iran, under international supervision, will not build one?

Obama, as he told New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman before the speech, wanted to "speak directly" to the Arab street and persuade them of America's "straightforward manner. Then at the margins, both they and their leadership are more inclined and able to work with us." But this is more than a margin call. Obama has straightforwardly distanced himself from Israel, the better to cultivate the Arab coalition, whose leaders are his real target. Can they deliver the Palestinians to a compromise acceptable to Israel? Can they do much to alter the Iranian course? Or is the Arab coalition's influence, like that of the Arab street, or the world of Islam, only a shadow of its reputation? A historian might say of the Cairo speech that it was a triumph—of hope over experience.



[15]Philip Carl Salzman :: President Obama uses his bully pulpit in Cairo to urge his vision to the people of the Middle East. That vision is one of commonality based on common traditions and common humanity. The driving force that would motivate this commonality is teleological: a desire for progress. We all want the same things, he argues and urges: peace, prosperity, dignity, education, family, community. If we only look ahead, we shall get along with one another, and go along the path of progress. This is a remarkable post-postmodern rebirth of the 19th-century concept of progress.

But the President does not address the people of the Middle East, but instead addresses Muslims. In doing so, he validates the argument by Islamists that Islam should be the primary identity of the people of the Middle East, and implicitly validates the vision of a new Caliphate. And in focusing on Islam, he must over-communicate virtues and commonalities, and under-communicate problems and differences. Islam, he tells us, is a religion of "tolerance and the dignity of all human beings." He goes on to say that "throughout history, Islam has demonstrated through words and deeds the possibilities of religious tolerance and racial equality."

This seems to me rather a whitewash of a dark history. Why, it's déjà Bush, all over again: Islam is the religion of peace. Indeed, he argues that "one rule... lies at the heart of every religion—that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us." I suppose we should not be surprised that these formulations are geared to generate positive sentiments, rather than to summarize our knowledge of actual Islamic history, theology, or law.

Several times the President urges listeners to stop looking backward, to leave past grievances aside: "If we choose to be bound by the past, we will never move forward." This is a difficult message for Muslims, given their understanding that the golden age of Islam was under Muhammad, who should for all eternity be the model for every believer. Islam under Muhammad is the life to be emulated. A good Muslim always looks back.

The specifics are mixed. The President is strong on "unbreakable" bonds with Israel, and that "Palestinians must abandon violence." Definite on favoring two states. Strong on condemning Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism, but in the abstract only. Strong on democracy generally speaking. Strong denouncing Iran's bomb. Weak on Palestinians still in camps in Arab countries. Very mild on women's rights. Ambiguous on Jerusalem. Wishes a nuclear-free world, but no special emphasis on a nuclear-free Middle East.

Shall the good intentions of the President pave the path to progress?

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[16]Raymond Tanter :: President Obama's Cairo speech was replete with soaring rhetoric designed to reach out to Muslims around the globe, and particularly those in the Arab world. The President remarked that now is "a time of great tension between the United States and Muslims around the world," but added:

We have a responsibility to join together on behalf of the world we seek. A world where extremists no longer threaten our people, and American troops have come home; a world where Israelis and Palestinians are each secure in a state of their own, and nuclear energy is used for peaceful purposes; a world where governments serve their citizens, and the rights of all God's children are respected.

The President can certainly talk the talk regarding outreach to Muslims, but will he walk the walk that the Muslim street wishes to see?

Doing so would require a number of U.S. policy changes to appease the Muslim street, such as pressuring Israel to make unilateral concessions, expanding engagement with Syria without preconditions, accepting an Iranian regime with a uranium enrichment capability, withdrawing forces more quickly from Iraq, halting drone attacks of Al Qaeda and Taliban targets in Pakistan, and reversing U.S. escalation in Afghanistan.

President Obama was careful to signal that such unrealistic policies would not be forthcoming. He indicated an evenhanded policy on the Arab-Israeli dispute, reaffirmed his commitment to keep Iran from getting the bomb, held to his Iraq timetable, and justified escalation in Afghanistan.

The President's indications that no major policy reversals would occur clashed with his eloquent rhetoric about a "new beginning" between Muslims and non-Muslims. Without any dramatic policy changes, President Obama's speech is likely to unfairly raise expectations in the Muslim world, leading to inevitable disappointment.

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[17]Michael Young :: President Obama's homily in Cairo had much that was interesting in it and much that was vague. That's the nature of these communications, but several things suggested that Obama wanted to have his cake and eat it too.

In referring to the war in Iraq, the President remarked:

Unlike Afghanistan, Iraq was a war of choice that provoked strong differences in my country and around the world. Although I believe that the Iraqi people are ultimately better off without the tyranny of Saddam Hussein, I also believe that events in Iraq have reminded America of the need to use diplomacy and build international consensus to resolve our problems whenever possible.



Indeed. But if Iraqis are better off without the tyranny of Saddam Hussein, what does that tell us about U.S. policy when it comes to supporting democracy and human rights in the Middle East? After all, neither diplomacy nor an international consensus would have ever freed Iraqis from under Saddam's thumb. So did the United States do the right thing in getting rid of the Baath regime by force? Obama didn't address this prickly question.

That fuzziness, however, permeated his later discussion of democracy in the region. Obama pointed out: "So let me be clear: no system of government can or should be imposed upon one nation by any other." But then he went on to say that this did not lessen his commitment to governments that reflect the will of the people. Except that "America does not presume to know what is best for everyone."

But hadn't Obama just presumed to know that the Iraq war was ultimately beneficial for the Iraqi people, since he felt that they were better off without Saddam? And weren't they better off without Saddam because the new system they are living under was imposed on them? And weren't Obama's bromides in favor of democracy and democratization not also statements implying that he presumed to know what was best for everyone?

If so, then why did he not just come out and state the obvious: that democracy, openness and pluralism are indeed better for all states, as is respect for human rights. Why did Obama prefer to avoid rocking the boat when it came to autocratic regimes in the region? Not a word was uttered on actual cases of human rights abuses, whether in Egypt, which was hosting him, or in any other part of the Middle East. Clearly, the realist aversion to involving the United States in the domestic policy of the region's states was on display.

Finally, I was interested in what Obama had to say about the Maronites and the Copts, given my weakness for minorities in the region: "Among some Muslims, there is a disturbing tendency to measure one's own faith by the rejection of another's. The richness of religious diversity must be upheld—whether it is for Maronites in Lebanon or the Copts in Egypt."

Yet this advice Obama placed under the rubric of "religious freedom." Odd, because the problem of minorities in the Middle East is usually more political than religious. What the Copts would like more of is political power, not the freedom to exercise their religion. As for the Maronites, their sense of decline is attached not to the fact that they cannot practice their religion, which they can do without any objection from their Muslim compatriots, but that they feel political power is escaping them.

What do these issues have in common? They lead me to a disconcerting conclusion that Obama has no coherent view of political freedom in the Middle East. He tended to overemphasize religion, while underemphasizing how the United States might address political matters, such as what to do about dictatorial regimes, the major cause of the great trauma he described, namely 9/11; or how to reverse the absence of democracy in the Middle East, in illegitimate states that fail to fulfill the aspirations of their citizens; or what to do about minorities denied political power, Muslim and non-Muslim.

Obama submerged his speech in the holy water of religion, but it is freedom, the failure of the Arab state, and the lack of accountability of regional regimes that are far more central to the dilemmas the Middle East face today. In one word, it is mostly about politics, and on this Obama was too busy being polite to his listeners to raise the difficult questions he promised to raise.

Go to the [18]comments for more from Alan Dowty, Chuck Freilich, Bruce Jentleson, and Michael Reynolds.

1. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NaxZPiiKyMw>

2. [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09/)

3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele\\_dunne/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele_dunne/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bernard\\_haykel/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bernard_haykel/)
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10. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0807003107>
11. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_laqueur/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_laqueur/)
12. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_mandelbaum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_mandelbaum/)
13. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_rubin/)
14. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey\\_sicherman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/harvey_sicherman/)
15. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)
16. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_tanter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_tanter/)
17. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_young/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_young/)
18. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/06/obama-and-the-muslims/comment-page-1/#comment-2198>

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Chuck Freilich (2009-06-10 09:55:33)

President Obama's speech to the Muslim world was well-thought out and eloquent. Gratuitous tensions are to no one's benefit. To the extent that atmospheric matter, it was an important starting point. Lofty aspirations, however, are insufficient, especially in the Middle East, which has defeated many well-meaning initiatives. It takes courage, in a speech from Cairo, the heart of the Arab world, to speak openly of democracy, women's rights, religious freedom and a willingness to embrace change. Although he did not go so far as to call oil "the Arab curse," which has enabled the perpetuation of authoritarian rule and avoidance of otherwise essential political and socioeconomic reforms, he noted that a regional economy cannot be based on one industry. It takes courage to unequivocally declare before the Arab world that U.S.-Israeli ties are unbreakable, bound by history and recognition of Jewish national aspirations, to call upon Arab leaders to cease using the conflict with Israel as an excuse for avoiding reforms. It takes courage to state explicitly that Holocaust denial, rampant throughout the region, is factually wrong and morally reprehensible, as are threats of Israel's annihilation. It takes courage to tell Palestinians and Arabs that violence is both wrong and will not work, that they must cease their self-defeating preoccupation with past wrongs. The sad reality, however, is that none of the fundamental reasons for U.S.-Muslim enmity have changed. It is hard to imagine that Al Qaeda, or someone, is not busy plotting the next 9/11, only this time bigger ("been there, done that"). Arab countries remain shrouded in suffocating socioeconomic backwardness, religious fundamentalism and authoritarianism. Can one imagine a more heinous society, a greater antithesis to American values, than Saudi Arabia, in which women need male permission to travel, cannot drive cars and in which Sharia law governs? Egypt, America's closest Arab ally, is an ossified dictatorship. A resource-rich region, whose population is burgeoning, is falling further, explosively, behind. Reform will take decades, at best, and in the meantime the Middle East will continue to export its ills, including to the United States. Inevitably, there were objectionable points in the speech. Obama is correct in saying that neither Israel nor the Palestinians will disappear, that a two-state solution is the only viable one and that Israel will have to cease settlements. He appears, however, to be willing to exert unprecedented pressure on Israel, the only democracy in the region, whose governing coalition may collapse as a result. Putting aside the question of whether a democracy should be pressured this way, Obama does not evince the same firmness towards the Arabs. Moreover, even if Israel were to accede to 100 percent of Palestinian demands, there is no one on the Palestinian side today both interested and capable of delivering on an agreement. The Palestinians are hopelessly divided between the fanatic Hamas in Gaza and the feckless Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, led by Abbas. While Hamas repeatedly declares its determination to bring about Israel's destruction, Obama now treats it as a legitimate player, albeit only conditionally. Abbas, who professes a desire for peace, rejected Olmert's [1] proposal to establish a Palestinian state in all of Gaza and 93 percent of the West Bank (with a compensatory land swap). Until the Palestinians abandon their all-or-nothing approach and learn to say yes to less than 100 percent of their dreams, they will remain with nothing. Netanyahu has gratuitously incurred American wrath by his refusal to explicitly recognize a two-state solution, despite the fact that the "Roadmap," which he has officially endorsed, is precisely about this. His refusal, on security, ideological, and mostly political grounds, enabled the creation of a fallacious linkage between the peace process and Iran's nukes. Both issues are important in their own right and should be pursued separately, as such. The greatest disappointment

was Obama's grossly understated reference to Iran's nuclear program. Granted, he wishes to begin an engagement process and, with Iran holding elections next week, this was not the time for intemperate rhetoric. Nevertheless, he should have been clearer. A hand stretched out in friendship is always more persuasive when there is a clear hint of a big stick in the other and time is short. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs recently assessed that Iran will have its first nuke within one to three years, an outcome he termed "calamitous." It is unlikely that any combination of positive or negative inducements will convince Iran to forgo its nukes. Good intentions aside, in a matter of months, certainly a couple of years, the United States will be faced with a narrow and unpalatable range of options: acquiesce to Iranian nuclearization and pursue containment and deterrence, a naval blockade, or direct military action. The other alternative, severe international sanctions, should be put in place today, concomitantly with the engagement process. Iran, the birthplace of chess, will understand an impending checkmate, when faced with one. Obama has taken an important step towards a complex and troubled region. He has his work cut out for him. [2]Chuck Freilich is a member of MESH.

1. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mideaststrategy/3554178719/sizes/o/>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck\\_freilich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/chuck_freilich/)

More MESH members (2009-06-05 09:54:20)

*In this cluster: contributions by Alan Dowty, Bruce Jentleson, and Michael Reynolds.* • [1]Alan Dowty :: Let's put it in perspective. President Obama's Cairo speech is part of an ambitious effort to totally recast the prevailing mood between the West and the Islamic world. The President evokes the glorious Islamic past, he quotes the Quran repeatedly, he condemns efforts to ban Islamic dress in (unspecified) Western nations, he promises to remove obstacles to *zakat* (charitable donations), and he even appeals to the vision of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammed together in prayer. In this framework, he could not have avoided dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Doing so would have condemned the entire exercise to futility. But this issue was only one of seven issues that comprise the core of his speech, and in reconnoitering this terrain Obama added nothing to existing policy. The United States has opposed Israeli settlements in the West Bank from the beginning, it has called for easing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and it has now for some time referred to the suffering of the Palestinians and called for a two-state solution. Nothing new in any of this; there was even a reaffirmation of Bush's Road Map, even though elsewhere in the speech Obama offered clear repudiations of his unnamed predecessor. He also repeated the three conditions required of Hamas in order to be included: an end to violence, respect for past agreements, and recognition of Israel. What was different was the theatrics of the occasion. By turning the spotlight on the entire spectrum of Western-Islamic relations, Obama also inevitably illuminates the Israeli-Palestinian impasse and existing gaps between the United States and Israel that were allowed, previously, to remain obscured in the shadows. The use of the descriptor "intolerable" to describe the Palestinian situation adds to this. The call for a complete end to settlement building certainly has the potential, as nervous defenders of Israel correctly surmise, to create a real crisis—although the Iranian nuclear issue has even more potential in this regard. (And the critic who said that we are already in the worst U.S.-Israel crisis since 1956 has a wildly inaccurate and sanitized vision of these relations over the last half-century.) A careful reading shows that Obama denied the legitimacy of "continued" Israel settlement, which could even be seen as a softening of actual policy since 1967. Furthermore, the image of a U.S. president quoting from the Talmud to an Egyptian audience that included Muslim Brothers has to evoke some appreciation that this is not simple pandering. It should also be noted that, in the end, Obama added nothing operational on the Israel-Palestinian front. Numerous new initiatives with the Muslim world were announced in economic, scientific, cultural, and commercial matters, but nothing specific was added to the general lines of ongoing policy toward Israel or the Palestinians. The major change is that, like Avis, this administration will try harder. That may not be a bad thing. • [2]Bruce Jentleson :: Perhaps it's because I'm just back from Spain, but President Obama's speech brought to mind Maria Rosa Menocal's book, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Christians and Jews Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*. This is a book about a period "when Jews, Christians and Muslims lived side by side and, despite their intractable differences and enduring hostilities, nourished a complex culture of tolerance." It was, though, ultimately undone in large part by the pulls, pressures and violence of extremists among all three groups. Both lessons, what was possible and how it was undone, came through in Obama's speech. In this sense, two themes especially resonate. One was right at the top about defining our relationship less by our differences than by what we share and can come to share. This isn't feel-good sensitivity group stuff, it is strategic in two key senses. One is in reducing our negative. Defining in terms of differences "empower[s] those who sow hatred rather than peace, those who promote conflict"—i.e., our negative that Al Qaeda, the Taliban, et al., have exploited for their own gains. The other is in increasing the positive we gain from AQ-Taliban-et al.'s negatives. Peoples who have had to live under the violent extremists tend to be first in line in wanting to get rid of them. By defining our relationships with these vast swaths of the Muslim world

more in terms of this commonality, we pin the negative more on the adversary and gain more for our side from the positive. Such calculi are a big part of taking the diplomacy of engagement from a process to a strategy. Start with interests, values and traditions that are shared. Don't deny what is not, but work from there on differences. The other theme was the power of people. Not Leninist or Jerry Rubin-esque power to the people. But the power of people to be forces of change. That's the link Obama meant between the American civil rights movement, Nelson Mandela's anti-apartheid, the post-Soviet Eastern European color revolutions and his message to those in Muslim societies who would change their societies. This wasn't intended as a one-to-one correspondence, but with the core similarity in "the simple truth, that violence is a dead end." Three other quick points for this post: Israel-Palestinians: I've been hearing the criticisms of these sections of the speech from those who think it wasn't sufficiently pro-Israel. "This bond is unbreakable" means what it says. So too do his statements about Holocaust denial as "baseless, ignorant, hateful," and how "deeply wrong" anti-Semitism and calls for Israel's destruction are. Obama's affirming style of these core positions is more likely to be effective than Bush's antagonistic one. On democracy promotion: The pigeonholing into "isms"—is Obama's foreign policy realism, Wilsonianism, some other "ism"?—is bad enough in academia, and now it's distorting policy and political discourse. Not that policy should be ad hoc, but that the coherence is more complex than these paradigms convey. In this and other speeches as well as various early policy initiatives, one can see an emerging distinctive approach to supporting democracy and human rights. Statements about the will of the people, consent not coercion and universal yearnings for justice and rule of law are hardly Kissingerian realpolitik. But there is (a) less assumption and assertion of our model and more about the universality of the values we have built our society on rather than these being American values that we propagate universally, and (b) more of a political economy approach that includes whether political systems improve the lives of their people on crucial aspects like poverty and social justice. On affirming America: "It is my first duty as President to protect the American people." All the rest, as it is said, is commentary. Can't get much clearer than that. For Obama to go from there to differentiate between the justified and effective parts of our response to 9/11 and those that were neither, and to hail certain past policies while acknowledging the legitimacy of criticisms of ones like the U.S. role in the 1953 Iranian coup, is to be no less affirming. One has more credibility in claiming credit and worthiness when one is also willing to be honest about flaws and misguided actions. Much more of course has been said and is to be said about the speech. Ultimately it's about follow-through and building on the declaratory for the speech to be a framework for policy. • [3] **Michael Reynolds** :: Many Americans and most of their politicians, regardless of partisan persuasion, possess a seemingly irrepressible compulsion to interpret the wider world through the prism of the American experience. President Obama and his speechwriters are no different. This tendency reflects in part the fundamental instability of American identity. Ideals have always been close to the heart of the American experience, but as America has grown more diverse, more wealthy, and globally more powerful, so too has the salience of ideals to the American project grown. The redefinition of America in terms of abstract ideals and the assertion of the universality of those ideals become more and more necessary for the affirmation of America's viability. What Americans want is what everyone wants, and what everyone wants is America. In Obama's Cairo address, America's story is the story of progress, a story of moving up, moving forward and moving beyond. And this story, Obama asserts, is also the world's story. Obama lays out a vision of world history as a process of universal civilizational progress, and in it he relegates both Islam and the United States to secondary roles as engines of progress. Thus in his effort to demonstrate respect for Islam, Obama assigns to Islam an honorable place in the broader history of progress, describing how Islam "carried the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way for Europe's Renaissance and Enlightenment." But if Islam moved progress in the past, Obama makes clear that no one should harbor doubts about what is today the driver of progress: the United States. Thus he defends the United States against cynical Muslims by declaring it to be "one of the greatest sources of progress the world has ever known." He cites his personal success and the material success of America's Muslims as evidence of America's progressive evolution. He cleverly employs the notion of progress as process to turn defects that critics typically use to attack America into opportunities to demonstrate America's bona fide qualifications as a force for good. By remedying its flaws, American society reveals its progressive mission. In a veiled reference to slavery and the American Civil War, Obama notes that Americans "shed blood and struggled for centuries" in order to realize the ideal of equality on which they founded their country. Later he avers, albeit rather incongruously, that "peaceful and determined insistence upon the ideals at the center of America's founding" overcame the legacies of the slavery and segregation of black Americans. "This same story," Obama claims, "can be told by people from South Africa to South Asia; from Eastern Europe to Indonesia." By contrast, he deplores the actions of Al Qaeda and its ilk as "irreconcilable" with "the progress of nations." Towards the end of his speech, Obama fleshes out his conception of a progressive society by reciting some principles, such as religious freedom, equal rights and education for women, the right to speak one's mind, and the right to live as one chooses. To American ears, such principles are so familiar they sound less like principles in need of explication and defense than mantras to be repeated. But none of these principles is in fact so self-evident to work as a mantra, and Muslim thinkers, among others, have mounted challenges to each of

them. In essence, Obama's message to Muslims is, "Be more like America and our conflicts will recede and you shall prosper." But is he speaking to them, or is he another American speaking to himself?

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bruce\\_jentleson/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bruce_jentleson/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_reynolds/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_reynolds/)

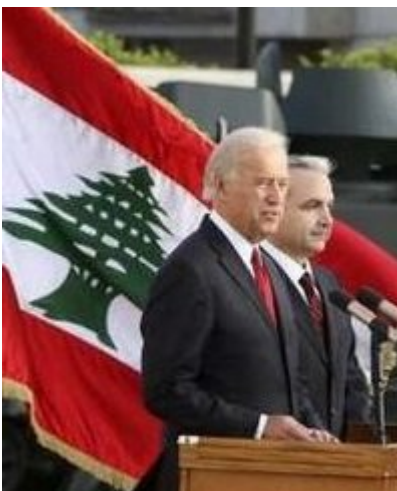
Robert J. Lieber (2009-06-05 13:27:25)

Obama's use of language and rhetoric was skillful in approaching his audience and set out some important themes. Portions of the speech even count as much needed intellectual hygiene (the passages about the Holocaust, the facts of 9/11, violence, core elements of democracy and freedom as human yearnings). But as [1] comments by Josef Joffe, Michael Mandelbaum, Martin Kramer, Robert Satloff, and others make clear, the speech included far too much mirror imaging and an exaggerated willingness to accept blame for real or imagined sins of the United States, Israel and the West. In practical terms, the speech is useful in that it may help to shift opinion among some Muslim populations. The policy consequences of this could make it easier for foreign governments to pursue policies closer to what we would like them to do. But by far the greatest long-term problem remains the disjunction between rhetoric and reality. On Iran, it is all well and good to offer an open hand, but every U.S. president since Jimmy Carter has tried without success to find a diplomatic opening. Moreover, Obama's overstated apologia breaks no new ground—the Clinton administration offered repeated apologies to Teheran, to no avail. The Iranian mullahs have spent twenty years on a covert nuclear weapons program. (NB: *pace* Mr. Obama, there is no civilian nuclear rationale for many of the facilities and technologies they have pursued.) On Israel and the Palestinians, the core problem remains the absence of a partner for peace on the Palestinian side. Time and again, the Israeli body politic has shown itself willing to make the hard choices if and when such a partner appears. Alas, there is no reason to expect that the Palestinians have either the will or capacity to make the necessary, binding and enforceable compromises. On the Middle East regimes themselves, most remain *mukhabarat* states, adroit at sustaining themselves in power and with little sign they are prepared to make necessary long-term changes or offer the kind of meaningful commitments that the Obama administration and its predecessors have sought. [2]Robert J. Lieber is professor of government and international affairs at Georgetown University.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/06/obama-and-the-muslims/>
2. <http://explore.georgetown.edu/people/lieberr/?PageTemplateID=156>

### Biden's hardball pays off in Lebanon (2009-06-07 23:02)

From [1]Robert Satloff



If early returns hold up and the March 14 coalition emerges victorious in Lebanese parliamentary elections, sending a resounding defeat to Iran's proxy, Hezbollah, then one of the most important "unsung heroes" in the vote will have been... Vice President Joe Biden.

Biden's surprise visit to Beirut on May 22 was not just gutsy. By reminding Lebanese voters that Washington will review financial assistance and other aspects of our relations with Lebanon depending on the outcome of the election, Biden played Middle East hardball. Lebanese voters—especially the critical swing Christian voters—seem to have gotten the message. They cast their ballots in droves for candidates opposed to the Hezbollah-backed alliance and, in so doing, appear to have turned the tide in the election. (Of course, those voters had ample reason to say "enough" to Hezbollah and its Aounist allies, but Biden may have pushed them over the top.)

Biden's Lebanon foray is a salutary reminder for the Obama administration in its overall engagement with the Middle East. Elsewhere in the region, the administration seems to be directing a policy devoid of sticks (except toward Israel's settlement policy, which is another story altogether). The President's Cairo address to the world's Muslims, for example, included not a single hint of "negative incentive"; while he eloquently made the case for religious freedom, democracy, women's rights, and peaceful nuclear energy, there were no suggestions of negative repercussions for any country that rejects the President's entreaties. After the polite applause is forgotten, the result is likely to be indifference on the part of most Arab and Muslim leaders (except, again, on settlement policy).

In Lebanon, Biden's timely reminder to locals of what they might lose by cutting deals with radicals and extremists suggests that Chicago politics is alive and well in the Middle East. The Chicagoan in the White House should pay attention.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_satloff/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_satloff/)

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Rex Brynen (2009-06-08 13:38:06)

I also have to disagree [1]with Rob Satloff here—I don't think the Biden visit had any significant impact at all. I was in Beirut when he passed through, and there was certainly no feeling among the March 14 supporters whom I spoke with that the whirlwind visit had given them any additional momentum. March 8 analysts, on the other hand, seemed quite convinced that—as yet more evidence of U.S. "interference"—it would play to their advantage. The diplomatic community seemed largely confused as to why he had come for such a short period of time, while Beirut taxi drivers were unanimously annoyed at the traffic snarls that high-level visits inevitably generate. Lebanese voters certainly didn't need Biden to remind them of the possible costs of a M8 win on relations with the United States, nor did he say anything new or surprising in this regard. Even more important, it might be argued, was the (potentially much greater) loss of Gulf assistance, investment, and tourism. To the critical factors that Andrew Exum has [2]identified, one could also mention Michel Aoun's ill-timed tripped to Syria, and some fairly effective scare tactics/negative campaign ads by the M14 parties. [3]*Rex Brynen is professor of political science at McGill University.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/06/bidens-hardball-pays-off-in-lebanon/>

2.

<http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/06/bidens-hardball-pays-off-in-lebanon/comment-page-1/#comment-2216>

3. <http://www.mcgill.ca/politicalscience/faculty/brynen/>

J. Scott Carpenter (2009-06-10 12:28:24)

I just returned last night from observing Sunday's elections in Lebanon and have to say that from what I heard and experienced, Andrew Exum and Rob Satloff [1]are both right. But Rob is more so—and not just because he's my boss. Andrew argues Christian voters had no need for encouragement to vote for March 14, which is for the most part true. Hezbollah's overreach during the dark days of May 2008 remains fresh not only in the minds of Lebanon's Christian community but in the Sunni and Druze communities as well. Nasrallah's pre-election speeches designed to rally his base did nothing to ease their concerns, and many on Aoun's campaign team expressed frustration with their timing. However, had the United States not signaled strongly and often that the shape of the next government would impact

its relationship with Lebanon, many fencesitters, concerned about where the wind was blowing, may have decided to sit on their hands or vote for Aoun. March 14's campaign, predicated heavily on the twin threats of Iran and Syria to Lebanese democracy, may not have generated the credibility and momentum that it ultimately did. The Obama administration's message to Lebanese voters, which was both nuanced and graduated, was useful in two critical ways. First, the words themselves reassured the Christian community and March 14 supporters more generally that the United States would not abandon them to rapacious Hezbollah demands or allow Syria to reassert itself in Lebanon. To that part of the Lebanese polity paranoid about America's new realist leanings, especially toward Syria, these reaffirmations were a critical indication of U.S. seriousness. That the message was delivered in Beirut not by the U.S. ambassador to Lebanon but by our Secretary of State and Vice President made the message even more powerful, and emboldened March 14's leadership. Second, the message made clear to Hezbollah's leadership and to Aoun's electorate that should they win and put together a government unacceptable to the United States, all of Lebanon would pay a price for their decision to do so. If only the Bush administration had done the same prior to the fateful 2006 elections in West Bank and Gaza. At that time, a number of us within the administration urged the administration to make clear to Palestinian voters that while they were free to vote for whomever they wanted, they should consider as they entered the ballot booth that the United States could not cooperate with a Hamas-led government, which would have unfortunate consequences for all Palestinians. The State Department successfully argued that such a statement, however artfully delivered, would be the kiss of death to Abu Mazen and Fatah. Instead we pitifully arranged numerous USAID-sponsored ribbon-cutting opportunities for the feckless Palestinian president, who skipped most of them. I argued then and now that it would have been better for the Palestinians to have full information to inform their electoral choice. Where the United States stood mattered in those elections, quite apart from our relationship with Fatah, and Palestinians should have had the benefit of knowing how their interests would be impacted by their choices. In the end, Fatah became a victim of protest votes cast for Hamas, and all Palestinians reaped the whirlwind when the latter won. Moreover, the United States, when it subsequently isolated the Hamas government, was saddled with the narrative that we support democracy but only when it serves our purpose. Had we been clearer up front, we may not have lost that public messaging battle, and Fatah may not have lost the election. The situation in Lebanon for March 14 just a month or so ago was not so dissimilar to Fatah's. Corruption, government ineffectiveness, and division all weighed March 14 down, contributing to a malaise and an expectation that March 8 was going to win. Aoun's principal rationalization for aligning himself with Hezbollah was that the Christian community could not count on the West, and that it needed a strong leader—him—to represent them amongst other strong sectarian leaders, i.e. Hariri and Nasrallah. The administration's persistent messaging, including the President's defense of the Maronite minority in his speech in Cairo, devastated this argument and contributed to the shift in momentum. Perhaps even Hezbollah felt it. Why, after all, did they so badly undercut Aoun just weeks out from the election? Perhaps they didn't want to be blamed for the international isolation that they thought would ensue following their victory, especially as Hezbollah feels its weapons provide sufficient safeguards for its interests. In any case, the Obama administration deserves credit for setting the right tone and for making clear how the United States evaluated its interests in Lebanon. Not only was it the responsible thing to do but it is what Arabs most want to hear: honesty. As Rob correctly argues, the administration should do more of it. [2] *J. Scott Carpenter is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/06/bidens-hardball-pays-off-in-lebanon/>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j\\_scott\\_carpenter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j_scott_carpenter/)

Lee Smith (2009-06-08 17:21:17)

Andrew Exum and Rex Bynen [1] are right to emphasize the various internal mechanisms that compelled the Lebanese majority to vote for March 14. However, as Rob Satloff [2] argues, the Biden visit did play a significant role. Due in part to the recent history of U.S.-Lebanon relations—from Eisenhower to the Marine Barracks bombing to Bush 41's tacitly green-lighting Syrian hegemony in Lebanon—the Lebanese cannot help but read virtually every move in Washington in terms of how it will affect their status. Anxiety over the American level of support for pro-democracy figures in Lebanon reached its heights during the U.S. election campaign, when then-candidate Obama promised to re-engage Damascus. This, the Lebanese assumed, would come at their expense, and Syria would once again extend its control over their neighbor. What soothed March 14 was the composition and tactics of the team Obama sent to Damascus, which included one of the authors of the Syria Accountability Act, NSC staffer Dan Shapiro, and Acting Assistant Secretary Jeffery Feltman, the former U.S. ambassador to Beirut, who, before and after they went to Damascus, visited Beirut and consulted with March 14 figures. Feltman, one pro-democracy Lebanese official is supposed to have said, "is U.S. policy toward Syria and Lebanon." While Feltman has rightly earned the admiration of March 14 politicians—he was apparently targeted in a car-bombing incident shortly before leaving his post as ambassador—that's not precisely true. Feltman, as well as Shapiro, are perhaps best seen as the spearhead of a U.S.

policy that supports the sovereignty and independence of the Lebanese state, a policy the Biden visit, like that of Secretary Clinton, served to reinforce. Now with the elections over, the real test for U.S. policy will come as the March 14 majority forms the cabinet. March 14's Saad Hariri and Walid Jumblatt have rejected the Doha formula that gave Hezbollah and its allies a blocking veto, a prerogative that the Party of God won not through ballots but force of arms when it overran Beirut last May. If Hezbollah and Syria's other allies in Lebanon are determined to resort to more violence to have their way, what is Washington prepared to do on behalf of Lebanese sovereignty and independence? [3]Lee Smith is a visiting fellow at the Hudson Institute.

1.

<http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/06/bidens-hardball-pays-off-in-lebanon/comment-page-1/#comment-2216>

2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/06/bidens-hardball-pays-off-in-lebanon/>

3. [http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff\\_bio&eid=LeeSmith](http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff_bio&eid=LeeSmith)

Andrew Exum (2009-06-08 12:14:08)

I have nothing but respect for my old boss Rob Satloff (who has forgotten more about the politics of the Middle East than I will ever learn), but there is simply no evidence to suggest the visit of Vice President Biden had a significant effect on the Lebanese elections. From Washington, of course, it is often tempting to think that what U.S. policy-makers say and do has a decisive effect on events on the ground. But early indicators suggest that it was words and deeds of those in Lebanon that tilted the election in favor of the March 14th coalition. Specifically, the events of May 2008, the poorly chosen words of Hasan Nasrallah in the run-up to the election, the timely intervention of the Maronite patriarch, and high voter turn-out were among the factors which most influenced this election. Of those four, the events of May 2008—when Hezbollah and its allies took over the streets of Beirut by force—had perhaps the most significant impact on the Christian electorate and probably sealed the election for March 14th in Achrafieh (Beirut 1). The fact that Hasan Nasrallah called the events of May 2008 a "glorious day" a few weeks back is another example of how badly Hezbollah has misjudged the political mood of Lebanon's Christians and the impact of May 2008. In the end, I understand that taking a hard public stance against Islamists is a policy Rob would very much like to see this administration pursue throughout the region. But let's not get carried away here. A multiplicity of factors help explain what happened yesterday in Lebanon, and few analysts—even those of us who happen to be fans of the current administration—believe the Vice President's visit was important in comparison to, say, voter turn-out in Zahle or the effects of the Hezbollah-provoked fighting in 2006 and 2008 on the Lebanese economy. Let us not allow, in other words, our policy preferences to cloud our analysis. [1]Andrew Exum is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew\\_exum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/andrew_exum/)

## Warlike Americans (2009-06-12 16:58)

From [1]Stephen Peter Rosen



Understanding the reasons why Americans are more willing to wage



wars than Europeans is of historical interest, but not only. It has been asserted, for example, that Americans were willing to wage war against Saddam Hussein because of the manipulation of the American political system by a lobby that was more loyal to Israel than it was to the United States. It has also been speculated that after the latest Iraq war, the American public will become more like Europeans, and less likely to employ war abroad.

Bob Kagan has argued that Americans are from Mars, Europeans are from Venus. Yes, but why? In my article in *The American Interest*, "[2]Blood Brothers" (sorry, editor's choice), I discuss how the large immigration to British North America from the English-Scotch border area, and the subsequent endemic and brutal warfare against the North American Indians, created a political culture in the United States in which failures to respond violently to challenges were seen as the mark of weakness that would lead to predation against the weakling, and in which willingness to fight was part of the duties of a citizen. We are a warlike people. We fought in Iraq because we rise, violently, to violent challenges, and we will remain a warlike people for the foreseeable future.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)
2. <http://www.the-american-interest.com/article-bd.cfm?piece=620>

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Mark T. Kimmitt (2009-06-17 21:27:26)

Having thoroughly enjoyed Stephen Rosen's piece in this month's *American Interest* ("[1]Blood Brothers"), I was duly impressed with his ability to combine history, political philosophy and military culture into one compact article. As a 30-plus-year veteran of the U.S. Army, I was also intrigued by his historical explanation of the differences between troops from the northern states and those from the south and southwest. Lest anyone take issue with that distinction, let me note that it is a difference that I saw throughout my 34 years in uniform, and until Stephen's article, I never understood why or how those differences came about. Officers from southern states, with their folksy aphorisms and distinctive dialect, often seemed more martial and more admired by their troops. In fact, a close colleague did his Master's thesis on promotion rates to General among West Point officers. One of the key variables was the state from which the officer was originally appointed to West Point. Although there was no strong correlation, urban myth had it that southern officers were more likely to be selected. Until Stephen's article, it was hard to find any explanation for this conviction. A couple of additional comments regarding Stephen's article. First, unless it is fairly recent, I am not aware of any U.S. military actions in either Sudan or Syria, but added to the list of post-Cold War U.S. military operations should be Panama and Grenada—two examples that amplify Stephen's thesis—as well as interventions in Burundi, Northern Iraq, Macedonia, the Mediterranean, the Gulf of Aden, the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. Second, it is hard to look at the historical record to substantiate Tocqueville's assertions that "warlike passions will become more rare and less lively as conditions are more equal." However, to also dismiss Tocqueville's comment that "Men who live in democratic countries do not naturally have a military spirit; they sometimes take it up when they are brought despite themselves onto the fields of battle," is to miss a key point about the American soldier. For any number of reasons, many brought out by Stephen, there is a predisposition to martial behavior among Americans. But it takes a lot of training, and a lot of un-training, to take kids off the street and turn them into soldiers. I remember talking to a group of my troops heading off to Afghanistan in 2002, and noting my surprise at how well this generation of "Simpson-watching, video-playing couch potatoes" were doing in current combat operations. The last seven years have done nothing to change that view, and we should take great pride in how well our soldiers have performed on the battlefield. But, should combat operations scale down over the next decade to a pre-9/11 pace, we should not be surprised to see the Army struggle to keep that same sense of combat readiness pervasive within its ranks. Having served in the "hollow Army" of the post-Vietnam era, I would not underestimate how difficult it will be to draw on those "warlike passions" in the post-Iraq/Afghanistan era. That predisposition to martial behavior noted in Stephen's article may be a part of our Scot-Irish and Quaker heritage, and the heritage of recent immigrants. But modern culture, mores and customs will continue to have the predominant influence on our youth, and we should also be grateful that our Drill Sergeants and Squad Leaders will continue their efforts—as they have since the era of Von Steuben—to bring out that martial behavior. [2]Mark T. Kimmitt is a member of MESH.

1. <http://www.the-american-interest.com/article-bd.cfm?piece=620>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark-t-kimmitt/>

### A sense of proportion (2009-06-14 10:21)

[kml \_flashembed movie="http://youtube.com/v/CHFXUH0Qf4" width="425" height="350" wmode="transparent" /]

From MESH Admin

Here in Cambridge, we rather enjoyed this little exercise in comparing part of the Middle East to the northeastern United States. It was done a couple of years back by [1]Andy Carvin, National Public Radio's senior product manager for online communities, who simply overlaid Google maps of the two regions, on the same scale. The result gives one a sense of proportion—to be exact, how small an area this part of the Middle East is. (If you can't see the clip embedded above, go [2]here.)

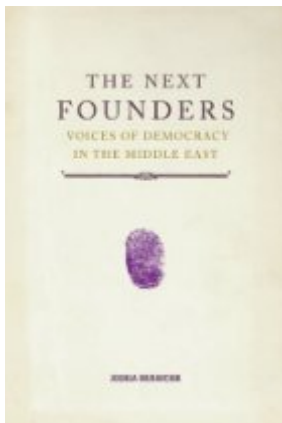
1. [http://www.andycarvin.com/archives/2006/07/the\\_mideast\\_vs\\_the\\_n.html](http://www.andycarvin.com/archives/2006/07/the_mideast_vs_the_n.html)
2. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHFXUH0Qf4>

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### 'The Next Founders: Voices of Democracy in the Middle East' (2009-06-15 00:40)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Joshua Muravchik is a fellow at the Foreign Policy Institute of the Johns Hopkins University School for Advanced International Studies, and a member of MESH. His new is book is *The Next Founders: Voices of Democracy in the Middle East*.

From [1]Joshua Muravchik



[2] When I would tell people that I was writing a book about Middle Eastern democrats, the reaction was invariably the same: "That will be a short book." This jibe expressed the common knowledge that the region remains stubbornly autocratic.

The fact that there is precious little democracy in the Middle East does not mean, however, that there are no democrats. Surveys show that the vast majority say they want democracy, although it is uncertain what they mean. Perhaps more important, there are also individuals whose lives revolve around making

their countries more free and democratic, and who have proven they understand these ideas well. We know little about them because their work is peaceful and incremental and overshadowed by the shocking deeds and pronouncements of tyrants, terrorists, and religious fanatics.

I have profiled seven of them, six Arabs and an Iranian. In addition to illuminating their goals and activities, I have attempted to sketch a full biography in the hope of understanding how they came to be who they are.

Each of them was raised under an authoritarian regime in a society hidebound in its customs. Each belonged to a religious tradition that prized memorization over debate; each attended schools that stressed obedience and rote recitation. They learned that personal desires may have little effect on one's choices in life; that family connections may determine how much justice can be expected; that dissent can consist of as little as a complaint and be punishable by as much as death; and that power is seized or retained through brutality. In such societies, acquiescence is the key to longevity.

How did they free their minds and become different from most around them? For some the answer lay in exposure to the West. For others the personal became political. Both women in the group saw their mother's life blighted by polygamy. Some experienced religious or class persecution or watched their parents persecuted. Some witnessed raw brutality and were revolted. One might have been content to be a poet if the authorities had tolerated that.

Each of these seven has paid a heavy price. Four have been imprisoned, and four have received death threats. Three have had loved ones menaced or penalized. Two have been forced into exile. One has seen his children murdered. All have sacrificed material well-being. In addition to physical bravery, each has displayed moral courage to march to their own drummer in societies that prize loyalty, not individualism. Their stories are inspiring and absorbing.

These are the seven:

- Wajeha al-Huwaider, briefly a columnist for the leading Saudi newspaper *al-Watan*, was banned for her searing polemics against male supremacy. She is the leader of the movement for the right of women to drive in Saudi Arabia and a group that puts Saudi women (faces concealed) on YouTube recounting their mistreatment.
- Mithal al-Alusi, once a leader of the youth movement of the Iraqi Baath Party, split with the party over its brutality and lived two decades in exile. In 2004, after returning to liberated Iraq, he became the first prominent Iraqi to visit Israel, provoking several attempts on his life. In one, his two sons perished. In 2008, Alusi's fourth trip to Israel led to the lifting of his parliamentary immunity and an indictment for a capital crime, but in a landmark ruling the Iraqi court overturned these actions.
- Mohsen Sazegara was a press attaché to Ayatollah Khomeini in Paris and accompanied Khomeini back to Tehran in 1978 for the revolution's final triumph. While serving in several high positions in the clerical regime, Sazegara grew increasingly disillusioned by it, becoming one of its most effective opponents, enduring four arrests before being forced into exile in 2004.
- Hisham Kassem pushed back the limits of press freedom in Egypt by publishing the *Cairo Times*, a small but widely-noted English weekly in the 1990s. Then he became the founding publisher of *al-Masry al-Youm*, the first fully independent Arabic daily in Egypt since Nasser took power, which has transformed the press scene in Egypt. He is also chairman of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights.

- Bassem Eid was the principal investigator for B'Tselem, an Israeli organization combating mistreatment of Palestinians. When Yasser Arafat returned to the occupied territories in 1994 and established the Palestinian Authority, Eid grew alarmed at mounting abuses of Palestinian citizens by Arafat's regime, so he left B'Tselem and founded the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group.
- Rola Dashti was the leader of the campaign that in 2005 won women the right of women to vote and hold office in Kuwait. In 2009 she and three other women won election to parliament.
- Ammar Abdulhamid is a human rights activist and blogger who was Syria's most outspoken dissident until a face-to-face death threat from Bashar Asad's security chief impelled him to flee the country.

[3]Order from Publisher | [4]Amazon

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/joshua\\_muravchik/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/joshua_muravchik/)
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/41jJpZ9Y7vL.jpg>
3. <http://www.encounterbooks.com/books/nextfounders/?excerpt>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1594032327>

### Iranian turmoil, U.S. options (2009-06-17 00:02)



Iran's June 12 presidential elections have precipitated Iran's greatest domestic political crisis since the 1979 revolution. The following MESH members responded to an invitation to comment on ramifications of the turmoil, with special reference to U.S. policy options: Daniel Byman, J. Scott Carpenter, Hillel Fradkin, Josef Joffe, Mark N. Katz, Martin Kramer, Walter Laqueur, Michael Mandelbaum, Philip Carl Salzman, and Raymond Tanter.



[1]Daniel Byman :: The Obama administration made a decision to engage Iran well before it seemed like Ahmadinejad even had a chance of being unseated as president, so it is no surprise that the doubts over the current elections are not leading the administration to change course. The brief hope was that a Mousavi victory would usher in a government that would end Iran's nuclear program and welcome closer ties to Washington. This was always unrealistic: Mousavi himself was not a cuddly figure, the nuclear program is popular across Iran's elite, and Khatami's experience as president painfully showed that conservative forces could easily undercut any attempt to reach out to the United States. So we are back to dealing with a conservative regime, albeit one whose legitimacy is dented. The silver lining to the cloud of dashed democratic expectations is that the odds of engagement succeeding are probably similar if not better under the conservatives, however noxious their overall policies.

In addition to their genuine hostility to U.S. policy, conservatives feared that moderates would exploit the political benefits of improved relations with the United States, which would be widely popular in Iran. With Ahmadinejad's victory, however, conservatives are in power across of Iran's institutions: any benefit of improved relations would go to them. In addition, conservatives could be confident they would control the pace of any rapprochement. Moreover, Iran's economy is also declining, and even a return of higher oil prices will not rescue it. Battered economically, and with doubts about the regime's legitimacy after the fraud at the polls, perhaps the regime will look for ways to improve its political position—like opening up to the United States—that would take the wind out of rivals' sails. (Okay, this is a big perhaps.)

Some of the same logic, of course, held years ago as well, and it is likely that the rivalries in Iran and pervasive hostility of the conservative elite will prevail. Predictions of a rapprochement are made constantly, and they so far have always been dashed. With Iran, the safe bet is always against improved ties to the United States.

Yet it would be a mistake not to try for fear of failing. To capitalize on the regime's newfound legitimacy concerns, Washington will have to recognize that efforts by Tehran to reach out may be accompanied by hostile rhetoric or other actions designed to shore up the conservative base. In addition, Tehran will prove especially sensitive to calls for regime change or other challenges to its legitimacy. Separating rhetoric and reality will prove difficult, and, as we try to glean insights into the regime's thinking, Iran's nuclear program continues to move forward.



[2]J. Scott Carpenter :: Autocrats the world over rely on elections to provide them with a veneer of legitimacy. Quite why this matters to them so much is something I've never fully grasped. Still, when even a horrendously flawed electoral process yields results that the Supreme Leader must further manipulate, what's left of the system's legitimacy degrades precipitously. Moral authority—if not the state's monopoly on force—is lost and proves difficult to recapture, especially in tough economic times.

President Obama should take advantage of this moment of regime weakness to increase pressure on Tehran. This will require him to side strongly with the Iranian people and recognize the farce that these elections were. It does not mean using the phrase "regime change." Instead he and other democratic leaders from around the world should speak to the hopes of individual Iranians who were robbed of a better future when the Supreme Leader undercut his own sham process. The Khamenei regime promises nothing but more misery and malaise; we in the international community offer something much better: opportunity and access.

In doing this, one of Obama's key target audiences should be European public opinion. For some reason, Europeans seize much more forcefully on images of the Basij beating old women and students than on the prospects of mushroom clouds over Warsaw. Of course, siding with the Iranian people won't do much to sway either Moscow or Beijing, especially as the latter recently managed to sweep Tiananmen under a Chinese carpet, but stiffening European spines is a first priority to applying sanctions with any teeth.

Beyond recognizing the need to sharply change his rhetoric, the President should now realize his engagement strategy as defined so far is bound to fail. To this point, the strategy has been predicated on a direct approach to the Supreme Leader as the sole decision maker within the system. If we can get directly to the Supreme Leader, the argument goes, he can be convinced through a combination of carrots and sticks

of the merits of accommodating the West's demands on the nuclear file. Within this strategy has been the implicit belief that the nature of the regime doesn't matter. After the past few days, however, it should be clear how preposterous such a notion is. A regime prepared to shoot its own citizens to preserve itself will not negotiate away its nuclear program to the "Great Satan" and can't be trusted even if it did. Engagement with this regime simply will not work. So what is Plan B and when do we implement it?

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[3]Hillel Fradkin :: There is little doubt that the Iranian regime has suffered some dents in its legitimacy, both through the election campaign and its outcome. During the campaign itself, the leading candidates—Ahmadinejad and Mousavi—flung charges against one another of such vehemence and character as to taint the regime, its history and legacy. As for the elections, the speed with which the results were announced—speed which seemed physically impossible given the number of ballots cast—called those results and the fairness of the election into question. So too did the announced landslide for Ahmadinejad, which confounded expectations of a much closer race and brought hundreds of thousands of Iranians into the streets of Tehran in protest. In the short term the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei has compounded the problem of legitimacy by first blessing the announced results as a "divine assessment" and then turning—in response to the protests—to the Guardian Council to perform a legally permitted review of the conduct of the elections.

It is of course uncertain what its verdict will be, although the safest bet is that it will confirm Ahmadinejad as the winner. There can be little doubt that he will pursue a radical and revolutionary policy. But can the controversy over the elections be turned to the ends of American interests, especially the attempt to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and even the interests of the Iranian people? Perhaps.

The necessary first step is for President Obama to speak out forcefully on behalf of democracy in accord with his own well-established statements in that regard. He should express his support for the Iranian people in stronger terms than he did in his Iranian New Year's message. This would be tantamount to denying that Ahmadinejad was the legitimate representative of the Iranian government or its people.

Whether this would have some substantial and long-term effect within Iran itself—for example the "color" or "velvet" revolution which Iran's leaders have claimed to fear and oppose—is very hard to know, but this is the most propitious time to try to find out. In the event that Iran continued to be disturbed by internal opposition, the United States would have laid the groundwork to lend whatever support was practicable.

Such an approach would require some alteration of current American policy. Practically speaking, it would mean an end to the effort to establish a dialogue with the Iranian government, which was unlikely in any case, and which now lacks the grounds of having a legitimate interlocutor. This would permit the administration to move quickly to what was likely to be the next stage of its policy: the attempt to impose "crushing sanctions," Secretary of State Clinton's phrase. The success of this effort always depended upon our capacity to persuade others to support such a regimen. Although that may still be difficult—as it was in the past—the dubious legitimacy of the Iranian government might now make that easier. For it could now be represented as a "rogue regime" from every point of view. And even if it should fail, the United States would have laid the ground for the proposal of other options.



[4]Josef Joffe :: You've heard about the "electronic herd" as moniker for those investors and venture capitalists who buy and sell exactly what the fad du jour demands. But what about a close relative, the "mooring media," which so often reports what it wants to see?

And so with Iranian election. Behold this immortal headline on the editorial page of the International Herald Tribune: "The Velvet Revolution," followed by cheery prediction that "whatever its outcome, this (dramatic) expression of the popular will carries the promise of better times."

"Hope Breeds Hype" would have been the better headline, followed by the warning to resist the "North Tehran" syndrome. In this fanciest section of the Iranian capital, they speak English, wear Chanel dresses under their chador and believe in the imminent demise of a despised regime. (In Tel Aviv, it is the "Sheinkin Street Syndrome," where your basic foreign correspondent talks to artists, Meretz activists and assorted lefties before he files his story on "Change, Hope and the Peace Process" or on the evils of the Netanyahu regime.)

If these good folks had dug deeper and wider, if they had gone into the slums or countryside, they would not have confused a few cute girls who show lots of ankle and hair or a university rally with a "velvet revolution." If they had read their Hanna Arendt, Franz Neumann or Lenin, they would have been still more skeptical about the incipient decrepitude of the Ahmadinejad regime. If they had studied the history of the Iranian revolution, they would not have called Mr. Mousavi a "reformer" instead of a "disgruntled conservative," ditto Messrs. Karrubi and Rezaei. Their battle against the past and future president was a very mild remake of what happens in any revolution: a falling out among chiefs.

The electoral outcome is no "velvet revolution" at all, though—give honor where honor is due—the "Iranian street" was more vocal and courageous than at any time since the crushed student revolt of 1999. But remember the election of 2005, when Ahmadinejad garnered a mere 19.5 percent in the first round, and then beat former president Rafsanjani with almost 62 percent. This time, Ahmadinejad won right away, and by one point more.

Of course, there was systematic (and brazen) fraud. Why else had the election authorities "counted" millions of ballots right after the polls had closed? On the other hand, Iran is not Enver Hoxa's Albania (where he came in at 97.8 percent each time), and so Ahmadinejad's massive majority could not have been completely rigged. As went North Tehran, the country did not. But the regime did not want to take any chances, and so added to vox pop without having to falsify it. Think Richard Daley the Elder, not Enver Hoxa.

The more interesting news is the opposition to Ahmadinejad in the "Holy City" of Qom, the spiritual headquarters of the 1979 revolution. The vocal protests of many clerics lead to a fascinating speculation: The old theocratic revolution is dead, power has passed to the—let's call them—"secularists." They are still bearded, but they wear suits or the battle dress of the Pasdaran, the Revolutionary Guards. They don't trade in fatwas, but in economic privileges. Their weapon of choice is not the Quran, but the Kalashnikov, and their badge is the Iranian flag and not the green of the prophet (the battle insignia of Mr. Mousavi).

Let's carry speculation on step farther. On Monday, the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei ordered an



investigation into what Mousavi calls outright voting fraud. Whence we might conclude: The old clerical guard has understood the true import of the electoral verdict. It was a putsch at the ballot box, masterfully executed by Ahmadinejad and his henchmen, and it was directed not so much against the students and the wealthy denizens of Niavaran and Shemiran, but against Khamenei and his religious cohorts. It is Robbespierre vs. Danton, who had led the uprising against the King in 1792.

If this assessment is correct, we will see a lot more strife in the days to come. In the end, it might lead to a Persian Napoleon and his military dictatorship. And why not a "little war" to stabilize the new autocracy? These are dark thoughts, and like all historical analogies, they may be wildly off the mark. So over to Barack Obama, who has staked his first months in office on wooing the Islamic world in order to give a boost to moderates and liberals. Round one goes to the reactionaries.

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[5]Mark N. Katz :: The prolonged protests in Tehran against the Iranian regime's claim that Ahmadinejad was overwhelmingly re-elected president have raised the possibility that Iran might be on the verge of a democratic revolution. The widespread belief that election results were falsified has triggered successful democratic revolutions in several countries, including the Philippines, Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine. Such protests, though, do not always succeed, as has been seen in Burma (Myanmar), Armenia, Azerbaijan, and elsewhere.

I have previously argued at MESH and elsewhere that a rapprochement between the United States and Iran's authoritarian regime would be in American interests. The democratic transformation of Iran, though, would be far more beneficial for the United States (and, of course, for Iran). A democratic Iran might become an American ally or, if not that, friendlier to the United States than Tehran has been since 1979. A democratic Iran could also be expected to push Hamas and Hezbollah in a democratic direction, or perhaps even sever its ties with them. Further, while a democratic Iran could be expected to continue the atomic energy program that Tehran began under the Shah, it would presumably be more willing to accommodate the concerns of the international community than the Islamic Republic has been.

With all these possibilities at stake, the Obama administration's restrained, "even-handed" reaction to the disputed Iranian election results may appear quite odd. This cool reaction, though, may be the best way for Washington to help the cause of Mir Hossein Mousavi—the presidential candidate who is charging electoral fraud. Greater public American support for him could be seized upon as an excuse by Khamenei and Ahmadinejad to discredit him as an American agent. Expressing support for a transparent process instead of a specific politician may avoid this problem—especially since there may be little that the United States can actually do to help Mousavi right now.

As past occasions have shown, whether or not widespread popular protest against perceived electoral fraud results in democratic revolution or not depends on whether elements of the security services defect from the regime to the democratic opposition. The defection of even a few key personnel can quickly cascade into the defection of much of the security services and the immobilization of the rest. But without these initial key defections, the democratic opposition cannot hope to prevail, and its protests will sooner or later (and more probably sooner) be crushed.

It is virtually impossible, of course, for the United States to engineer the key security service personnel defections away from the regime and to the opposition during the brief window of opportunity that



may be available before the democratic opposition is crushed, if security force defections don't take place. What the United States can do, though, is quietly signal that it is prepared to work with those security service forces that do defect and to not seek their destruction. This is because organizational survival and personal advancement are often just as or even more important motives than the desire for democracy for officers considering defection to the democratic opposition in such situations.

Even if the regime succeeds in crushing the democratic opposition, its self-confidence is likely to decline and its internal divisions to remain and even grow. In similar circumstances elsewhere, some elements inside an authoritarian regime have made common cause with democratic forces outside of it. Helping them do so may be the sort of long term project that the United States could discreetly help with—whether or not Washington goes forward with attempting to achieve détente with the Islamic Republic.

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[6]Martin Kramer :: There are days when I'm supremely grateful that I'm not paid to make policy decisions. Those who must make them on Iran have much more information than I have, but it probably still won't be enough, so that in the end, analogies will play as large a role as analysis. Already much of the public in the West has embraced the analogy between Iran's protests and the "color revolutions" of Europe. The potential for error there is great: Iran's politics are sui generis even in the Middle East. But there's a bit of room for such an error, because the regime doesn't have nukes. If it had them, we'd be biting our nails instead of tweeting on Twitter.

Harvard's Stephen Walt, [7]on his blog, made an assertion that exposes the fundamental weakness of the realist claim that the outcome doesn't matter, at least to us: "In the end, what really matters is the content of any subsequent U.S.-Iranian rapprochement, not the precise nature of the Iranian regime. If diplomatic engagement led to a good deal, then it wouldn't matter much who was running Iran." Walt is right when he goes on to say that Mousavi, specifically, may not be a vast improvement over the Khamenei-A'jad duo. But in keeping up Iran's end of any "good deal," does it really not much matter who runs the country? In our own lives, we prefer to do business with reputable dealers, as opposed to known scam artists, thieves, and forgers. The meaning of this past week is that the ruling mob has been exposed, and that alternatives aren't entirely unimaginable. No one should get their hopes up, but the moment Khamenei, A'jad, and even Mousavi aren't the entire universe of options, there's every reason to put engagement on hold.

And since it's always better to have options, perhaps the United States should act to promote them. "The Americans do not have the experience or the psychological insight to understand Persia." That was Ann (Nancy) Lambton, the great British Iranologist, back in 1951. (She thought Mossadegh could be readily overthrown; the Americans at first thought otherwise. She was right.) So it's a long shot. But there may be an opportunity here, and perhaps even awkward Americans—now with an additional sixty years of experience and a president with psychological insight—can find it.

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[8]Walter Laqueur :: Has the legitimacy of the Iranian regime been seriously dented? The regime was no doubt surprised and even shocked by the intensity of feeling against Ahmedinajad by so many in the capital, but there seems to have been much less resistance outside it. The country is split ,but the levers

of power (and the weapons) seem to be firmly in the hands of the regime, and this is all that matters at the present time. Mousavi, in any case, is part of the regime, not a true reformer, at best half-hearted; his fervent supporters are bound to be disappointed. A rotten compromise to solve the present crisis seems quite likely. The decomposition and eventual breakdown of the regime are bound to happen but they will take time.

Perhaps there was fraud in Iran, but most outside observers were apparently not aware how easily elections can be won in authoritarian regimes without even using the grosser forms of fraud such as stuffing the ballot boxes. If part of the population is illiterate, a desirable outcome of the elections becomes even easier to achieve. As far as now known, there was no outright forgery on a massive scale in the elections in the fascist and communist regimes in Europe.

The U.S. approach? What approach? I suspect Washington has accepted, knowingly or not, an Iranian regime in possession of nuclear weapons. No substantial help to slow the process can be expected from Europe, Russia and China. Military action will not be used, and its use by Israel will not be accepted.

No thought seems to have been given to what American policy should be once this stage has been reached. Should there be a grand bargain with Iran, accepting some or all of its "legitimate demands," including its wish to extend its influence throughout the Middle East? Or should America support the anti-Iranian forces? I suspect there will be a little bit of appeasement and a little bit of resistance, some engagement and some disengagement, all the options will be tried in an attempt to muddle through until (or unless) something wholly unforeseen will happen.

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[9]Michael Mandelbaum :: The principal goal of American policy toward Iran is to prevent that country from acquiring nuclear weapons. The Obama administration proposes to accomplish this through direct negotiations with the Iranian regime. Success is unlikely, but it is less unlikely if greater international pressure is brought to bear on that regime. The administration should therefore use the stolen election, and the outrage it should provoke in the democratic West, to try to persuade the Europeans to agree to tougher economic sanctions on Iran.

It would be helpful to have the Russians and the Chinese join in such an effort, but the events surrounding the election are not likely to prompt either to do so. The governments in Moscow and Beijing are no doubt just as appalled as the Europeans at what has happened, but for different reasons: the Russians because of the way the regime in Tehran has botched a rigged election, the Chinese at Tehran's decision to hold an election at all.

Ultimately, Iran will cease to be a major strategic problem for the United States only if the current regime falls and is replaced by one less resolutely opposed to Western interests and values. Here the events of the last several days count as good news. Dictatorships fall when the governing elite loses the will to rule (as in Eastern Europe in 1989) or when it is sharply divided. The candidate from whom the election appears to have been stolen must represent a segment of the governing structure, otherwise he would not have been permitted to run in the first place. The unfolding conflict in Iran therefore pits not only the society against the rulers but also one part of the ruling clique against another. The United States can probably have little or no influence over internal Iranian politics, but anything American policy can do to widen this second division (the regime itself can be counted to do everything necessary to expand the first one) is worth doing

and should be done.

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[10]Philip Carl Salzman :: Watching the Iranian elections is like watching a Model United Nations or a Mock Supreme Court. The issues are real and important. The passions are deeply felt. The divisions reflect divisions among the population. But the decisions have no effect whatsoever in the real world.

The elections, to change the metaphor, are like shadow plays or puppet shows: it is the manipulators behind the scenes who make the actors move, or negate the movements of the actors. In Iran, it is the Supreme Leader, the Council of Guardians, the Expediency Council, and increasingly the Revolutionary Guard who call the shots.

We have already seen this play, starring reformist President Khatami. Whatever the president and the reformist Majlis tried to do, the real rulers denied. Elected officials are mainly a façade, giving faux-democratic respectability to the regime. Yes, to an extent, elected officials provide a face to the regime, and do have some influence over internal matters, such as economic measures. But on the greatest matters of substance, they are entirely powerless.

Why should we pin any hopes on the Iranian elections? Does it matter all that much whether the face of the regime is sweet and smiling or angry and frowning? The regime will be the same.

What if, as many suspect, the current election, allegedly won by Ahmadinejad, was itself manipulated? The supporters for other candidates, like participants in a Mock UN, are incensed that, as they believe, the rules were violated and the results unfair. In this case, with electoral cover gone, the regime stands naked, its reality exposed. Naive Iranians will be disappointed and angry.

What about hopeful foreign leaders and diplomats? What has changed for them? Nothing. If they did not know what they were dealing with before, they were not only hopeful, but naive.

What approach to Iran would be most beneficial for the United States? Again, let's look at past experience: When did Iran last do something agreeable to the United States? Iran stopped their nuclear program when the United States invaded Iraq, fearing that Iran might be next. When the threat appeared to recede, Iran reactivated their nuclear program. It thus seems that Iran responds to a serious threat by pulling in its horns. If the United States wants Iran to stop its nuclear bomb and missile program, reduce its terrorist support throughout the Middle East, and ease the pressure on its neighbors, then Iran must feel that the cost of pursuing its current path would be too high. President Obama must show the stick, and be ready to use it.

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[11]Raymond Tanter :: The unfolding drama on the streets of Tehran raises key issues of whether Iranian instability will threaten survival of the ruling ayatollahs and if it is possible for a diplomatic breakthrough with them on Iran's quest for nuclear weapons status in light of growing political instability.

Two schools of thought conflict in addressing these two issues.

One approach holds that although election fraud represents something of a setback for Iran's "illiberal democracy," efforts at engagement should be continued. Just as such analysts were wrong in presuming the regime would be constrained from cheating to maintain power, they falsely assume that representative institutions legitimize the rule of the ayatollahs in a less-than-liberal democracy.

A second school, of which the Iran Policy Committee is a contributor, finds that Iran does not have even a "limited" or "illiberal" democracy. Rather than deriving legitimacy from the people, the ayatollahs rule by assertion that clerics should rule because they are representatives of God on earth.

Regarding the issue of whether illegitimate elections in Iran are a point of departure for a breakthrough in Western diplomacy, such an assertion overlooks the role revolutionary ideology plays in motivating the Iranian regime to pursue its nuclear weapons program. Whether Iranian elections are legitimate is irrelevant to the regime's pursuit of the bomb.

To motivate the Iranian regime to bargain in good faith requires leverage. An unused point of leverage against Tehran is for the West to reach out to its main opposition as it reaches out to the regime.

The Iran Policy Committee performed a content analysis of leadership statements regarding all major Iranian opposition groups. The study showed that the Iranian regime pays attention to the Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MEK), the main Iranian opposition group, 350 percent more than all other opposition groups combined. In view of this surfeit of attention, it is reasonable to infer that Tehran fears the MEK as a threat to the survival of the regime.

Reaching out to the Iranian opposition, which is based in Iraq but has an extensive network in Iran, would be a common point of leverage for Washington and moderate Arab allies of President Obama to counter Iranian regime expansion in the region. Rather than a binary choice of pressure or engagement, an approach that incorporates the Iranian opposition would allow for a coherent policy of coercive diplomacy. Such a policy is likely to be more effective than either pressure or engagement alone.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel\\_byman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel_byman/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j\\_scott\\_carpenter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j_scott_carpenter/)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/hillel\\_fradkin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/hillel_fradkin/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef\\_joffe/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef_joffe/)
5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_n\\_katz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_n_katz/)
6. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)
7. [http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/06/15/on\\_irans\\_election](http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/06/15/on_irans_election)
8. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_laqueur/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_laqueur/)
9. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_mandelbaum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_mandelbaum/)
10. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)
11. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_tanter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_tanter/)

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## Iran's elections mapped (2009-06-18 00:04)

From MESH Admin

These two maps depict official Iranian presidential election results by province with varying degrees of detail. The map on the left has been produced by [1]Critical Threats, a project of the American Enterprise

Institute. The map on the right has been prepared by the [2]Guardian Datablog. Click on the thumbnail of each to view full-scale original.

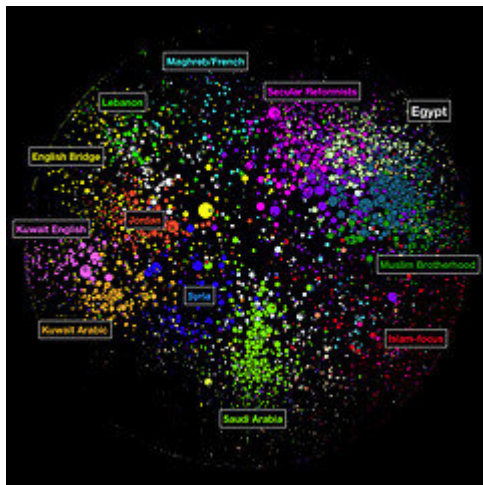


[3] . . . . . [4]

1. <http://www.irantracker.org/analysis/iranian-2009-presidential-election-results-province>
2. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2009/jun/15/iran1>
3. [http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3582/3637738204\\_d4c804ac1b\\_o.gif](http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3582/3637738204_d4c804ac1b_o.gif)
4. [http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3360/3637771676\\_d68ab0e19f\\_o.jpg](http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3360/3637771676_d68ab0e19f_o.jpg)

## The Arabic blogosphere (2009-06-20 01:05)

From MESH Admin



[1] The [2]Internet and Democracy project at Harvard’s Berkman Center for Internet and Society (which graciously provides hosting services for MESH) has produced a map of the Arabic blogosphere. Click on the thumbnail to enlarge, and download the full report [3]here. The key finding:

Most bloggers write mainly personal, diary-style observations. But when writing about politics, bloggers tend to focus on issues within their own country, and are more often than not critical of domestic political leaders. Foreign political leaders are discussed less often, but also

more in negative than positive terms. Domestic news is more popular than international news among general politics and public life topics. The one political issue that clearly concerns bloggers across the Arab world is Palestine, and in particular the situation in Gaza (Israel's December 2008/January 2009 military action occurred during the study). Other popular topics include religion (more in personal than political terms) and human rights (more common than criticism of western culture and values). Terrorism and the US are not major topics. When discussing terrorism, Arab bloggers are overwhelmingly critical of terrorists. When the US is discussed, it is nearly always critically.

1. [http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3415/3634971698\\_5bf635f2fc\\_o.png](http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3415/3634971698_5bf635f2fc_o.png)
2. <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/research/internetdemocracy>
3. [http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/Mapping\\_the\\_Arabic\\_Blogosphere\\_0.pdf](http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/Mapping_the_Arabic_Blogosphere_0.pdf)

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### Netanyahu: shadow and substance (2009-06-22 00:14)

From [1]Alan Dowty



Some sixty years ago my mentor Hans J. Morgenthau posited as a cardinal rule of diplomacy that states should "give up the shadow of worthless rights for the substance of real advantage." It is not clear whether Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has ever read Morgenthau, but he seems attuned to this basic adage of statecraft.

In his much heralded June 14 foreign policy [2]address, Netanyahu was clearly reacting to U.S. pressure focused on two matters: acceptance of a two-state model for Israel-Palestinian negotiations, and a freeze on further building of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Acceptance of a two-state model is, under present circumstances, primarily a verbal act with no immediate operational implications. By conceding this point, Netanyahu was giving up a shadow in order to retain substance; Morgenthau would have approved.

This is not to say that Netanyahu's concession was meaningless. Words do have consequences, and the fact that Netanyahu put the words "Palestinian" and "state" into the same sentence puts the seal on consensus within Israel on the preference for two states compared to other options. Predictably there have been vocal protests from within the Likud and elsewhere on the right, but nothing that Netanyahu cannot weather—especially given the perception that he has, in fact, given away little or nothing in substance.

The fact is that the speech included no immediate operational changes of importance. Before serious negotiations over two states get anywhere, Palestinians would have to satisfy a number of conditions with



which Netanyahu's version of two states is encumbered. First they must make their own verbal leap: explicit acceptance of Israel as a Jewish state, something much harder for them than Netanyahu's terminological retrenchment was for him. They must somehow present a united front without Hamas, but including Gaza. They must come to terms with the reality that the refugee issue will be solved "outside the borders of the State of Israel." And they must accept a draconian version of demilitarization surpassing any such measures on today's world map. Not a single one of these eventualities is imminent, meaning that pressure on Netanyahu to negotiate the substance of a two-state solution is also, presumably, not imminent.

In this regard, the Netanyahu government is simply exploiting the biggest natural advantage that it has at the moment, which is that there is no Palestinian negotiating partner both able and willing to negotiate and to implement a final peace settlement in all the Palestinian territories. So long as this is the case, any Israeli government will be able, with minimal diplomatic skill, to deflect outside pressures to make major concessions in advance of negotiations. And for that matter, even a fervently dovish Israeli government would find itself unable to convert its support for two states into reality.

Netanyahu's surrender of shadow also has to be seen in the context of Israel opinion, which has moved to overwhelming support of two states in principle, if only in reaction to the new prominence of much more ominous one-state proposals. Majorities of up to 78 percent, in one poll, express willingness to accept a Palestinian state alongside Israel under the right conditions. Any Israeli government that rejected a realistic chance to negotiate a two-state solution would find itself replaced, as Netanyahu implicitly recognized even before his recent speech. In that case, as he has repeatedly stated, "the terminology will take care of itself."

What remains to be seen is how far the Obama administration will take satisfaction in having the first of its demands met, on a verbal level, while nothing changes regarding the second demand, on settlements. The issue of "natural growth" in West Bank settlements remains contentious; Netanyahu's pledge of no new settlements merely continues official policy set under Yitzhak Rabin and Ariel Sharon, and changes nothing on the ground. As before, "outposts" are occasionally dismantled and then quickly rebuilt. Significantly, according to reports in the Israeli press, settlers in the territories have reacted to Netanyahu's speech, by



and large, with great equanimity.[3]

MESH adds this: Click on the thumbnail on the right (or [4]here) for a word cloud of Netanyahu's speech, illustrating the frequency of the one hundred most-used words.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)
2. <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Communication/PMSpeaks/speechbarilan140609.htm>
3. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/06/netanyahucloud.jpg>
4. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/06/netanyahucloud.jpg>

Efraim Inbar (2009-06-23 10:09:51)

After President Obama's Cairo [1]speech on June 4, Prime Minister Netanyahu not only felt the need to respond to the American leader, but also to address the Israeli people. In his June 14 [2]speech, at Bar-Ilan University's Begin-Sadat (BESA) Center for Strategic Studies, Netanyahu was successful in redefining the Israeli consensus and becoming a mainstream political leader. Over 70 percent of Israelis found themselves in agreement with Netanyahu—quite a feat for any Israeli prime minister. Netanyahu stressed the historic rights of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel (Palestine) and rejected Obama's interpretation of the Holocaust as legitimation for the Jewish state. He pointed out that a Jewish state where persecuted Jews could flee the Nazis would have prevented the Holocaust. Despite the ancient Jewish claim to its historic patrimony, Netanyahu expressed willingness for a territorial compromise in order to satisfy the national needs of the Palestinians (a two-state solution). A large majority of Israelis is ready for a repartition of the Land of Israel. Netanyahu's acceptance of a Palestinian state came with conditions. His demand for a demilitarized state reflects the ingrained and justified Israeli fears of their dangerous neighbors. Since Oslo, more Israelis have been killed by Palestinians than during the 1973 October War. Netanyahu also demanded the long overdue recognition of Israel as the Jewish nation-state. In line with Israeli consensus, he insisted on Jerusalem remaining the undivided capital of the Jewish state and opposed a total freeze on building in the settlements. The speech positioned Netanyahu at the center of Israeli politics. His coalition remains strong and a majority of the Kadima opposition party in the Knesset prefers to join the government. Netanyahu's centrist approach also strengthened the chances that his coalition will survive potential tensions with the United States. Netanyahu reluctantly agreed to mention the two-state solution to please the United States. Even the hawkish faction within his party, the Likud, understands that statements are not enough to create a new political reality. Capturing the center of Israeli politics will allow Netanyahu flexibility if there is an opportunity for peace as well as the needed stature to lead Israel in continuous protracted conflict. It is not yet clear if Washington is looking for a confrontation with Jerusalem by focusing on a total settlement freeze. Israelis are likely to view such an insistence primarily as a pretext for ulterior motives and are likely to support their government. The territory of the settlements is less than 2 percent of the West Bank. After all, even the PLO agreed to an exchange of territory to incorporate the bloc settlements into Israel. Moreover, the Israeli political system has demonstrated its capacity to remove settlements when necessary. Israel dismantled settlements in Sinai in the framework of a peace treaty with Egypt in 1981 and in Gaza and Samaria in 2005. Finally, the Palestinian demand to receive a *Judenrein* area is racist and unacceptable. If Israel hosts an Arab minority, why can't a few thousands of Jews reside in a Palestinian state, which occupies part of the Jewish homeland? The Israeli government will try to avert a crisis in U.S.-Israeli relations and will hope for a fast learning curve by the Obama administration. The Obama vision of an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement within two years is unrealistic. Jerusalem can still count on a reservoir of friendship on Capitol Hill and by the American public at large. Due to this support, Israel might decide to put up a fight and play for time. Nowadays, Netanyahu is in a better position to do it. [3]Efraim Inbar is professor of political studies at Bar-Ilan University and director of the Begin-Sadat (BESA) Center for Strategic Studies.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/06/obama-and-the-muslims/>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/06/netanyahu-shadow-and-substance/>
3. [http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/efraim\\_inbar/](http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/efraim_inbar/)

## Iran, technology, and revolution (2009-06-25 00:15)

From [1]Michael Rubin





The Boston Globe, Christian Science Monitor, and Washington Post have dubbed it a "Twitter Revolution," speculating about whether new technology will enable Iranian protesters to overcome government forces. The role of technology in the current unrest is well-covered elsewhere. What is lacking in much of the coverage, however, is a sense of context.

Technology has been essential both to empire formation and preservation, and to state degradation in the Middle East. The late historian Marshall G.S. Hodgson [2] described the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires as "gunpowder empires." Their sultans and shahs consolidated control over expansive territories by controlling weaponry which potential aspirants to power along the periphery did not have. Once the central government lost monopoly over guns and cannons, however, the empires fractured—devolving into fiefdoms or dissolving completely.

In Iran, technology played a particularly important role in state preservation. Looking at 18th and early 19th century atlases, borders are all over the place. Discrepancies of dozens if not hundreds of miles mark frontiers on maps published by different gazetteers. Whereas today imperialism is presented in almost cartoonish terms as a free-for-all, in reality there were huge debates during the 19th century whether or not to expand imperial control over various territories. Imperial rule was an expensive prospect, and so many imperial powers preferred to advance informal control.

Britain did this in Iran by supporting various regional officials—for example, briefly recognizing the autonomy of Makran (Baluchistan) in the mid-19th century and flirting with Sheikh Khazal in Khuzistan at the beginning of the 20th century. While rulers could claim as much territory as they liked, the real litmus test was whether they were able to extract taxes. Sometimes governors or sub-district governors along a country's periphery, many of whom paid for their offices, calculated they could keep all the revenue for themselves and not remit anything to the center. Often, foreign powers encouraged such defiance (e.g. in Georgia, Kuwait, Herat, and Khorramshahr).

This would create a quandary for the Shah. If he ignored the governor's defiance, he would effectively lose that province. Mobilizing the military and launching a punitive expedition, however, was extremely expensive. As Iran flirted with bankruptcy throughout the 19th century, the Shah had very few resources at his disposal, and the periphery knew it.

Nasir al-Din Shah (r. 1848-1896), however, embraced the telegraph. He could threaten and cajole opponents, and keep on top of the latest intelligence. What were the Russians doing in Azerbaijan? What were Kurdish tribes doing across the Ottoman frontier? Could he afford to dispatch the army and still maintain his security? In many ways, it was the telegraph which allowed the Shah to play foreign powers

and domestic competitors off each other and preserve Iranian independence, even in the regime's weakened state.

What was a blessing for the government and for the consolidation of the state, however, turned into a liability. Over time, the Shah's government lost control over the communications network. While the popular belief in the 1860s and 1870s was that the telegraph ended at the Shah's throne, myriad Iranian groups discovered that they could communicate directly with each other and against the central government. This became quite clear in the early 1890s when, desperate to raise revenue, the Nasir al-Din Shah granted the unpopular Tobacco Regie which gave the British a monopoly over all phases of one of Iran's most important industries, from agriculture to sale. Liberals, nationalists, and clerics joined forces to force the Shah to retract. Clerics in Najaf used the telegraph to issue a fatwa, obeyed even by members of the Shah's household, prohibiting the use of tobacco until the Shah recanted. The telegraph network enabled the formation of the mass movement.

This point was driven home in the first decade of the 20th century during Iran's constitutional revolution. Britain backed constitutional forces, and the Russian government supported the autocrat shah. The conflict was bloody and, just as in Iran today, it made headlines. When reactionary forces laid siege to Tabriz, then Iran's second largest city, British papers reported news of the deprivation and starvation received by telegraph. What once would have occurred without notice in Europe, sparked outrage.

As the Shah cracked down, a broad array of constitutionalists, nationalists, liberals, clerics, and Bakhtiari tribesmen coordinated their actions by wire. The Shah's forces sought to cut the wires, but the network was too vast, and not entirely under the government's control. Importantly, the telegraph extended across the frontier into what now is Iraq. Senior clerics cabled instructions from Najaf and Karbala.

Technology created a template upon which the opposition could act. Oppression was a constant during the Qajar period and, indeed, before. It was technology, however, that enabled the mass movement; it simply could not occur before the technology template was laid.

Into the 20th century, the Iranian government sought again to dominate technology. Early in Reza Shah's reign (1925-1941), the Iranian government controlled radio. Under his son and successor, the state controlled television. However, it could not control audio tapes smuggled across the border from Iraq, and so in the 15 years before the Islamic Revolution, the audio cassette—easily copied and distributed—was Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's only means of communication. While Khomeini's image is iconic now, it should be remembered that until his return to Iran, many Iranians knew his voice but had not seen his image.

The Islamic Republic knows it is unpopular, and knows its vulnerability to technology. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps stepped in to cancel a 2004 contract granted to Turkcell to create an independent cell phone network in Iran. Only this past year did the Iranian government [3]bless the introduction of multimedia messaging services in the Islamic Republic. It could be a decision the Islamic Republic will not live long enough to regret.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_rubin/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_rubin/)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0226346854>
3. <http://www.abrarnews.com/politic/1387/870418/html/eghtesad.htm#s277746>

Philip Carl Salzman (2009-06-26 01:04:37)

Michael Rubin is [1]certainly right that technology can give an edge, either to the defenders of the status quo, or to the challengers. In some cases, it can be decisive. But, as I am sure Rubin understands, it is one factor of several major ones. Technology is after all a means that can be applied to an end. But for the means to be applied at all, there must be a motive. Or, as Nietzsche said, there must be the will. The elections in Iran provided an opportunity for disgruntled youth to support a candidate—"moderate" and "reformer" only in terms of the established extremism of the Islamic Republic's government—who might put a kinder and gentler face on the rigid theocracy, and might give them a bit more breathing room. Their campaigning expressed this desire, motive, will. But the "Supreme Leader," not satisfied with his few hand-picked candidates, and with the absolute power to veto policy or legislation he did not like, decided to fix the election in favor of the most extreme candidate, Ahmadinejad. Those opposed to Ahmadinejad were stunned that their votes were nullified and replaced with nonsensical vote counts. The challenging of the governors of the Islamic Republic began with voters' rejection of the fixed election. There was now a double motive, a strengthened will. The Supreme Leader, not satisfied with having spoiled his legitimate monopoly by fixing the vote and betraying Iranian voters, decided to respond to the demonstrators with the batons and guns of the police and militia, beating and killing ordinary citizens more or less at random. The Supreme Leader, after all, represents God and the Islamic Revolution. Except he no longer does. The brutality of the regime has provided a triple motive, an even more strengthened will to the opposition. The Supreme Leader and his acolytes have lost legitimacy, as has this form of rule. So the opposition yells from the rooftop, "Death to the dictator" and "God is great," invoking the oppositional slogans of the Islamic Revolution. It is true, as Rubin says, that the opposition have used technology—Twitter, the internet, cellphone cameras—to mobilize and to send abroad their message and images. This is important. But we must remember that martyrs have become legends and spurs for opposition for millennia, long before modern means of communication. And that primitive forms of communication, such as opposition *samizdat*, have trumped modern communications technology in the hands of the state. So, yes, advanced technology can help, but it is advantageous, not necessary. If we recall Ibn Khaldun, we will be reminded that, in addition to motive and will, organization and solidarity are factors that can be decisive in regime change. It is the superiority in these elements that Ibn Khaldun credits with the ability of peripheral tribes to conquer states, as so often has been the case in the Middle East and North Africa. And here I would recommend caution in prophesizing the rapid fall of Islamic Republic. The Revolutionary Guard, the militia, and the army are highly organized; the opposition, no matter how strongly motivated, is not. The best hope for change is that a major part of the military, also disillusioned with the loss of legitimacy of the government, will go over to the opposition. If this does not happen, it may take the opposition years to organize sufficiently to challenge effectively the government. [2]*Philip Carl Salzman is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/06/iran-technology-and-revolution/>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)

**Obama and Netanyahu: speeches, constituencies, peace (2009-06-29 01:51)**

From [1]Robert O. Freedman



One of the joys of traveling in the Middle East is the possibility that one can be on the spot to observe the reactions of the residents of the region to important events as they actually happen, instead of being dependent on newspaper or television reporting of the reactions. Thus, I was fortunate to be in Israel as U.S. President Barak Obama gave his speech on U.S. relations with the Muslim world, and in Egypt when Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu gave his speech on achieving an Arab-Israeli peace settlement. While each speech was aimed at multiple constituencies, there might be just enough overlap between them to jump-start the stalled Arab-Israeli peace process.

President Obama's speech on U.S. relations with the Muslim world had a major impact, both in Israel and in the Arab world. It is clear that the main goal of Obama's speech was to turn a new page in U.S.-Muslim and particularly U.S.-Arab relations, and if the reactions of the individuals whom I interviewed in Egypt (in Cairo and Alexandria) are any indication, his words were greeted with great enthusiasm, as he went out of his way to demonstrate respect for Islam.

However, despite the assertions of some right-wing Israeli and American commentators, Obama did not pander to his Muslim audience. He emphasized the need to combat Islamic violence, to stop stereotyping both the United States and Israel, and to accept the Holocaust as a fact. While he also emphasized the need to allow greater roles for women in Muslim society and for democracy—in this he did not go as far as some of my interviewees had hoped—overall his speech was very well received.

As far as Israel was concerned, Obama reiterated the U.S. commitment to Israeli security, but he also made very clear that Israel's responsibility in moving the peace process forward included accepting a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and stopping the construction of settlements. That Obama's words were clearly understood in Israel became apparent not only in Netanyahu's concession on a two-state solution, but also in the words of a security guard whom I interviewed at the West Bank settlement outpost of Kedar Bet (near Maaleh Adumim). When I asked him if Kedar Bet would grow across the valley to meet the already established settlement of Kedar (this is a frequent pattern for settlement growth), he replied: "It all depends on the President of the United States."

As the security guard's words indicated, a second audience of Obama's words was the Israeli body politic. However, in measuring the impact of Obama's speech on Israel, one must take into consideration the shift to the right of the Israeli public over the past few years, which was reflected in major gains for right-wing parties, and especially Likud, in the election of last February 10 which brought Netanyahu to

power as the head of a right-of-center coalition. Essentially, many Israelis, having experienced unilateral withdrawals from Southern Lebanon (2000) and Gaza (2005), which instead of bringing peace brought barrages of Hezbollah and Hamas rockets, were quite sympathetic to Netanyahu's election position which opposed withdrawals from the West Bank. Such withdrawals, he argued, would result in Hamas rocket attacks against Tel Aviv and Ben-Gurion airport. Thus Obama's call for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had a negative resonance for many in the center and right of the Israeli political spectrum, and a June 19 poll in the right -of-center Jerusalem Post found that 50 percent of Israelis now considered Obama to be more pro-Palestinian than pro-Israeli. (Only 6 percent considered him to be more pro-Israeli, while 36 percent said his policies were neutral and 8 percent did not comment.)

Nonetheless, despite support from a significant part of the Israeli public for his hard-line policies, Netanyahu could not simply ignore Obama's speech. Israel is dependent on the United States for \$3 billion in annual military aid, for protection in the United Nations against the numerous anti-Israeli resolutions introduced by Israel's enemies, and, above all, for U.S. support for an Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear installations, if the Israeli government deems it necessary—a possibility now somewhat more likely following the Iranian regime's brutal crackdown on demonstrators after the disputed June 12 Iranian presidential elections.

Consequently, Netanyahu adopted what might be termed a "minimax" strategy: doing the minimum necessary to satisfy the United States—agreeing to a two-state solution, albeit with reservations—while retaining the maximum support in his coalition government. Thus, Netanyahu's speech was a careful balancing act between the United States and the center-right portions of his coalition government, and the Israeli prime minister's speech, consequently, precipitated multiple reactions. It was welcomed both by coalition member Labor—the leftist element of Netanyahu's government—and also by the main opposition party, Kadimah, which may now, at least in part (the faction led by Shaul Mofaz), be prepared to join the coalition. Rightist elements of Netanyahu's own Likud Party were more reserved in their support, although he sought to win them over with his positions that any Palestinian state would have to be demilitarized, that Jerusalem would remain united under Israeli rule, that no Palestinian refugees could be resettled in Israel, and that Israeli settlers, whom he described as "an integral part of our people, a principled, pioneering and Zionist public" had to be allowed to live "normal lives."

These positions, together with Netanyahu's call for the Palestinians to recognize Israel as "the state of the Jewish people," succeeded in neutralizing, at least in the short run, much of the opposition in his coalition government. Indeed, Netanyahu's approval ratings shot up after his speech. On the far right of the Israeli political spectrum, however, there were strong protests against Netanyahu's speech, both by a coalition member, the Jewish Home Party, and by the opposition National Union Party, as well as by some settler leaders such as Rabbi Dov Lior.

Obama, for his part, appeared willing to accept the "half a loaf" which Netanyahu offered—acquiescence in the establishment of a Palestinian State—and, at least initially, appeared to disregard the other elements in Netanyahu's speech, including his rather vague call for "normal life" for the settlers. Indeed, Obama called Netanyahu's speech "an important step forward." By contrast, The response in the Arab world to Netanyahu's speech was almost universally negative, except for a few commentators writing in Al-Ahram and the Egyptian Gazette, who saw the possibility of building on Netanyahu's commitment to a two state solution.

The Palestinian leadership on the West Bank, in what I think was a major tactical error, totally rejected the speech which it claimed offered no hope for moving the peace process forward. The lines of the Arab critique of Netanyahu's speech were as follows: 1) a Palestinian state's sovereignty would be limited by demilitarization; 2) no Arab could accept Jewish sovereignty over East Jerusalem, including the Dome of the

Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque; and 3) Israel was evading its responsibility for the 1948 Palestinian exodus by claiming no Palestinian refugees could be resettled in Israel. Most of all, the Arabs seemed angered by Netanyahu's demand that Israel be recognized as a Jewish state. Noting that such a recognition (they claimed) would make them Zionists and would also jeopardize the position of the Israeli Arabs in Israel.

Given the contrasting views on Netanyahu's speech, is there any hope for moving the peace process forward? The answer is a qualified "yes," but it is highly dependent on the actions of Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, who, unfortunately, is not a strong leader. If the July talks in Cairo to set up a national unity government between Hamas and Fatah fail—as many such unity talks have failed in the past—and if Abbas comes to the belated realization that the United States won't simply "deliver" Israel, as Abbas may have naively thought after his visit to Washington in late May and the Obama speech in Cairo, then Abbas may agree to resume negotiations, building on the two-state solution which Obama pressured Netanyahu to accept. Given the fact that Palestinian elections, both for the Legislative Council and for the Palestinian Executive, are due in January 2010, Abbas may wish to demonstrate some progress in his talks with Netanyahu before the elections.

Netanyahu, for his part, has already made some gestures to Abbas by removing a number of roadblocks and check points on the West Bank to make travel in the region easier, and by agreeing to halt, on a trial basis, Israeli raids into a number of West Bank cities, thus enhancing both the role and the prestige of Palestinian police units. Whether Abbas will be willing to resume talks remains to be seen, and it may well be that Obama, who so far has primarily prodded the Israelis, may find it necessary to pressure Abbas into resuming peace talks.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)

## 3.7 July

### Israel should hand off Palestinians (2009-07-01 18:26)



[1] Israel America Academic Exchange (IAAE) is a new organization that sponsors educational missions to Israel for American scholars in the fields of political science, international relations, international law, international economic development, modern history, and Middle East studies. By special arrangement, [2]participants in the inaugural mission (June 22-29) have been invited to guest-post their impressions and assessments. Michael Barnett is Harold Stassen Professor of International Affairs in the Hubert Humphrey Institute of Public Policy at the University of Minnesota.

From [3]Michael Barnett



Prior to the trip, I was of the opinion (1) that it is increasingly unlikely that there will be a negotiated two-state solution, and (2) that in the remote chance that the parties do negotiate a settlement, it will lead not to peace but rather to a new phase of the conflict. I believed that the trends were moving in the wrong direction, but I hoped that the trip would alleviate my fears. Although we did not meet a representative sample of Palestinians or Israelis, I came away from my encounters more fearful and anxious than ever before.

The prospects for a negotiated solution appear dim, at best. I see little ground for optimism from the Israeli side. Although Israelis insist that they will always try to negotiate, even the most hopeful of them express little hope. The Israelis seem convinced that they have offered the Palestinians nearly everything they have demanded, but that the Palestinians still prefer to fight it out. Perhaps they do. (Or perhaps Israel has still not offered the best deal possible. In every negotiation, Israel has always claimed that it could do no more, yet it always had more to give: Israeli offers have inched closer to the Palestinian ideal point from Oslo to Camp David to Taba to the purported plan of then Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.) Israelis also seem convinced that these failed negotiations represented nothing short of a "test" of the Palestinians' sincerity regarding the possibility of a peaceful settlement. And Israel's unilateral withdrawals from Lebanon and Gaza have not brought peace, but rather allowed their enemies to get closer to Israel's population centers.

Moreover, and in contrast to my previous trips, I was struck by the near absence of any kind of Israeli sympathy for the Palestinians. Whereas a decade ago I heard Israelis speaking about the rights of Palestinians, the need for justice, and a genuine sympathy for their plight and suffering, this time any sort of compassion was overwhelmed by sheer frustration. Why should the Israelis continue to feel badly for the Palestinians when the Palestinians do not seem prepared to do anything to help themselves?

Because Israelis do not believe that a negotiated two-state solution is likely (though a majority continue to support the idea), they identified a mish-mash of "Plan Bs." In nearly all cases, though, these contingency plans appear to be a jumble of inconsistencies and logical contradictions: withdrawing alongside occupying, disengaging while engaging, believing that developing the Palestinian economy is the ticket to success despite evidence to the contrary, putting their faith in a wall when Gaza tells them that good fences don't do much good. The only thing that the Israelis seem to agree upon is that they would like to be rid of the Palestinians.

What about the Palestinians? The Palestinian representatives are certainly more polished than ever. But it was not clear what the Palestinians would accept (or, rather, what the Palestinian leadership would try to sell to their public) short of their maximum demands. I left convinced that while Israel may not have offered the Palestinians the best deal imaginable, the Palestinians might not accept even that. There are lots of explanations for why the Palestinians seem incapable of saying "yes, but," including principled beliefs, domestic politics, and a lack of Arab support. Perhaps the Palestinian "no" is overdetermined. However, I

was impressed by the Palestinian failure to imagine the conditions under which they might accept less than they demand.

Assuming that the Israelis and the Palestinians will not be able to negotiate a two-state solution, and assuming that, as one Israeli negotiator aptly said, the longer we negotiate the more "complex" the situation becomes, what should be done? Until this trip, I supported the idea of an imposed solution, putting a deal on the table (Taba-plus) and telling the parties that they will be rewarded if they accept it and punished if they do not. Some Israelis suggested that the leaders would never be able to reach an agreement on their own and that the Americans would have to apply considerable pressure on both parties. I agree that American pressure will be necessary, but I do not think that American pressure, no matter how intense, can move both parties to peace. Assuming that an imposed solution ever was a viable option, I am not sure it is anymore.

Instead, I think the Israelis should follow the British colonial strategy: withdraw and hand off the problem to the United Nations. The Israeli situation appears eerily like the one confronted by the British mandatory authorities after the Second World War. In 1947, following decades of trying and failing to find a compromise between Jews and Arabs, the British announced their imminent withdrawal and informed the UN that Palestine was now its problem. Israel might do the same. It could tell the UN that it will be "consolidating" its settlements and retreating behind the separation wall (declaring it an armistice line and not a legal border). The Israelis also could announce that they are prepared to internationalize Jerusalem once the security situation has stabilized. In short, rather than another unilateral withdrawal, the Israelis might consider working closely and coordinating with the UN.

At this point, it would be up to the UN Security Council to decide how it wanted to proceed. Ideally, the United States would lead the Security Council to authorize a Chapter VII operation, working closely with the Palestinian Authority (thus giving the moderates considerable legitimacy), replacing the Israeli forces as they withdrew from the territories, and deploying to Gaza if and when the situation became less violent. The international authority would have to be ready, willing, and able to use force if and when necessary, and it also should come bearing a significant aid package. This "strategy" has its various problems, but at least it gives the parties something to look forward to besides mutual suicide.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. <http://academicexchange.com/>
2. <http://academicexchange.com/participants.asp>
3. <http://www.hhh.umn.edu/people/mbarnett/>

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Efraim Inbar (2009-07-03 07:42:46)

Michael Barnett is right in [1]pointing out that the two-state paradigm cannot solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because the two sides cannot reach an acceptable compromise. Without saying so explicitly, he realizes that this paradigm lost its appeal in part because the Palestinians have not been capable state-builders. Probably, this is why he suggests that the UN become the de facto ruler of the areas now in the hands of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and under Israeli military control. This suggestion shows the great gulf between diagnosis and prognosis that even respected political scientists have problems bridging. The UN is a morally bankrupt institution with automatic majorities for the most ridiculous preferences of dictatorial Third World states. Moreover, for decades the UN has shown an entrenched anti-Israel bias, singling out Israel for every type of abuse. It was the UN that declared Zionism, the Jewish national movement, to be racist, and it is the UN that hosts anti-Semitic Durban-type conferences that annually adopt hundreds of anti-Israeli resolutions. Finally, the UN is hardly an effective organization that can issue credible security assurances. The UN peacekeeping record is very flawed. In the Arab-Israeli arena, the UN forces have played a particularly dysfunctional role. Will they fight Hamas? The recommendation to place the security of Israelis in the hands of the blue helmets vastly overestimates what the UN can do, and shows disregard for the welfare of Israelis who face Palestinian hatred and terrorism. Moreover, the belief that a UN trusteeship would bring law and



order, prosperity, and political stability to the Palestinians is divorced from Middle East realities. The Palestinians are beleaguered by problems similar to those that haunt other Arab societies, such as in Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen and Somalia. The UN is hardly the remedy for the emerging failed states in the Arab world. Neither UN administrators nor generous outside funding can save the Palestinians from their problems. This is probably the main reason for the Israeli desire to disengage from most of Judea and Samaria, but if the choice is between the status quo and a UN-controlled PA, a huge majority of the Israelis, including most of the Israeli Left, will prefer the uncertainties of the current predicament to the certainty of a deterioration in the security situation under a UN mantle. [2]Efraim Inbar is professor of political studies at Bar-Ilan University and director of the Begin-Sadat (BESA) Center for Strategic Studies.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/07/israel-should-hand-off-palestinians/>
2. [http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/efraim\\_inbar/](http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/efraim_inbar/)

Michael Barnett (2009-07-03 09:09:04)

Efraim Inbar's [1]comment nicely identifies the current dilemmas that Israel faces. It wants out but cannot get a deal to its liking from the Palestinians. It recognizes that the longer it stays, the more complex and volatile the situation becomes. It knows that every day it gets closer to the moment when the non-Jewish population is either a majority or close enough that it will ask for citizenship and thus end the idea of Israel as either a Jewish or a democratic state. So, what is the preference? Drift. Although Inbar prefers the "status quo," the problem with such terms is that they mask the very real changes that are taking place under the surface and the movement toward a very different future. The UN is no sure thing, but neither is it the complete mess Inbar suggests it is. The UN as a whole would not be involved. Instead, this would be run by the UN Security Council, which has responsibility for peace and security. And, there are now a multitude of different force arrangements, including UN deputizing of other military forces while providing civilian staff (because UN staff know a lot about transitions, a whole lot more than Americans). Would the transition be potentially violent, disruptive, and bloody? Any force would have to prepare for these possibilities. Would it be as bloody as the civil war we see between Hamas and Gaza or Israel's shelling of Gaza and other parts of the region? I honestly don't know. Instead of speaking as if we know categorically what the future will bring, and setting up one alternative to a doomsday scenario, we need to think in terms of probabilities and a range of possible outcomes. Does anyone really believe that the future is going to get better? [2]Michael Barnett is Harold Stassen Professor of International Affairs in the Hubert Humphrey Institute of Public Policy at the University of Minnesota.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/07/israel-should-hand-off-palestinians/comment-page-1/#comment-2441>
2. <http://www.hhh.umn.edu/people/mbarnett/>

Robert J. Lieber (2009-07-03 13:49:28)

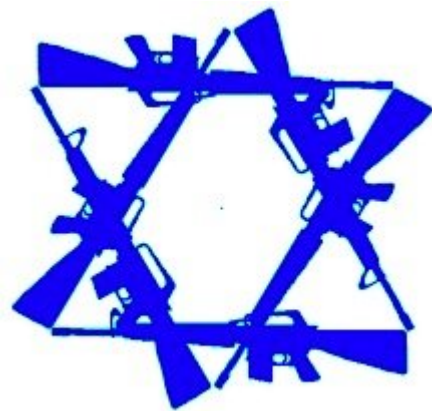
Michael Barnett rightly [1]observes the enormous obstacles to arriving at an Israeli-Palestinian peace, but the emphasis on the UN as arbiter and enforcer unfortunately reflects a weakness altogether too common in liberal internationalist and constructivist thinking. As Efraim Inbar has already [2]noted, this is done without reference to the grave weaknesses of the UN as an institution. This is not only a matter of systematic bias against Israel, but of the intrinsic weakness of the UN itself, its lack of authority, and its dangerous incapacity in regard to enforcement. These weaknesses are evident not just on the politically fraught Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but recently in the case of North Korea. The much-touted UNSC Resolution 1874 calls for member states to inspect North Korean ships thought to be carrying banned weapons exports, but with the almost surreal caveat that this action be "with the consent of the flag state"—i.e., North Korea itself. [3]Robert J. Lieber is professor of government and international affairs at Georgetown University.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/07/israel-should-hand-off-palestinians/>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/07/israel-should-hand-off-palestinians/comment-page-1/#comment-2441>
3. <http://explore.georgetown.edu/people/lieberr/?PageTemplateID=156>

**Has force worked for Israel? (2009-07-03 09:15)**

[1] Israel America Academic Exchange (IAAE) is a new organization that sponsors educational missions to Israel for American scholars in the fields of political science, international relations, international law, international economic development, modern history, and Middle East studies. By special arrangement, [2]participants in the inaugural mission (June 22-29) have been invited to guest-post their impressions and assessments. Bruce Jentleson is professor of public policy and political science at Duke University. He is also a member of MESH.

From [3]Bruce Jentleson



Central to our discussions was the debate over force and diplomacy as Israeli strategies, so I'll focus on that for this post.

Is it the case that the lessons of the last 10-15 years are that force has worked, both as compellence and deterrence, and diplomacy has not? This was the dominant argument we heard from Israeli speakers. While the speaker selection was short of representative, I know from other interactions and reading that this perspective has become more prevalent. It also is a view our American group debated among ourselves.

Four main parts to the argument:

1. The Gaza war was intended to impose substantial costs on Hamas and to deter further attacks on Israel. It achieved both; e.g., attacks from Gaza are down since the war.
2. The same regarding Hezbollah and the 2006 Lebanon war: Look at the northern front and how quiet Hezbollah has been, and how weakened the recent elections showed it to be in Lebanese politics.
3. Oslo didn't work; Camp David 2000 was another instance of the Palestinians never missing an opportunity to miss an opportunity; unilateral withdrawals, both Barak in Lebanon and Sharon in Gaza, gave land but didn't bring peace; plus the recent stories swirling about Olmert ostensibly offering even concessions on Jerusalem. Arafat was an essentialist; his successors may have more will but lack capacity; Hamas is ideological.
4. The status quo is not great for Israel, but it's tolerable. Risk aversion, both security and politics, says keep relying on military power. Be sufficiently willing to negotiate to check off that box for the United States and the international community but not much more. Don't antagonize the political coalition on which your power (read Netanyahu's) depends.

An alternative analysis:

- Gaza: The evidence is more mixed and uncertain than claimed. On the one hand we were told of how few rockets had been launched, on the other of how there'd been a recent uptick. At minimum, six months is hardly enough of an empirical base on which to attribute durable deterrence success. The criteria for durability is not some out-there notion of the long-term, but it also can't be so short term as to need to be "serviced" again with anything close to a comparable operation in the next year or two. Moreover, gains made need to be part of a net assessment that also takes into account costs incurred and gains made by the other side. One can see a strategic logic for Hamas by which the price it paid had value as (a) diversionary war, detracting attention from problems of its governance and re-igniting the enemy on which to increase its appeal (so lowering a negative source and increasing a positive one), and (b) playing into Israeli politics in ways that strengthen the Right, which in turn makes for strained relations w/the United States. The net assessment may still come out positive, but less dichotomously.
- 2006 Lebanon War: We do have three years of data, and it is a fact that the northern border has been quieter than in many years. That goes in the plus column, as does the demonstrated capacity to impose costs. But in the negative column: the Israeli military's failure to prevail in this nonconventional warfare as a deterrence-weakening message; the failure to bring captured soldiers home alive; the political disarray that helped doom the Olmert government; and the further loss of international legitimacy as an instrumental and not just normative matter. Moreover, the causal link to Hezbollah's June 2009 election performance is questionable. Hezbollah came out of the war strengthened. But it then overplayed its hand by unleashing its militias into Lebanese politics in 2007-08. Then as intervening variables in the run-up to the election, Saudi money for the coalition and, I'd at least postulate, the Obama effect made it more politically legitimate to at least not be anti-American.
- Lessons of Oslo, other diplomacy: George Kennan made the distinction between flaws of execution and flaws in the concept. The former means that the policy could have worked but was done poorly; the latter that it was inherently flawed. Oslo, et al., did have elements of the latter, but also plenty of the former, and on all sides (United States, Israel, Palestinians, others). It didn't work—but that doesn't mean it couldn't have worked. What would have happened if Rabin was not assassinated, given his domestic credibility and that he was having at least a degree of success in dealing with Arafat? And if the 1996 election, which Netanyahu won by less than 1 percent amidst the spoilers who got going on both sides, had come out differently? If the Clinton administration had been less accommodating and firmer against both sides playing both sides of the street? In the end, Arafat was the major problem, a Gromyko-like Mr. Nyet. He was never going to be a Mandela, but the essentialist analysis is too straight-line and dismissive of decision points and interactive dynamics along the way. As to Hamas, while it's shown plenty of essentialism, it's not clear that even this is fixed; see, e.g., the [4]analysis of Khaled Meshal's recent speech by Brig. Gen. (ret) Shlomo Brom.
- Deteriorating status quo: The domestic opportunity costs to Israel from the status quo were more graphic to me than ever before. See the economic analysis by Professor [5]Dan Ben-David, Tel Aviv University and head of the Taub Center for Social Policy Research. Walk around and see and feel the rising societal power of the ultra-Orthodox, abetted by continuation of the Palestinian conflict both directly through the political utility of the enemy and indirectly as a distraction from the nation focusing on the threats to its balance of secularism and Jewish identity.
- Shifting regional strategic dynamics? While much is too soon to tell, there are signs that the strategic dynamics in the region may be shifting. Anti-fundamentalism is pushing back on many fronts in the Arab and Muslim worlds. The U.S.-Syria relationship has some traction. Perhaps Iran will come out of the current crisis more flexible. The Saudis and Arab League may be ready to make their peace

initiative more than a piece of paper. Don't know for sure, but the alignment of forces may potentially be more favorable than in a long time.

- Palestinians as a credible peace partner and viable state: This may not be the world's hardest case for state-building, but it's up there. Among the many challenges their leadership faces is better synching their maximalist positions on terms of a peace and their more limited capacities as yet to function as a viable state. This is tricky politically as well as in substantive policy terms. It likely will require various roles for various third parties. Plenty of work to be done here: the PA-Hamas talks being run by Egypt, security forces, the economy, lawlessness, spoilers. Not to be underestimated.

I'm still not ready to bet the next mortgage payment (non-subprime) on peace and security in the Middle East. But nothing we saw or heard has been sufficient to counter the Churchillian sense of a peace process still being the worst strategy except for all the others.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. <http://academicexchange.com/>
2. <http://academicexchange.com/participants.asp>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bruce\\_jentleson/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bruce_jentleson/)
4. <http://www.inss.org.il/publications.php?cat=21&incat=&read=3065>
5. <http://tau.ac.il/~danib/>

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Michael Doran (2009-07-06 14:48:00)

After reading the compelling [1]post by Bruce Jentleson and [2]comment by Asher Susser, I couldn't resist the urge to make a few observations about what their discussion means, in my view, for Washington. There is no doubt that force and diplomacy both work, but they work best when they are tied together as part of an integrated strategy. Bruce, however, described an internal Israeli debate that sees force and diplomacy as wholly separate tracks. This kind of dichotomous thinking arises when the political debate becomes so detached from realities on the ground that it can no longer shape military strategy. There are domestic Israeli factors that give rise to this polarization. But it is also indicative of a deficient American diplomacy. It is the job of the United States to provide—to borrow a term from the peace-processing world—a "political horizon" that will shape effective strategies of our allies. If I interpret Asher correctly, he doubts whether a two-state solution is within our grasp in the near future. I don't want to put words in Asher's mouth, however, so let me take responsibility for the assertion myself: the impediments to a two-state solution are currently too great to assume that within the next four years we can achieve a lasting agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Consequently, we should be thinking in terms of shaping the conflict—diplomatically and militarily—rather than solving it. The goal of our diplomacy should be to create the conditions that will permit the next generation of leaders to conduct a meaningful process that might result in a signing ceremony on the White House lawn. Oslo and Camp David II illustrate the dangers of aiming too high too fast. Such efforts force the protagonists down roads that they are not capable of traversing. The cost of failure is incalculable. U.S. diplomatic strategy must, instead, be focused on the primary impediments to a two-state solution. These are currently five in number. Listed by order of severity they are: the regional influence of Iran (and its facilitators, Syria and Qatar); Hamas; Hezbollah; Fatah disarray; and the Israeli settlement movement. As the fate of the Israeli settlers in Gaza showed, the last obstacle is the easiest of the five to overcome. Unfortunately, Washington is currently fixated on the settlements, which, it has apparently convinced itself, will significantly help it address the other four. Surrogates of the Obama administration dismiss this criticism with an arsenal of familiar answers: the peace process will broker a Sunni-Israeli alliance against Iran; it will detach Damascus from Tehran; it will remove the pretext for Hezbollah's weapons; and it will strengthen Abbas against Hamas. In short, the peace process is one of our most effective strategic weapons for undermining our enemies. These sound plausible, but they are based on a solipsistic understanding of the Middle East. These arguments suffer equally from Eurocentrism and Jewcentricity. Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah are primarily concerned with the balance of power within their own societies. The Americans and the Israelis are not the most important actors on their stage. Changes in the balance of power with Israel do not have nearly as great an impact on that stage as advocates of the peace process claim. I can only reiterate what Asher wrote: "Many Westerners (and many Israelis) give themselves more credit than they deserve for the movements and machinations of

local politics.” Linkage does work, however, in the other direction. Victory of the reformists in Tehran would benefit the two-state solution greatly. Countering the Iranian regime and its malign influence, therefore, should be the target of our flagship diplomatic efforts. To return to the original debate, as outlined by Bruce: at least some of the Israelis who are saying “diplomacy doesn’t work” are expressing the view that “the international community’s agenda for Israel is out of touch with the real threats and processes on the ground.” The international community sees the storm clouds that Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah generate, and it responds by saying, “We need another Madrid conference.” The amount of bureaucratic man-hours that such a project will eat up, the high-level attention that it will absorb, the political capital that it will expend, the expectations that it will generate—all of these factors and more amount to a whopping opportunity cost. It is easy to ignore this cost when the alternative is depicted as “Peace Process vs. War.” The real alternative to the peace process, however, is not war but a different diplomatic process altogether. Bruce argued (without quoting Churchill) that it’s “better to jaw-jaw than to war-war.” He’s right, of course. But that begs the question: What are we jaw-jawing about? [3]*Michael Doran is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/07/has-force-worked-for-israel/>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/07/has-force-worked-for-israel/comment-page-1/#comment-2447>
3. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael-doran/>

Bruce Jentleson (2009-07-06 16:04:04)

I appreciate Asher Susser’s [1]response. Indeed his talk at the opening dinner of our trip was among the most insightful we heard. It was with his views in mind, as well as some others, that I posed the argument that force works and diplomacy doesn’t as “dominant” in the current Israeli strategic and political discourse, but not unitarily held. The points Asher makes in his post laying out an alternative view are helpful in this regard. My argument was not as portrayed—that force doesn’t work—rather that it has come to have more limited and conditioned utility than in the past. The prevalence of asymmetric warfare and the heavily political objectives for which force tends to be used (ultra-Clausewitzian, if you like) have been making for a greater gap between the possession of superior military capabilities and the capacity to achieve strategic objectives through the use of military power. Nor is this just for Israel: e.g., the contrast for the United States between the 1991 Persian Gulf war and the 2003 Iraq war; and Ethiopia’s failed 2006-08 military intervention in Somalia. Asher’s emphasis on how well force worked for Israel in its wars up to 1973 is more consistent with this point than challenging of it. Deterrence arguably has been more central to Israeli strategy than it has been for any other country at least since the end of the Cold War. To be sure, it continues to have value as a standing posture and for certain objectives. Yet amidst changes in the nature of threats, the greater relevance of asymmetric warfare, the varying bases for calculations of credibility by various audiences, and other factors, deterrence requisites are harder to meet. That’s where net assessments of cases like Lebanon 2006 and Gaza 2008-09 are crucial for policy implications going forward. The “real world” Asher refers to requires assessing both the scope and the limits of military power. It’s not force or diplomacy; both sides of that formulation are inadequate. It’s striking a balance that’s key. On that I think we agree. [2]*Bruce Jentleson is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/07/has-force-worked-for-israel/comment-page-1/#comment-2447>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bruce-jentleson/>

Asher Susser (2009-07-06 02:52:25)

I would like to present an Israeli position that does not quite tally with the Israeli argument [1]outlined in Bruce Jentleson’s post. Briefly, the Israeli argument presented by Bruce is that force has worked (see Gaza and Lebanon), while diplomacy has not (see Oslo), and that the status quo, while not perfect, is tolerable. My argument is that force indeed has worked, but the status quo is intolerable for Israel. Israel must use force not to prolong the status quo but to create the essential preconditions to undo the status quo and bring the occupation to an end. Time is not on Israel’s side either in terms of demographic trends in the occupied territories (not so in Israel proper) or in terms of Israel’s international legitimacy, which is being seriously undermined by the continued occupation. The Zionist enterprise from the very outset sought: a) to build the state of the Jewish people; and b) to have that state become a legitimate member of the family of nations. If Israel allows the status quo to continue indefinitely, it might end up forfeiting both of these historical objectives. Israel must withdraw from the occupied territories through an agreement with the Palestinians, and possibly even without one if that can be achieved through a more coordinated form of unilateralism than the last effort in Gaza. But no agreement with the Palestinians, nor any form of stability in the wake of a unilateral act of sorts, will hold unless Israel can create an effective deterrence. Indeed, deterrence is the only alternative to occupation. The fact that it may have to be “maintained” or “serviced” every now and then does not make deterrence and compellence any less of an effective means of stabilizing Israel’s borders. Frequently scholars

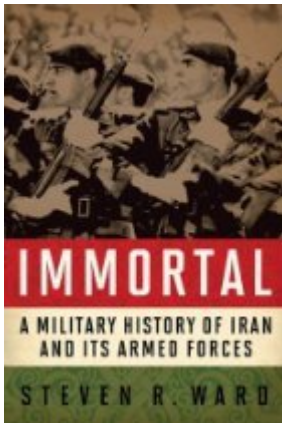
and pundits alike argue that force does not work. Unfortunately, in the real world it does. The great menaces of the 20th century would never have been banished from the stage had it not been for the enormous use of force against them. If we look through Israel's history from 1948, through the border wars of the 1950s, culminating in the Suez war, then 1967 and 1973 and the war in Lebanon in 1982 (which, in the end, brought Arafat on his knees to Oslo), one discerns two distinct lessons. Generally, force has worked for Israel and brought the Arabs slowly but surely to come to terms with Israel. But Israel generally has not and should not rely *solely* on force. Israel's power is not a club with which to bludgeon the Arabs into submission. Using it in that way would be immoral, foolhardy and unworkable. Israel's power is an instrument to ensure a form of lasting peaceful co-existence with its neighbors, based on historical compromise (Egypt and Jordan are good examples). Indeed, the justice of the Zionist cause in the eyes of its founding fathers, most Israelis, and the international community rests on Israel's acceptance of compromise with the Palestinians too—that is, partition or, as it is phrased today, "two states for two peoples." As for the specific cases of Lebanon and Gaza, I disagree with Bruce's analysis of both. In Gaza, it is difficult to gauge how long the present lull may last. But I have no doubt that it was induced by the operation in Gaza. Hamas is a political organization of rational operators and not just terrorists. They need the support of the people of Gaza, who have had enough of war for the meantime. If there are some signs of Khalid Mash'al being somewhat less essentialist, I would argue that they stem from the war in Gaza too. The war shocked Hamas. They expected nothing even remotely similar, not in terms of the technology, the force employed or the boots on the ground. And I see no evidence to support the ascription to Hamas of some sophisticated use of the war to maneuver Israel to the right. The war was not their choice, nor their plan. At the time, they claimed Ehud Barak was playing domestic Israeli politics to save himself—i.e., they thought the war was serving Labor, not the Right. In short, the strained relations between Israel and the United States have little or nothing to do with Hamas, but rather reflect differences between Obama and Netanyahu. In Lebanon, the deterrent effect of the 2006 war, as Bruce agrees, is more obvious. But he then goes on to mention in the "negative column" Israel's military failures in the war as a deterrence-weakening message. In fact, three years after the war, deterrence seems to be working and the failures seem far less serious than portrayed at the time, primarily by a rather hysterical and sensationalist Israeli media, both print and electronic, that served Hezbollah a public relations victory on a silver platter. (This is not 20/20 hindsight; I wrote so in an [2]article at the time.) The damage inflicted on Hezbollah and its infrastructure in South Beirut and South Lebanon still weighs heavily on the organization and severely limits its freedom of action not only vis-à-vis other Lebanese communities hostile to Hezbollah, but amongst the Shiites in the south too. True, Hezbollah has more and better rockets now than before the war. In that respect, they are more powerful than they were in 2006. But deterrence is not about preventing rearmament. It is about preventing the *use* of the new materiel. Preventing the rearmament was UNIFIL's job (together with the government of Lebanon) as outlined in UNSC resolution 1701. That was never implemented, and no one in Israel ever believed it would be. But that elemental flaw in 1701 only serves to reinforce the Israeli reliance on its own power, deterrence and compellence, rather than on the UN or other international forces. As for the elections in Lebanon, Hezbollah's poorer-than-expected showing had precious little to do with the war in 2006 or Vice President Joe Biden's visit. The elections in Lebanon had more to do with the confessional politics and long-term demographic shifts in Lebanon than with the war of three years ago, the recent visit by Biden, or any "Obama effect." Many Westerners (and many Israelis) give themselves more credit than they deserve for the movements and machinations of local politics in the Middle East. In Middle Eastern politics, primary credit should be given to the locals in the crafting of their own political fortunes. [3]Asher Susser is director of external affairs and senior research fellow at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/07/has-force-worked-for-israel/>
2. <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1157913624183&pagename=JPost/JPArticle/ShowFull>
3. <http://www.dayan.org/research.htm#ASHER>

### 'Immortal: A Military History of Iran and Its Armed Forces' (2009-07-07 04:50)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Steven R. Ward is a senior CIA intelligence analyst who specializes in Iran and the Middle East. He is also a graduate of West Point and a retired U.S. Army Reserve lieutenant colonel. His new book is *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and Its Armed Forces*.

From Steven R. Ward



[1] *Immortal* grew out of my nearly quarter-century of covering Middle East military issues as a CIA intelligence analyst. I had looked for years without success for a book covering the broad sweep of Iran's military history, and had occasionally thought that perhaps I should try to fill that gap. There were three factors, however, that pushed me from thinking about writing to actually doing it: ongoing U.S.-Iran tensions, my experiences with the Afghan and Iraq wars, and the utility of having such a history available for analysts joining the intelligence community since September 2001.

When I started working on *Immortal* in late 2005, the potential for hostilities between the United States and Iran was a concern for Washington because of Iran's role in post-Saddam Iraq and its provision of weapons and training to armed groups opposing Coalition forces there and in Afghanistan. Given Iran's history of supporting provocative lethal activities against U.S. interests I was concerned that, totally distinct from the U.S. policy debate, the Islamic Republic was capable of triggering a conflict.

Admittedly, the improved situation in Iraq lowered tension as I moved my manuscript into the publication process in late 2007 and early 2008. More recently, President Obama's offer of an open hand to Tehran may have further decreased the likelihood of hostilities. I still think, however, that Iran remains a potential military opponent for the United States as it seeks to elevate its influence and change the regional status quo at America's expense. Should events take us back toward more hostile relations, *Immortal* can help show how Iran has been shaped by its history and, in turn, improve our understanding of Tehran's security outlook and strategies. And, not to be too negative, I think that knowing Iran's military history, which covers a lot of the grievances the Iranian regime has asked the U.S. government to address, can be useful in any efforts to improve relations between our countries.

Back-to-back assignments working on the intelligence side of Operation Enduring Freedom against the Taliban and Operation Iraqi Freedom against Saddam Hussein were the events that made me think seriously about writing *Immortal* in preparation for potential military encounters with Iran. In both cases, as intelligence community analysts were shifted from their primary country accounts to support these U.S. military operations, I saw the great need others had for help in understanding Afghanistan and Iraq and in putting current events into their larger historical context. Analysts with more time on these accounts, I noted, were able to do some of the best work because they were familiar, not only with the Soviet experience in Afghanistan or the Iran-Iraq war, but with the role of Afghanistan's ethnic and tribal traditions in combating the British in the 19th century or with the British occupation of Iraq in the 1920s. So, it was not much of a leap to decide that a book on Iran's military history would be very useful to have on hand in the event of a conflict.

The traumatic events of the terrorist attacks of September 11, and the emotions that surrounded the run up to the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, also reminded me that a stronger grasp of the history shaping these

foreign cultures was one of the best protections against analysis distorted by our own heightened nationalism and ethnocentric views. I wrote *Immortal*, in part, in the hope that a better understanding of Iran's history would prevent preconceptions, misconceptions, and ethnocentric bias from clouding our view of Iran's true capabilities and likely intentions. As an intelligence analyst, I was aware that, at least since the days of Sherman Kent and start of the U.S. intelligence community, one of the primary objectives of strategic intelligence has been an empathetic understanding of foreign countries. My history aims to contribute to such an empathetic understanding of Iran, helping us to avoid problems (as discussed in Kenneth Booth's *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*) that deprive an adversary of intentions other than hostility, but also deprive our policy of constructive possibilities on which to build a more stable relationship.

Finally, I am a strong believer that history matters, and this is something I wanted to share with the new analysts joining the intelligence community to work on Iran and other critical national security issues. As historians and strategists have noted over the years, our experience with the past provides the only real empirical data we have about how people conduct war and behave in crisis. New analysts and others dealing with Iran also can benefit from *Immortal's* presentation of the role of Iran's military history and ethnic, tribal, and religious heritages in shaping contemporary issues such as civil-military relations, military professionalism, and innovation. Its military history also helps distinguish Iran's war-fighting style from that of neighboring Arab militaries, and can add nuance to analysis of regional power balances.

Knowing Iran's history, of course, does not provide easy answers for such a complex country. But my fondest hope is that *Immortal* will help intelligence analysts, military personnel, policymakers, and other interested Americans isolate the important questions about Iran that affect peace and stability in the region.

[2]Order from Publisher | [3]Amazon | [4]Excerpt

All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official positions or views of the CIA or any other U.S. Government agency. Nothing in the contents should be construed as asserting or implying U.S. Government authentication of information or Agency endorsement of the author's views. This material has been reviewed by the CIA to prevent the disclosure of classified information.

1. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51II0LtIsPL.jpg>
2. <http://www.press.georgetown.edu/detail.html?id=9781589012585>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1589012585>
4. [http://press.georgetown.edu/pdfs/9781589012585\\_Intro.pdf](http://press.georgetown.edu/pdfs/9781589012585_Intro.pdf)

## Obama in Russia: meager on Mideast (2009-07-09 06:57)

From [1]Robert O. Freedman



On the two major Middle East issues that divide Russia and the



United States and that could have been talked about at the U.S.-Russian summit—Moscow’s legitimization of Hamas by regularly inviting its delegations to Moscow, and Russia’s protection of Iran from serious UN Security Council sanctions—not much appears to have been accomplished. I have seen no references to Hamas, and as far as Iran is concerned, all that Obama was willing to [2]say publicly was the following:

Ultimately, you know, we’re going to have to see whether a country like Russia, for example, is willing to work with us to apply pressure on Iran. That’s not something we’re going to know the results of, probably for several more months, as we do the basic diplomatic work of putting this coalition together.

A Russian source, Yury Ushakov, an aide to Putin, [3]told Interfax: “Obama said emphatically that Russia and the United States could cooperate more intensively on Iran, that Russia’s role is extremely important there, and that America is interested in stronger cooperation.”

What Ushakov’s comment may imply is that if Obama were to give Moscow a freer hand in Georgia and Ukraine, Russia might be more willing to be more cooperative on Iran. I doubt Obama is willing to make that bargain.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)
2. <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/story?id=8021156&page=1>
3. <http://www.interfax.com/3/504269/news.aspx>

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## Russia in Mideast: more of same (2009-07-10 07:18)

From [1]Mark N. Katz



At the recent Moscow summit, the U.S. and Russian governments made progress on strategic arms control and on Afghanistan. Instead of heralding broader Russian-American cooperation, however, the results of the Moscow summit—and subsequent G-8 summit in Italy—suggest that

Russian-American cooperation is likely to remain limited, especially regarding the Middle East.

Presidents Obama and Medvedev reportedly discussed Iran at length, but no agreement on how the United States and Russia would work together in preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons was announced. The G-8 summit leaders (which include the president of Russia) have given Iran until September to make progress on the nuclear issue, but this call is largely symbolic. Unlike the UN Security Council, the G-8 has no authority to impose sanctions on Iran. The New York Times reported on July 9 that Russian officials are already boasting that they watered down the G-8 statement.

As I have argued before, what the Kremlin really fears is the prospect of an Iranian-American rapprochement since this would result at minimum in Tehran being even less dependent on and cooperative with Moscow than it is now. Improved Iranian-American relations could also lead to America helping Iran displace Russia as a gas supplier to Europe and as a transit route for Caspian Basin oil and gas.

The Obama administration's efforts to improve relations with Iran, then, was something Moscow feared, not welcomed. For the Kremlin, the Iranian hardliners' crackdown on the extraordinary protest against the regime's declaring Ahmadinejad the winner of the recent presidential elections there has been a godsend, since it has resulted in the pause (if not the stop) button being pressed on the Iranian-American rapprochement process. Unlike the United States, which has criticized (admittedly sparingly) Iranian government behavior, Russia has enthusiastically recognized Iran's officially announced election results. In short, the Iranian hardliners' mistaken belief that the United States is somehow behind their opponents is simply too good an opportunity for Moscow not to take advantage of.

The Moscow summit did not result in any meaningful Russian-American cooperation on the Arab-Israeli issue either. While the Kremlin will undoubtedly continue to call for a "comprehensive" solution (as well as meetings to take place in Moscow—as if that location would improve chances for a settlement), it is neither willing nor able to broker one. As with the diplomacy over the North Korean nuclear issue, Moscow seems more interested in being seen to be involved in the Arab-Israeli peace process than in actually contributing to it. Instead, Russia appears likely to continue its efforts to have good relations and balance its ties among Israel, Syria, Fatah, and Hamas. And it will probably succeed because, as Moscow well knows, while each party disapproves of Moscow's ties to its opponents, each would prefer to have some support from Moscow rather than none.

Yet while America and Russia may not have made progress on Iran or the Arab-Israeli conflict at either the Moscow or G-8 summits, some might hope that the progress they made on strategic arms and Afghanistan could lead to cooperation in these other areas. This, however, seems doubtful, not only because Moscow and Washington simply have different interests regarding Iran and the Arab-Israeli conflict, but also because there was less cooperation than was announced on the Russian side regarding Afghanistan and strategic arms control.

The Russian decision to allow the United States to transport military equipment through Russian airspace to Afghanistan reflects a calculation that if things go badly for the U.S. military effort in that country, Russian security interests are going to suffer. Objectively (as Russians were fond of saying during the Communist era), the American military presence in Afghanistan serves to protect Russia and its Central Asian allies from the Taliban. Facilitating the transport of American military equipment to Afghanistan, far from representing a concession to the United States, is very much in Russia's own interests. Similarly, for the United States and Russia to agree on reducing their strategic nuclear arsenals at a time when it has become far more difficult for Russia to keep up with the United States in weapons technology seems far more beneficial to Russian interests than American ones.

If they herald anything, then, the Moscow and G-8 summits do not presage improved prospects for Russian-American cooperation in the Middle East, but for a continuation of the pattern of Russia cooperating with the United States when this serves Moscow's interests and not doing so when it doesn't. And, as before, Moscow is more likely to see not cooperating with the United States in the Middle East as being in its interest more often than cooperating with it. Nor would it be reasonable to expect otherwise.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_n\\_katz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_n_katz/)

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Michael Reynolds (2009-07-13 08:08:17)

Mark Katz is, I think, essentially right in [1]his assessment that Obama's trip to Moscow has not and will not yield any substantial beneficial changes to U.S. policy in the Mideast. As numerous observers have noted, President Obama failed to generate in Russia the sort of awe and excitement that he has in America and much of the world at large. One reason for this anomaly is that Russians maintain no illusion that the problems in Russian-American relations began and ended with the presidency of George W. Bush. To the contrary, Russian attitudes, popular as well as elite, toward America underwent a profound shift during the presidency of Bill Clinton. At the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, much of the Russian public exuberantly admired Americans and America. By the end of the decade, however, that admiration had morphed into distate and resentment. One indication of the change in attitudes came in the realm of vocabulary. Instead of using the standard *amerikantsy* to refer to Americans, by 2000 Russian youth increasingly were preferring two slang terms, the slightly disparaging *amerikosy* and the openly contemptuous *pindosy*. (It was Russian peacekeeping troops in the Balkans who allegedly repackaged *pindosy*, formerly an archaic word for Greeks and other travelers from the south, as a denigrative synonym for Americans.) *Amerika*, a word that for a moment had conjured images of a prosperous land of polite people, freedom, and boundless opportunity (i.e. the mirror image of the economically and ideologically bankrupt Soviet Union), became *Pindostan*, the country of the doltish and rather pathetic *pindosy*. To be sure, popular Russian images and expectations of America at the beginning of the 1990s were irrationally inflated and unsustainable. Disillusionment was bound to set in as Russians came to the realization that crawling out from under the rubble of Communism would be a long process, and that if they were to achieve a prosperous and orderly society they would have to do the work themselves. The Clinton administration's policies in the Balkans, and especially the undeclared war it fought with Serbia over the fate of Kosovo, angered Russians in all sectors of society. But it was hardly the only source of friction. Other issues such as NATO expansion, missile defense, energy pipelines, and, not least, America's high profile involvement in the redistribution of wealth and property under Yeltsin's "shock therapy" economic policies all served to antagonize Russians, who concluded that Washington was determined to exploit their country's weakness to the hilt. The simultaneously self-congratulatory and hectoring tone of the Clinton administration did not help. It is worth remembering that in 2000, Condoleezza Rice felt compelled to emphasize that the incoming Bush administration would, unlike its predecessor, conduct a foreign policy grounded in humility. Despite Rice's promise and Bush's later famous claim to have peered into Putin's soul and found it good, Russian-American relations remained strained for the next eight years. Toward the end of the Bush years, Russia's reluctance to cooperate in pressuring Iran to cease its nuclear program became a greater source of discontent on the American side. But as Mark points out, Russia has few incentives to back the United States against Iran. To the contrary, Moscow senses that today the United States is overextended and more exposed vis-à-vis Russia than it has been in a long time. The global economic downturn, of course, has revealed the fragility of Russia's own economy. But whereas just a year ago some American policymakers were still championing the idea of bringing Georgia into NATO—an act that would have put NATO right on the border of Chechnya—Russia went to war with Georgia and demonstrated that it could thrash an effusively pro-American ally with few consequences. Among those gleefully looking on was Tehran. The Obama administration—not unlike the Bush administration eight years ago—hopes for better relations with Russia. As Obama's Moscow trip revealed, however, the president's charisma will not suffice to make that possible. To the contrary, the return of many former Clinton administration officials to power under Obama reminds Russians of their experience in the 1990s. When prior to the Moscow summit Obama gibed that Putin was standing with one foot in the past and one in the present, the Russian prime minister retorted, "We don't know how to stand *vraskoriachku*." To "stand *vraskoriachku*" here means to adopt a sexually submissive position. As Putin himself acknowledged, his choice of phrase was a less than cultured one. But it does express pithily the attitude of many Russians. Back in March, Hillary Clinton's State Department had attempted to signal Obama's wish to start anew by presenting her Russian counterpart with an office toy, a mock big red button marked "Reset." Alas, not only did the State Department write the word "reset" in the wrong alphabet—in itself an embarrassing display of cultural

solipsism—but it also botched the translation. Whereas the correct translation of "reset" is *perezagruzka*, the Clinton team rendered it as *peregruzka*, a wholly different word meaning "overload." One could hardly imagine a more apt illustration of self-satisfied yet incompetent *pindosy* in action. A number of structural factors prevent America and Russia from being easy allies, but they need not condemn the two states to chronic stalemated animosity. Overcoming those structural impediments calls for skillful diplomacy. Effective American diplomacy requires talent, of course, but it must first start with a clear and definite, even ruthless, prioritization of goals and objectives, with the least important sacrificed for the more important. This is particularly true today when U.S. foreign policy has comparatively fewer resources to face multiple challenges that overlap regions. Washington for years has been attempting to obtain cooperation from Russia against Iran while simultaneously pressing Russian on a raft of other issues, despite the fact that Russian interests on Iran do not easily align with American desires. It is no mystery that this approach has consistently failed to elicit the cooperation it seeks. In Moscow, Obama attempted to substitute his charm for a substantively reworked agenda. For the reasons noted above, that charm counts for little in Russia, and the results of Obama's trip were predictably modest. It showed that gimmicks and glamor are thin bases on which to build a new foreign policy. The fact is, resetting American foreign policy requires a certain concrete boldness that Obama, for all his rhetoric of change, has been loathe to display in either domestic or foreign policy. [2]Michael Reynolds is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/07/russia-in-mideast-more-of-same/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_reynolds/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_reynolds/)

### Uzi Arad and the unthinkable (2009-07-13 19:07)

From [1]Alan Dowty



In some respects, Ari Shavit's widely-noted [2]interview of Israel's national security adviser, Uzi Arad, contained no great surprises. Arad's insistence on "deep" acceptance of Israel (not just de facto acknowledgement of Israel's existence) by Palestinians; leaving the door open, just by a crack, to a Palestinian state, while dismissing the possibility of any Palestinian leader rising to the occasion; closing the door entirely to a peace treaty with Syria by insisting that Israel remain on the Golan; the preference for the Road Map rather than disengagement and Annapolis—all of this has been in Prime Minister Netanyahu's hymnal since he took office, and it is clear who is composing the libretto.

Two elements are more striking. First, Arad's proposal of eventual Israeli membership in NATO adds an oddly chimerical note to what could otherwise be described as an essay in cold-blooded and cynical realism. Arad doubts that the Palestinians will get their act together, or that the international community will act effectively on the Iranian nuclear issue, or that Arabs will ever "internalize" their acceptance of Israel. And he may be right on all counts; pessimists are often mistaken for prophets because they get it right all too often. But to imagine that risk-averse European states, which can barely be persuaded to allow their troops in Afghanistan to go near danger, will commit to meaningful defense of Israel—even in the context of a peace settlement—is fantasy.

The second note of importance is the continued building of infrastructure to prepare the ground for action to prevent Iranian acquisition of the bomb. Arad does not believe that the non-military options will work, and that a maritime blockade might escalate in any event. At the same time, he defines preventing an Iranian bomb as an existential imperative: we cannot live with a nuclear Iran because a nuclear Middle East would not be the same as the Cold War nuclear stalemate. A nuclear Middle East would become a

multi-nuclear Middle East, with all that entails.

There is an ironic contradiction here. Arad puts great weight on preventing nuclearization of the region, but at the same time declares himself an acolyte of the late Herman Kahn, the nuclear strategist who rejected the idea of mutual deterrence and insisted on "thinking about the unthinkable," that is, the actual waging of war with nuclear weapons. Arad even mentions that he once wrote a paper on possible limited nuclear war in Central Europe. If it is so critical to prevent Iran emerging as the first declared nuclear-weapons state in the region, then why is Kahn, of all people, put forward as an icon for the new era?

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)
2. <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1099064.html>

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Max Singer (2009-07-14 17:22:11)

As some one who worked closely with Herman Kahn for a number of years, I would like to clarify an ambiguity in Alan Dowty's [1]characterization of Kahn's views. Dowty says that Kahn "rejected the idea of mutual deterrence and insisted on 'thinking about the unthinkable,' that is, the actual waging of war with nuclear weapons." If this is understood to mean that Kahn thought that the idea of the United States starting a nuclear war was a serious option, or something he would advise, it is a misunderstanding of Kahn's views. He thought very well about the unthinkable, and understood very well the inevitable uncertainty of such thinking. He would never have had enough certainty about his calculations to recommend starting a nuclear war. Dowty's description of Kahn's position on nuclear deterrence is only partly correct. First, Kahn regarded deterrence as an unreliable but probably necessary way to protect ourselves. Second, Kahn thought that one could not understand an enemy's deterrence calculation without considering what might happen if he actually started such a war, because that is what he might think about were he in a desperate situation. Third, Kahn thought that it would be better if nuclear war could be avoided without the United States having to face the possibility of being hit by many hundreds of large nuclear weapons. "War fighting" was something you had to think about in order to avoid vulnerabilities that might tempt an enemy in a crisis; and because an enemy might start a war; and because a war might be started by accident. It was not something you thought about because the United States would ever want to initiate a nuclear war. [2]Max Singer was a founder with Herman Kahn of Hudson Institute in 1961 and its president until 1973.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/07/uzi-arad-and-the-unthinkable/>
2. [http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff\\_bio&eid=singmax](http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff_bio&eid=singmax)

### Isolate Iran's regime (2009-07-15 10:15)

From [1]Raymond Tanter



President Obama continues to seek direct talks with Tehran in face of its suppression of Iranian oppositionists. But now is not the time to engage Tehran, given its

violent suppression of the Iranian people and the American troop pullback from Iraqi cities.

If President Obama extends a warm hand toward the clerical-military rulers of Tehran after they assassinated protesting Iranians like Neda, he is likely to wind up with warm blood on his hands. Business as usual is unseemly in the face of cold-blooded murder. And if the President reaches out to Iran while he draws down from Iraq, he is apt to encourage Iranian proxies to step up their attacks against withdrawing American forces and an Iraq weakened by the U.S. drawdown.

Here are the foundations of an alternative approach:

**Lead Europe.** On July 1, the EU floated the idea of recalling its ambassadors from Tehran, which elicited a strong response from Iran. Tehran's chief of staff of the armed forces said that the EU had "totally lost the competence and qualifications needed for holding any kind of talks with Iran." Having just returned to Washington from trips to Paris, Brussels, and Madrid, I heard scores of European parliamentarians, national legislators, and Iranian dissidents clamor for strong American leadership to isolate the Iranian regime and pressure Europe to use its economic clout as leverage against Tehran.

Iran's rulers seriously fear isolation, particularly from Europe, on whose trade the Iranian economy depends. The EU as a group represent Iran's largest trade partner, receiving one-third of Iran's exports, mostly in the form of energy products, to the tune of €11.3 billion in 2008. The value of EU exports to Iran was even larger: €14.1 billion.

Just as the EU suspended negotiation of a Trade and Cooperation Agreement with Iran in August 2005, when Iran resumed enriching uranium, Europe is now primed to curtail its trade with Iran. Now is the time to lead Europe in isolating the Iranian regime, instead of standing on the sidelines while the European Union ponders.

**Engage the opposition.** With the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps now pulling the strings for Supreme Leader Khamenei, any negotiation with the West only buys time to expand Iran's stock of low-enriched uranium and expands the number of centrifuges at the Natanz enrichment facility. If the United States has any hope of actually halting that enrichment, Washington must take the lead in isolating Iran and engaging the regime's opposition.

**Leadership** means speaking out on behalf of those Iranians protesting in the streets of Iran's major cities, as well as reaching out a hand to Iran's main opposition groups, including the "disloyal" Iranian opposition. Though much is made of "moderates" like Khatami and Mousavi, they are a "loyal" opposition, which accepts the legitimacy of the Islamic Republic's system of governance in which clerics rule by divine right: Velayat-e Faqih.

Iran's "disloyal" opposition proposes a democratic and secular state, in which responsibility for governing is taken out of the hands of unelected Ayatollahs in favor of democratically elected leaders. Such oppositionists include the Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MEK) and the parliament in exile of which the MEK is a part, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI). Based in Iraq and in Paris with extensive support networks in Iran, Tehran considers them serious threats to its survival.

**Protect Iraq.** As suppression of street politics in Iran dominated the news cycle, Iraq dropped below the radar screen of news. However, Iraqi developments have an impact on U.S. diplomatic leverage over Tehran. It was appropriate to withdraw from Iraq cities on June 30, because of the commitment the United States made in its Status of Forces Agreement with Iraq, but such troop drawdown is being portrayed as a retreat by Iran's proxies in Iraq.

Muqtada al Sadr, the fiery Shiite militia leader, compares the American withdrawal to the revolt against British occupation forces in 1920. Iran is also likely to view the diminished U.S. role in Iraq as an opportunity to fill the vacuum with Iranian proxies armed with improvised explosive devices manufactured in Tehran. Iranian President Ahmadinejad stated as early as 2007, "Soon, we will see a huge power vacuum in the region. Of course, we are prepared to fill the gap."

Having interviewed tens of Iraqi Sunni and Shiite politicians during a research trip to the area, I [2]determined that a precipitous American withdrawal would provide the Iranian regime an incentive to pour additional arms to its proxies like the Muqtada al Sadr. Because of the possibility of Iran misperceiving the United States as weak in Iraq, it is even more important for the Obama administration to replace its "wait and see" Iran policy with concrete actions to isolate Tehran and engage its opposition.

A policy package. Engaging the Iranian regime was never likely to be successful, and was as much about appearing to have made a good faith effort at diplomacy to keep the anti-Iran coalition together rather than a genuine plan for halting uranium enrichment. In the past, Tehran has used negotiations as a ploy to buy time and as a mechanism for inducing concessions from the West without reciprocating. But since the events following the June 12 election, the regime is even less likely to be responsive to engagement because it needs to take a hard line against the West for domestic political purposes.

Building on the foundations described above, the Obama administration should undertake these specific measures:

- Induce the EU to impose crippling economic sanctions on the Iranian regime, such as restrictions on export of gasoline products to Iran because of its strong dependence on foreign sources; intensify sanctions on banks in Dubai and elsewhere in the Gulf that cooperate with Tehran to circumvent UN and Treasury restrictions on Iranian banks.
- Urge European allies to withdraw their envoys from Tehran; during the mid-1990s, a temporary withdrawal of some 12 European Union ambassadors succeeded in dissuading Tehran from continuing its assassination of Iranian dissidents in Europe.
- Engage Iranian dissidents by removal of their main groups from the U.S Foreign Terrorist Organizations list—the Mujahedeen-e Khalq and the National Council of Resistance of Iran—following the lead of the European Union, which delisted the MEK and never designated the NCRI.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_tanter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_tanter/)

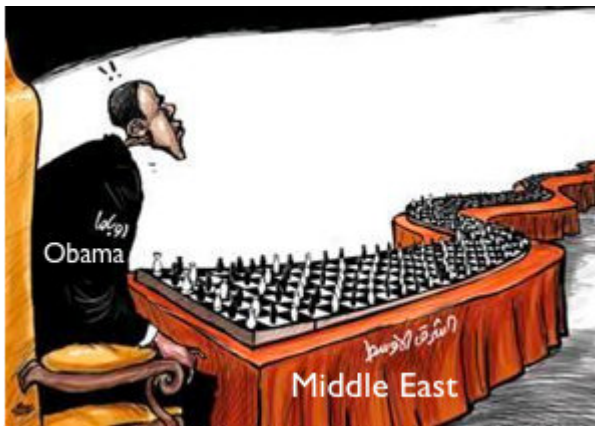
2. <file:///blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/a-responsible-troop-drawdown-in-iraq/%E2%80%9C>

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## Obama's opening gambit (2009-07-16 17:23)

From [1]Michael Doran





Amjad Rasmi, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, January 25, 2009

American presidents have been trying to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict since the days of Truman. Sooner or later, every one of them has learned a harsh lesson about the limits of American influence. There is no reason to believe that President Obama's experience will be any different. In fact, his opening gambit in Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking suggests that his own lesson may already be upon him.

In his Cairo speech, the President said that "the situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable," and he called for a halt to Israeli settlements, which he deemed illegitimate. His advisers have repeatedly explained that this policy includes an end to so-called "natural growth," meaning construction and population expansion within the boundaries of existing settlements. Obama's ban on natural growth nullified an understanding that President Bush had reached with then Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. The Israelis agreed not to appropriate any new Palestinian territory; in return, the Bush administration gave the nod to natural growth within existing settlement blocs.

Out of a mix of motives, Obama reversed this policy. On a personal level, he finds settlements morally offensive. He likely considers them to be a long-term, demographic impediment to a two-state solution. Their continuous growth underscores the impotence of Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, sapping him of legitimacy, and validating the hard-line arguments of Hamas. Previous presidents and secretaries of state have held similar views, but they expressed their concerns in a less dramatic manner. Obama chose to take an early, categorical, and public stance in order to launch a shot across the bow of Binyamin Netanyahu. In the 1990s, Netanyahu's recalcitrance had been a thorn in the side of the Clinton administration. The former Clintonites advising Obama no doubt relished the idea of immediately knocking Netanyahu back on his heels so as to begin negotiations from a position of strength.

In addition, Obama also sought to make an impression on the Arab world. Taking an unyielding, principled stand would, he reasoned, restore the credibility of the United States. According to mainstream Democratic analysis, George W. Bush had abandoned the role of "honest broker" in the conflict. Moving too close to Israel, he lost the trust of the Arabs. Armed with copious polling data, Obama's advisers argued that the Palestinian issue was the sine qua non for redressing the balance. Strike a powerful note on the settlement issue, they told the President, and the Arabs will gravitate toward you in response.

Neither the Israelis nor the Arabs, however, have reacted according to this script. Netanyahu fought back with unexpected subtlety. When he visited Washington in mid-May, the White House greeted him with a remarkable display of influence on Capitol Hill. It lined up key supporters of Israel to deliver a consistent and stern warning to the new prime minister: "Do you really want to fight over settlements with one of the most popular American presidents in living memory?" Netanyahu was certainly shaken by this power play, but hardly coerced. In a step that the White House did not foresee, he quickly ran to capture the moral high ground in Israeli politics.



Shortly after Obama's address from Cairo, Netanyahu delivered a speech of his own. In it, he tacked to the political center, presenting himself to the Israeli public as the representative of a mainstream consensus on national security. Approximately two-thirds of all Israelis support the position that their prime minister staked out. On the specific issue of settlements, Netanyahu reaffirmed the basic lines of the Bush-Sharon agreement: natural growth, yes; settlement expansion, no. "We have no intention to build new settlements or set aside land for new settlements," he said. "But there is a need to have people live normal lives and let mothers and fathers raise their children like everyone in the world." The warm reaction to the speech in Israel gave Netanyahu renewed political capital. He now turned to his critics in Washington with a warning of his own: "Do you really want to fight with three quarters of the Israeli public over the building of kindergartens?"

Obama is now on the horns of a dilemma. If he backs down on natural growth, he lays himself open to Arab claims that he is a hypocrite. On the other hand, if he sticks to his guns, he will become Israel's senior city planner, rejecting building permits for a school one day, and a new home addition the next. The president can certainly win the fight over building permits, but he must already be asking himself whether it is really worth the prize. Victory will eat up at least a year of precious time, and it will not have a strategic impact.

If Obama found Netanyahu difficult to coerce, he failed to charm the Israeli Left. Israeli pundits have noted the conspicuous absence of a pro-Obama coalition on the Israeli political scene—this, despite the fact that the Israeli Left detests the settlements as much as or more than Obama himself. Many Israelis simply do not understand how the country's security dilemmas fit into Obama's larger scheme. With respect to the issue of gravest concern, Iran's nuclear ambitions, Obama's strategy remains worryingly opaque. And with respect to the Palestinian question, many Israelis are skeptical about the power of any American president to overcome the Hamas-Fatah split, and to create conditions on the Palestinian side that will achieve a two-state solution capable of guaranteeing Israeli security. In a context fraught with uncertainty, Obama is inviting the Israeli Left to join with him in a fight against Netanyahu in order to achieve... well, what precisely?

In addition to the vagueness of his goals, Obama's body language has dealt the Israeli Left a weak hand. The Cairo speech cast Israel as a bit player in a U.S.-Muslim drama. The President, stressing his Muslim ancestry, did not take the time to fly to Jerusalem, where he might have reasoned with the Israeli public about the value to it of abandoning the Bush-Sharon agreement. Instead, his advisers denied flatly (and falsely) that such an agreement had ever existed. As a consequence of this disingenuousness, many Israelis fear that the administration aims to buy goodwill from the Muslim world by distancing itself from Israel, and they wonder whether settlements are not simply the first of many concessions that will be demanded. With such doubts swirling in the air, it is difficult for the Israeli Left to trumpet the Obama agenda.

The White House has sacrificed some credibility on the Israeli side, but it surely must have recouped its losses by garnering Arab goodwill. Think again. Today, the peace process is on hold until the settlement question is resolved. Mahmoud Abbas has refused to sit down with Netanyahu in direct negotiations, insisting instead that the Israelis must first implement the total settlement freeze that Obama himself has demanded. This is a wise tactic. Were Abbas to negotiate with the Israelis today, they would simply demand reciprocal concessions. The Americans, however, have already made a public commitment on settlements, so why not pocket it, and hold Washington to its word?

Meanwhile, Washington has simultaneously been attempting to mobilize the Arab states—particularly the Saudis. President Obama and Secretary Clinton have exhorted King Abdullah to take public steps toward

normalizing relations with Israel. So far, this effort has registered no successes. The president's interest in involving the Saudis arises from his realization that the Hamas-Fatah split means that Abbas does not have the power to deliver on an agreement that would guarantee the legitimate security concerns of the Israelis. Hamas controls Gaza, and it will not submit to Abbas' authority, especially with respect to the key issue of abandoning terrorism.

Hamas is the elephant in the room of the peace process. Washington seeks Saudi Arabia's help in weakening it. Riyadh could become the linchpin in an Arab support network around Abbas, in order to help shift the balance of power against Hamas. In addition, Obama hopes to offset Israeli skepticism by energizing a normalization process with the Arab states—one that will run parallel to the Palestinian-Israeli track. The Israelis complain to Washington that it has singled them out for censure while making no corresponding demands on the Arab side. "If we are to freeze settlements," they ask, "what will the other side provide in return?" Washington looks to Riyadh to help formulate a response.

The Saudis, however, have only limited incentive to help Obama with this problem. They and their public do not regard an Israeli moratorium on settlement growth as a concession; it is, rather, a moral imperative and a Palestinian right. Washington is asking them to reward the Israelis dramatically for returning what is, in their view, stolen property.

But Obama's problem with the Saudis runs deeper than the settlement question. There is a larger, strategic question at play. It's worth asking whether Riyadh can really offset Hamas in a meaningful way, and whether, in its own view, it stands to gain from diving headlong into the midst of an intractable dispute that has persisted for more than sixty years. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a tar baby. No sober Arab leader could relish the idea of taking responsibility for developments in such an unpredictable and unmanageable arena—particularly now, when peace is hardly in the offing. Quite understandably, the Saudis much prefer to occupy the politically safe position of Arab umpire: they sit on the sidelines and critique the Americans. They quietly help out here and there to keep the game from falling apart, but they don't want to be players.

The President's advisers promised him that taking a principled stand on settlements would generate goodwill in the Arab world. There is no doubt that the Cairo speech struck a chord with many Arabs. But goodwill of that sort is not a strategic commodity. Even a popular honest broker cannot reshape the iron interests of the parties on the ground, none of whom see much benefit in taking risks to achieve a goal that they do not really believe in. Many Western diplomats tell themselves that peace is nearly at hand, but the parties on the ground—Arab and Jewish alike—are highly skeptical. And for good reason. The power of Hamas, Hezbollah, and Syria, supported by Iran, looms in the background. It is highly unlikely that, in the next four years, a major breakthrough will take place. In order to maintain good relations with Washington, the leaders in the region will certainly play along with the Obama administration. But the name of their game is not "Peacemaking" but, rather, "Shift the Blame." Its object is to take positions that paint one's rivals as the real obstructionists in the eyes of Washington.

The central strategic challenge for the United States in the Middle East is diminishing the power of the Iranian-led alliance. The peace process is not as effective a tool for addressing this challenge as the administration believes, because the disarray of Fatah and the power of Hamas (not to mention the other rejectionists in the region) will not allow significant, forward movement. Everyone in the region knows this, though few will say so openly. Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates are today focused on one key question: Is Washington going to go the distance with the Iranians, and thwart their nuclear program? Obama's Cairo speech did not provide an answer. It bought a modicum of goodwill from Arab publics on the settlement question, but it did not address the crucial strategic question that is keeping Middle Eastern leaders awake at night.

The American engine is revving loudly, but the administration cannot put the car in gear, because significant obstacles block the way. President Obama will soon realize, if he hasn't already, that the map that his advisers handed him does not match the terrain of the region. He can take some consolation in the fact that every president before him has reached a similar point in the road. Some of them, like Eisenhower, developed new maps as they went along. Others, like Carter, never did. Their place in history has, in part, been determined by their ability to chart a new course.

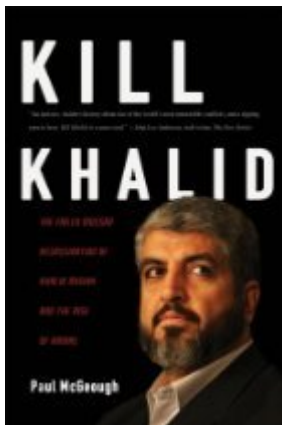
1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael-doran/>

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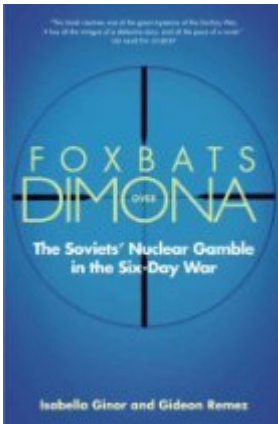
### Summer reading 2009 (2009-07-18 07:02)



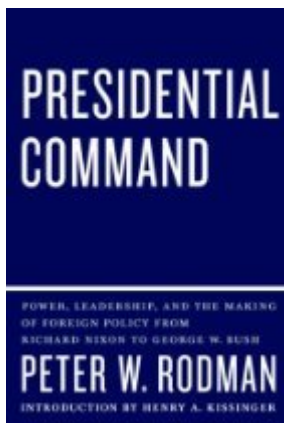
Summer is upon us, and MESH has asked its members to recommend books for summer reading. (For more information on a book, or to place an order with Amazon through the MESH bookstore, click on the book title or cover.) And now that you have other reading, MESH takes our first vacation since we launched back in December 2007. Action will resume on August 10.



[1] [2]Daniel Byman :: [3]Kill Khalid by Australian journalist Paul McGeough (New Press, 2009) offers a riveting account of the bungled Israeli assassination attempt against Khalid Mishal in Amman in 1997. McGeough also explores the rise of Hamas and the emergence of Mishal as one of its leaders. Kill Khalid is extremely readable and draws heavily on interviews of many of the key figures. McGeough also provides an interesting account of Hamas after its victory over Fatah in elections in 2006. I would have liked more on Hamas' rise inside the West Bank and Gaza before 2006, and the focus on Mishal means that several other key players do not receive enough attention. But these criticisms are simply a desire to have an already long book be even longer. McGeough's occasional sympathy for Hamas will annoy some readers, but it would be a shame if this turns them off the book completely, as he offers plenty of interesting stories and provocative thoughts about a group that is not well understood in the United States.



[4] [5]Mark T. Clark :: Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez propose a provocative thesis in their book, [6]Foxybats over Dimona: The Soviets' Nuclear Gamble in the Six-Day War (Yale University Press, 2007). They propose that, contrary to conventional historiography, the Soviets provoked the 1967 Six-Day War between Israel and Egypt in order to destroy Israel's nascent nuclear program. The conventional wisdom holds that while the Soviets may have carelessly provoked the war (by baselessly charging the Israelis with preparing for war against Syria and Egypt), they nonetheless acted to constrain their Arab clients once war began. Ginor and Remez demonstrate conclusively that this interpretation has more to do with holding to certain assumptions than in attending to all the details that have become available through careful research, interviews, some archival work, and unintended admissions by Soviet officials and participants in the war. The authors are continuing their research beyond the book and will present their latest findings at ASMEA's annual conference in October 2009. But you will have to read this book first.



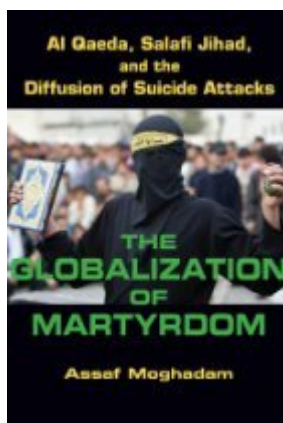
[7] [8]Michael Doran :: My favorite recent book on the Middle East is not on the Middle East at all: Peter Rodman, [9]Presidential Command (Knopf, 2009). Although it is a study of U.S. national security policy making, it is highly relevant to students of the Middle East, not least because it presents an original interpretation of Bush 43's Middle East policies—one that is considerably at odds with the reigning narrative. Let me revise that last sentence: "an original and critical interpretation...." Rodman was no cheerleader. The entire book is rewarding, but, if nothing else, read the Bush 43 chapter—personally, I found it riveting. Fair warning: the book does have a dispassionate, academic quality that makes it less than ideal as fun, beach entertainment. It is, however, essential reading. Rodman, who was a [10]member of MESH, died unexpectedly last year. He was a special man. In his honor, be sure to read the eulogy by Kissinger at the beginning.



[11] [12]Adam Garfinkle :: Lawrence Rosen, a Princeton anthropologist (also a lawyer and an early MacArthur "genius" awardee), has a "big idea" in his newest book, [13]Varieties of Muslim Experience (University of Chicago Press, 2008). The idea concerns the intensely personal, relational nature of what he calls Islamo-Arab society. The metaphor that holds it all together is that of the arabesque. Rosen tries to illustrate the workings of this big idea with regard to politics, law, science, terrorism, portraiture, how we understand Ibn Khaldun, and more.

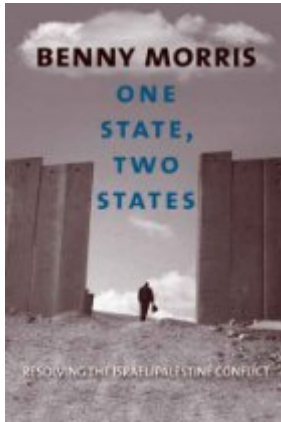
Some of these applications have appeared in Rosen's earlier work, and some of his attempts at interpreting the big idea are more persuasive (to me, anyway) than others. Still, despite the occasional repetition and the density of the some of the writing, this is worth a look. If you take a social anthropological approach to the Middle East as the beginning of wisdom, as I have done now for several decades, you will have more patience for Rosen's kind of writing and way of thinking than if you have limited yourself to IR/poli-sci-fi kinds of writing. So this book is not for everyone, but it is stimulating. It provides new ways to support arguments some of us make on related but different grounds (about the fit between Arab political culture and political pluralism, for example). Above all, perhaps, it really does traffic in a big idea, which, for anthropologists these days, if not for other social scientists, is depressingly rare.

Ah, but will it hold your attention at the beach or at poolside? If you're worried it might not, maybe bring along Tom Robbins' new one, [14]B is for Beer, just in case.



[15] [16]Michael Horowitz :: Assaf Moghadam's book, [17]The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), is an excellent read. Moghadam is a leading expert in the study of Al Qaeda and suicide attacks and his expertise shines through. He discusses the rise and spread of suicide terrorism, and specifically looks at how the Salafi Jihad movement has spearheaded the spread of suicide terror tactics. Well-researched and argued, this book deserves a close read by all scholars interested in questions of terrorism, Al Qaeda, and

the way globalization is influencing the trajectory of terrorist groups.



[18] [19]Josef Joffe :: "Two states" between the Jordan and the Mediterranean are back en vogue, what with Obama demanding it, and Netanyahu grudgingly conceding it. Dividing up a beach towel, which this slice of 50 miles essentially amounts to, would be hard enough for two friends. It is, unless the Lord intervenes, impossible between two foes. There is only one alternative that is worse: a "one-state solution." Benny Morris, in his book [20]One State, Two States (Yale University Press, 2009), tells us why, in all the gloomy and bloody details—quotes, facts, and all.

The Israelis, who made the horrible mistake of settling "Judea" and "Samaria" post-1967, have finally come around to "two states" in principle. The Arabs have not, or as Morris puts it: The "Palestinian Arab nationalist movement, from inception and ever since, has consistently regarded Palestine as innately, completely, inalienably and legitimately 'Arab' and Muslim and has aspired to establish in it a sovereign state under its rule covering all of the country's territory." So, it's not just Tulkarm, but Tel Aviv, too. There is no place here for the Jews, and that, as Morris adds, Arabs believe "in the deepest fibers of their being." Could this ever change? It has—but that happened in another country which was once fiercely irredentist. Germans have yielded Alsace-Lorraine and those lands that are now Polish, Russian and Czech not just in writing, but also in their hearts. But then look at all the "intervening variables:" Cold War, nuclear weapons, European integration, population transfers numbering 9 million, and, above all, a liberal-democratic polity where Hitler once ruled. This is how you change a zero-sum into a non-zero sum game. Morris makes for melancholy summer reading, but he cuts skillfully through layers of wishful thinking and sloppy analysis to lay bare the core of the Hundred Years War. Germans and French have fought over Alsace-Lorraine a lot longer—since Louis XIV.



A NECESSARY  
ENGAGEMENT



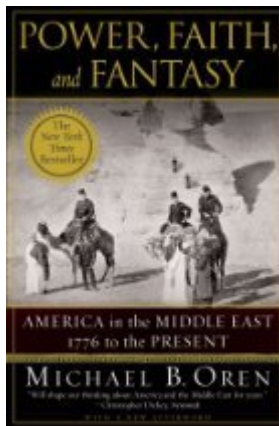
*Reinventing America's Relations  
with the Muslim World*

EMILE NAKHLEH

[21] [22]Mark N. Katz :: Former CIA analyst Emile Nakhleh lays out a strong case for how the United States not only should, but could improve relations with the Muslim world in [23]A Necessary Engagement: Reinventing America's Relations with the Muslim World (Princeton University Press, 2008). In 162 pages, he points out that radical Islamism is a minority phenomenon within the Muslim world, and argues that the U.S. must recognize this in order to isolate it. The most interesting—and controversial—part of the book are his ten recommendations for guiding future American foreign policy toward the Muslim world. I assigned this book as a text for my "War on Terror" seminar earlier this summer, and it proved highly successful in engaging the interest of my students as well as provoking discussion and debate over his policy recommendations in particular. As my students showed, not everyone will agree with these. But Nakhleh's book is an excellent starting point for how to reorient American foreign policy away from a narrow focus of how to defeat radical Islam to a more effective approach that seeks to discredit it.



[24] [25]Walter Laqueur :: Christopher Caldwell is a columnist of the Financial Times. There have been several dozen books in various languages about the political, cultural, and social changes taking place in Europe (and about to occur in the years to come), but Caldwell's [26]Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: Immigration, Islam, and the West (Doubleday, 2009) is still useful, based on wide reading and shrewd observation. This levelheaded book has its weaknesses, it is far better informed about European reactions to Muslim immigration than on European Islam and the differences within Muslim communities and between various countries. But it still deserves to be read in view of the great resistance in Europe to accept the fact that important changes have taken place, and confusion over what to do about it.



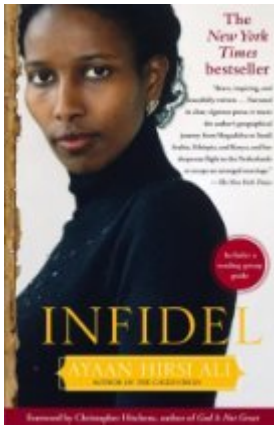
[27] [28]Michael Mandelbaum :: The subtitle of Michael B. Oren’s [29]Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present (Norton, 2007)—a compelling, smoothly written history based on prodigious research—announces one of its themes: the connection between the world’s strongest country and the world’s most turbulent region is an old one. It dates back, in fact, to the earliest years of the republic: the war with the Barbary pirates in the latter part of the 18th century and the outset of the 19th counts as the first war waged by the independent United States. (The war was won, but only after years of setbacks—perhaps a portent for our own time.) For their chronic naivete about the Middle East, therefore, Americans have no good excuse.

The book’s title expresses another of its principal themes. The American encounter with the region has had three distinct although overlapping sources. Power, of course, is the principal moving force of international affairs, and as the United States has grown stronger over the decades its entanglement in the Middle East, as in other parts of the world, has deepened. Because Americans have always been religiously inclined people, the Holy Land has held a special attraction for them. The commitment of American Protestants to the return of the Jews to their ancestral homeland goes back, for example, to the 18th century. And Americans have consistently held beliefs about the region based on their own wishes and hopes rather than on the realities of the societies there. If one of the bases of recent American policy in the Middle East—the belief in Arab democracy—turns out to be a fantasy, it will have a long pedigree.

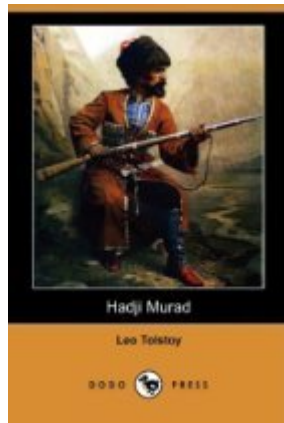
One other theme from this rich account deserves mention. For religious, self-interested, and altruistic reasons Americans have tried, for more than two hundred years, to do good in the land of the Bible, the pyramids, and the mosque. More often than is commonly realized, as Oren documents, they have succeeded. The low public standing of the United States among most Middle Easterners (Israelis conspicuously excepted) for the last six decades therefore provides powerful supporting evidence for the proposition that no good deed goes unpunished.

For those interested in these three themes, and in putting the occupation of Iraq, the confrontation with Iran, and the sputtering but apparently immortal Arab-Israeli peace process in their proper historical context, Power, Faith, and Fantasy is the book to read.



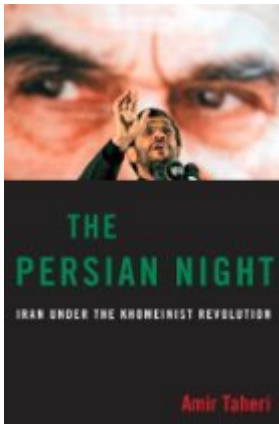


[30] [31]Joshua Muravchik :: [32]Infidel by Ayaan Hirsi Ali (Free Press, 2007) is simply a great work of literature. How she does it, I cannot imagine since, as we learn in the book, English is apparently her sixth language, and they are disparate ones. Move over, Joseph Conrad. The prose is beautiful. The recounting of her childhood and coming of age in Somalia and other Third World venues is gripping. No less so, her flight to the West and her encounter with, and gradual assimilation of, its culture. Hirsi Ali is a significant political figure, but never mind the politics. This is a magnificent tale of human growth and triumph.

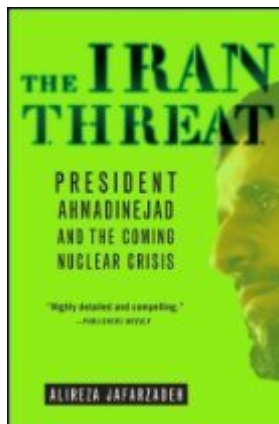


[33] [34]Michael Reynolds :: Summer reading and Tolstoy are mutually exclusive, but I urge readers to make an exception for Tolstoy's [35]Hadji Murat (Dodo Press edition, 2009), and not because Tolstoy was an Orientalist (he studied Oriental languages at Kazan University). Hadji Murat is a short and fast-paced novel set in the Great Caucasus War which Russia waged against the Avars, Chechens, Lezgis, Circassians and other mountain peoples of the North Caucasus in the 19th century. Drawing on his own experiences fighting in the Caucasus, Tolstoy illustrates an empire at war with tribal peoples.

The novel's namesake and central character is an Avar notable trapped between an Imperial Russian Army seeking to subdue the mountaineers and an Islamic resistance movement led by Imam Shamil, who grimly seeks to upend traditional mountaineer society in the name of religion. As a classic work of literature, Hadji Murat explores universal themes, including the dynamics that drive men to fight and sacrifice their lives. It reveals, among other things, the complexity of modern insurgencies, where bureaucracies clash with clan structures, trust is impossible, and religious, ethnic, and family ties all compete for the loyalties of individuals, with often fatal consequences.



[36] Philip Carl Salzman :: Amir Taheri, executive editor-in-chief of Iran's Kayhan newspaper prior to the "Islamic revolution," and now living in the West, is an unalloyed opponent of the Islamic Republic of Iran. [37]The Persian Night: Iran Under the Khomeinist Revolution (Encounter Books, 2009), written for a popular audience in clear prose, doesn't mince words in its rejection of the current regime. The Islamic Republic's claims to Islamic purity are debunked; its insistence on world conquest exposed; and its brutality to its own people denounced. Taheri cites widespread internal clerical opposition to the regime, including quotes from ayatollahs that the Islamic Republic is "a conspiracy against God and believers," and "the rule of the corrupt, by the corrupt, for the corrupt." The entire sordid history of the Islamic Republic is recounted in detail and assessed. Taheri makes a strong case that the Iranian people deserve better. In sum, a lively read by a knowledgeable partisan.



[39] Raymond Tanter :: Alireza Jafarzadeh's [41]The Iran Threat: President Ahmadinejad and the Coming Nuclear Crisis (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) charts a unique path among commentary on Iran by directly linking the Iranian regime's ideology with its quest for nuclear weapons. Jafarzadeh's knowledge of Iran's nuclear program is expansive: In August 2002, as spokesman for the National Council of Resistance of Iran, he revealed the existence of the Natanz uranium enrichment facility, where the Iranian regime had clandestinely built cavernous centrifuge enrichment halls. In The Iran Threat, Jafarzadeh examines the rise of President Ahmadinejad and the corresponding Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) control of Iran's nuclear program. As the IRGC and its clerical ally Ayatollah Khamenei consolidate power following the fraudulent re-election of Ahmadinejad in June, it is worth revisiting Jafarzadeh's incisive work on the Iranian president's background and the ideology that underpins his domestic and international policies.

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8. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael-doran/>
9. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0307269795>
10. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/peter\\_w\\_rodman\\_1943\\_2008/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/08/peter_w_rodman_1943_2008/)
11. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0226726169>
12. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)
13. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0226726169>
14. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0061687278>
15. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0801890551>
16. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_horowitz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_horowitz/)
17. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0801890551>
18. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0300122810>
19. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef\\_joffe/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef_joffe/)
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21. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0691135258>
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31. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/joshua\\_muravchik/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/joshua_muravchik/)
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36. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1594032408>
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38. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1594032408>
39. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0230601286>
40. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_tanter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_tanter/)
41. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0230601286>

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## 3.8 August

### Israel-Palestine: three paths (2009-08-10 05:28)



- [1] Israel America Academic Exchange (IAAE) is a new organization that sponsors educational missions to Israel for American scholars in the fields of political science, international

relations, international law, international economic development, modern history, and Middle East studies. By special arrangement, [2]participants in the inaugural mission (June 22-29) have been invited to guest-post their impressions and assessments. Stephen Krasner is the Graham H. Stuart Professor of International Relations at Stanford University, where he is also a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and the Freeman Spogli Institute. He was director of policy planning at the Department of State from 2005 to 2007.

From [3]Stephen Krasner



There are at least three paths that Israeli-Palestinian relations might follow. The most likely, but not the most attractive from an American perspective, would be a continuation of the status quo in which Israel achieves security as best it can through the iron fist. The least likely would be an agreement reached through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. More likely, albeit not very likely, would be an agreement between Israel and a third party and the Palestinian Authority and that same third party. De facto or de jure, this would be a tripartite agreement. A strategy in which a third party plays a principal and not a mediating role offers the best hope for peace in the Middle East.

**Path One:** The status quo supported by the iron fist. Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon and was rewarded with rockets and kidnapping. Israel basically accepted the Clinton parameters in 2000 and the result was the second intifada. Israel withdrew from Gaza and got 8,000 rockets. After the second intifada, Israeli adopted a much more aggressive strategy to suppress violence from the West Bank including an active military presence and the construction of the security fence. There has not been a terrorist attack in Israel for a year and a half. Israel sent its army into Lebanon in 2006; incursions and rockets stopped. Israel sent its army into Gaza in 2008; rocket attacks almost completely stopped. Many Israelis have concluded that force works and concessions fail. The empirical evidence supports this conclusion. Israelis realize that force is a tactic not a strategy. In the absence of a strategy, however, tactics are all that remain.

**Path Two:** A negotiated settlement between the parties. The international community, including the United States, has supported direct negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian authorities that would create two separate states. Given that the parameters of such a settlement have been clear for a decade or more why have efforts failed? Pick your favorite (or favorites) from the following list:

- There is a disjunction between the interests of Palestinian leaders and the Palestinian population. The PLO, despite its revolutionary nationalistic rhetoric, is most easily understood as a typical rent-seeking aid-dependent political entity. The present situation has served the leaders of Fatah well enough, probably better than they would be served in an independent Palestinian state.
- The Israeli political system is so fragmented that it will be impossible for any Israeli government to take the hard steps that would be necessary to remove settlers from the non-contiguous settlements in

the West Bank.

- The division between Fatah and Hamas makes it impossible to move forward with a comprehensive settlement.
- The level of cynicism and distrust is now so high among both Palestinians and Israelis that neither party has confidence that any agreement that were reached would be honored.
- The Palestinian Authority has never prepared the population for the fact that there will not be a right of return.
- The Palestinians believe that demography will make them winners in the long run.
- The Israelis believe that they can always withdraw from parts of the West Bank if demography becomes too problematic.
- Add your own favorite impediment.

Regardless of judgments about the reasons for failure, the following stark fact remains. The parameters of a settlement are clear—modest border adjustments, the dismantlement of Jewish settlement outside these borders, no right of return, some kind of shared or international authority over Jerusalem—but there has been no settlement.

Path Three: A negotiated settlement signed separately or jointly by Israel and the Palestinian Authority with a third party. A process in which both the Israelis and the Palestinians separately signed an agreement with a third party would have the following advantages:

- A third party principal would have explicit agenda-setting status.
- A process with a third party as a principal rather than a mediator would eliminate the mutual veto that both parties have over the conclusion of a bilateral settlement.
- An agreement reached between the third party and either Israel or the Palestinian Authority would create a highly salient focal point; it would limit the options open to the non-signatory. Anxiety about being the second mover would provide an incentive for engagement and compromise rather than rejection.
- A third party process would make it easier to propose the kind of unconventional supra- or shared-sovereignty solutions that are imperative for any agreement. Such solutions will be necessary in two areas: (1) Palestinian security: A third-party security force with executive authority within the Palestinian state will be necessary if Israel is to sign an agreement; and (2) Jerusalem: Jerusalem will have to be governed through some kind of shared or supra-national arrangement.
- Direct third party involvement would reassure the Israelis, and possibly also the Palestinians, that the terms of an agreement would be implemented.

To be effective, the third party would have to be:

- internationally legitimate so that neither of the two principals could appeal to outside actors if an agreement were concluded between one of the principals and the third party;
- sufficiently credible so that neither party could refuse to participate in the process; and

- in a position to credibly threaten to conclude an agreement first with either Israel or the PA; such a threat would end the mutual veto power that the two principal parties now exercise.

The ideal participants in the third party would be the United States, the European Union, the UN, Egypt and Jordan. Russia would only be an impediment. Saudi participation would preclude an initial agreement with the Israelis because this would mean formal recognition before a final peace agreement.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. <http://academicexchange.com/>
2. <http://academicexchange.com/participants.asp>
3. <http://politicalscience.stanford.edu/faculty/krasner.html>

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Philip Carl Salzman (2009-08-10 17:32:32)

Stephen Krasner is correct to [1]point out the failure of concessions by Israel to bring any peace or even good will. But, in recommending a third party process, he appears to have forgotten that many of those concessions had third party guarantees that turned out to be worthless. Did not the European Union undertake to insure that no weapons would be brought into Gaza, to be followed after the Israel action in Gaza by Egypt and the United States promising that no weapons would be brought into Gaza? And yet the weapons flow. Israel called a halt to its military operation against Hezbollah, an effort that was just beginning to gain traction, in response to UN promises that UNIFIL would block the weapons flow to Hezbollah and keep them away from the border area. None of this has happened, and Hezbollah has more weapons, and more advanced weapons, than ever. For Israelis to trust European or UN guarantees would be the triumph of hope over experience. As for confidence in the Obama administration, Israelis already have lost that. Krasner even suggests that Egypt and Jordan would be "ideal participants" and guarantors—good one! [2]*Philip Carl Salzman is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/08/israel-palestine-three-paths/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)

### Score one for ' Hamaswood ' (2009-08-11 13:41)

From [1]Matthew Levitt

Hamas, which recently created a production company and [2]released its first major film production glorifying the life of a master terrorist (view the Arabic trailer at the end of this post), has scored its first major public relations coup. In a new [3]article on the website of Foreign Affairs, Michael Bröning (director of the East Jerusalem office of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung) cites the group's recent downplaying of the relevance of its own charter as a telltale sign that Hamas is turning around or even "growing up." To be sure, the rhetoric of Hamas leaders has visibly changed in public statements. But in focusing on these statements alone, Bröning misses the real point: Hamas's words have changed, but their actions have not.

Hamas cannot be judged on the basis of its choice of vocabulary alone. Neither the relevance of each and every part of the Hamas charter (which Hamas leaders have expressly refused to revoke or update) nor the public statements of its leaders deserve as much weight as what the group actually does in judging whether or not it has truly evolved. The approach of solely examining what the group says, rather than what the group does—the approach upon which Bröning has relied—dangerously disregards Hamas's actions on the ground.

True, in recent interviews, Hamas leader Khaled Meshal has [4]offered to cooperate with U.S. efforts to promote a peaceful resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, indicated a willingness to implement an immediate

and reciprocal ceasefire with Israel, and stated that the militant group would accept and respect a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. But the conciliatory tone of this hardline Hamas leader, who personally has been tied to acts of terrorism and is himself a [5]U.S.-designated terrorist, is belied by the group's continued violent actions and radicalization on the ground, as well as the rise to prominence of violent extremist leaders within the group's local Shura (consultative) councils. Hamas's activities of late appear to be diametrically opposed to the thrust of Meshal's statements.

**Continued terrorist activities:** Despite talk of a ceasefire and pursuit of a peaceful resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Hamas's military wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, continues to engage in terrorist activities. Shooting attacks are still common along the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip, including the firing of rocket-propelled grenades and mortar shells of the kind that rained on Israel just the other day. In late July, two Qassam Brigades operatives were killed in a "work accident" while placing explosives along the border fence near the al-Buraij refugee camp in central Gaza. A few days later, Israeli defense officials revealed that Hamas has been digging tunnels—often used by the group to smuggle weapons and conduct kidnapping operations—next to UN facilities, including one near a UN school in Bait Hanun that had recently collapsed. The placement of the tunnels near UN facilities was purportedly intended as a preventive measure against an Israeli attempt to destroy the tunnels.

Meanwhile, over the past several months, Palestinian security forces in the West Bank have seized at least \$8.5 million in cash from arrested Hamas members who plotted to kill Fatah-affiliated government officials. Palestinian officials reported that some of the accused had "recently purchased homes adjacent to government and military installations, mainly in the city of Nablus" for the purpose of observing the movements of government and security officials. Security forces also seized uniforms of several Palestinian security forces from the accused Hamas members.

**Radicalizing Palestinian society:** For Hamas, mutating the predominantly ethno-political Palestinian national struggle into a fundamentally religious conflict is critical to the group's ideology and its continued ability to inspire Palestinians to reject compromise or peaceful solutions to the conflict. Recently, Hamas embarked on a large public relations campaign using culture and the arts to glorify violence and demonize Israel. In a telling example, Hamas produced a feature-length film in 2009 that celebrated the life of Emad Akel, a leading Hamas terrorist who was killed by Israeli troops in 1993. Written by hardline Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar, Emad Akel was first screened in July 2009 at the Islamic University in Gaza City and described by Hamas interior minister in Gaza Fathi Hamad as the first production of "Hamaswood instead of Hollywood."

In addition, despite Meshal's statements, Hamas's continues its campaign of radicalization targeting Palestinian youth. This summer, more than 120,000 Palestinian children attended Hamas-run summer camps that focused not only on Islamic teachings, but also on "semi-military training with toy guns." Hamas campers recently staged a play reenacting the Gilad Shalit abduction before an audience that included Hamas officials such as Usama Mazini and Sheikh Ahmad Bahar.

**Militants elected to leadership positions:** Hamas's ongoing radical activities are particularly apparent in its willingness to place its most militant members in positions of power. This year, Hamas's local Shura councils held elections to determine who would move into leadership positions. Three local councils under the aegis of the Majlis al-Shura, the group's overarching political and decisionmaking body in Damascus, represent Gaza, the West Bank, and Hamas members in Israeli prisons. This last council completed a five-month-long election process in July 2009 that resulted in the appointment of Yahya al-Sinwar, described as the founder of a Hamas security agency who is serving a life sentence, as president of the prison Shura council. Many other Hamas operatives involved in terrorist activities were placed as council members, including:

- Abbas al-Sayyed, the mastermind of the March 2002 Park Hotel suicide bombing that killed 29 people and left 155 seriously wounded.
- Salah al-Arouri, a founder of the Qassam Brigades in the West Bank, who served as both a recruiter and commander for Hamas terrorist cells.
- Abd al-Khaliq al-Natsheh, Hamas's spokesman in Hebron, where he reportedly was the interlocutor between Hamas members who wanted to carry out suicide attacks and the leaders of Hamas terror cells within the Qassam Brigades.

In the August 2008 elections for Gaza's Shura council, for example, Hamas hardliners [6] dominated as well.

As Hamas's activities on the ground make clear, the group's tactical flexibility cannot be mistaken for strategic change. Even in his recent interviews, Meshal was clear that Hamas has not rejected terrorism, but has put it on hold due to current circumstances. "Not targeting civilians," Meshal explained, "is part of an evaluation of the movement to serve the people's interests. Firing these rockets is a method and not the goal." In the context of discussing the sharp drop in Hamas rockets fired at Israeli civilian population centers, Meshal added, "The right to resist the occupation is a legitimate right, but practicing this right is decided by the leadership within the movement."

Even as Hamas advances a public-relations blitz for tactical gains, the group continues to advance its strategic goals through ongoing terrorist activities, robust radicalization, and the election of militant hardliners to leadership positions. Hamas's policies are evidenced not only by its words, but also by its deeds and actions. Michael Bröning had the right idea when he advised policymakers to "study recent Hamas policies and the movement's performance on the ground." If only he'd taken his own advice.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

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(If you do not see the embedded trailer, [7]click here.)

MESH Admin: There is an [8]Arabic translation of this post.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew\\_levitt/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew_levitt/)
2. [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090718/ap\\_on\\_re\\_mi\\_ea/ml\\_gaza\\_hamaswood](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090718/ap_on_re_mi_ea/ml_gaza_hamaswood)
3. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65214/michael-br%C3%B6ning/hamas-20>
4. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/05/world/middleeast/05Meshal-transcript.html>
5. <http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/js672.htm>
6. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2982>
7. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYalYEPmwCc>
8. <http://arabic.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=1190&portal=ar>



Joshua Muravchik (2009-08-18 18:10:16)

Michael Bröning's [1]polemic against Matthew Levitt culminates in this conclusion:

Hamas should be engaged via diplomatic processes that acknowledge the party's capacity for ideological softening and political realism. Hamas must be recognized as a relevant political player. Only such an approach will pave the way for a political process that is in the best interest of Israelis and Palestinians.

There is a serious logical lacuna here. Bröning's claim that Hamas is "a relevant political player" is true whether the group has changed or not. (Its "capacity" for change is a red herring; nothing in the universe lacks that.) If the fact of Hamas's popular support dictates engagement, then the question of whether or not Hamas has genuinely softened is moot—so why waste time parsing Hamas's statements and actions? Or does Bröning mean to say that if Hamas had not softened, or if this softening were not genuine or insufficient, then he would not favor engagement, regardless of Hamas's "relevan[ce]?" In that case, he would do well to tell us what he regards as the threshold at which sufficient softening will have occurred and been proved to qualify Hamas for engagement. Then we can debate more cogently whether that threshold has been crossed. [2]Joshua Muravchik is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/08/score-one-for-hamaswood/comment-page-1/#comment-2741>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/joshua\\_muravchik/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/joshua_muravchik/)

Michael Bröning (2009-08-17 12:33:28)

In a recent [1]contribution to the *Foreign Affairs* website, I argued that "Hamas is in the midst of an unprecedented ideological transformation," and that Western decision-makers have until now widely ignored these changes to the detriment of all involved. Instead of acknowledging change within Hamas, decision-makers remain focused on misleading reassertions of "facts" and continue to base their assessments on outdated Hamas statements such as the 1988 Hamas Charter. In light of recent and more moderate Hamas policy declarations, and in view of the party's comprehensive state-building activities in Gaza, I suggested that "Western diplomats should acknowledge the organization's reduced aspirations and ideological softening" rather than "focusing on Hamas' unbending symbolic positions." This, last but not least, is pertinent given that the Charter today seems more widely quoted in Western capitals than in the Palestinian Territories. A modification in the Western approach appears necessary in view of the failed boycott that has been in place for the better part of two decades. This approach has left Western decision-makers with limited policy options and has resulted in an increasingly popular Hamas. Matthew Levitt, one of the foremost American experts on Hamas, has [2]rejected this argument on the grounds that Hamas "continues to advance its strategic goals through ongoing terrorist activities, robust radicalization, and the election of militant hardliners to leadership positions." My argument in *Foreign Affairs* was thus interpreted as "score one" for Hamas, and my reasoning perceived as weakening the boycott and legitimizing Hamas as a political movement. This criticism, however, is unconvincing. First, it is questionable whether a political movement that enjoys the support of roughly 40 percent of Palestinians is truly in need of a public relations campaign to bolster its standing in the West. Hamas has not only won municipal elections in many towns in the West Bank but has also gained a landslide victory in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections. To describe a much-needed re-evaluation of Hamas as falling into the trap of a "public relations blitz" thus seems rather detached from the actual political developments on the ground. Hamas is a significant player in one of the world's most complicated conflict zones, and will continue to be relevant with or without Western endorsement. Second, Levitt bases his argument on a cursory and incomplete stock-taking of Hamas' current behavior, focusing on recent events selected out of context. He begins his reply by arguing that Hamas' military wing "continues to engage in terrorist activities," as "shooting attacks are still common along the border between Israel and Gaza." Make no mistake about it: Every rocket that is fired from Gaza on Israeli homes is an unacceptable contravention of the rules of war and a clear violation of international law. Such attacks been rightly condemned by numerous governments and non-governmental organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. The Israeli Army not only has the right to prevent such attacks, but is also obliged to protect its citizens. However, to argue that Hamas mortar shells today "rain down on Israel" is both an inaccurate and outdated representation of reality. While authoritative data is yet to be released, the Israeli Army reported that this year between June 13 and July 16, there was one rocket attack. According to the official Israeli Army spokesperson, this rocket "was fired from the Shujaiya district of Gaza City and fell in a field near the Nahal Oz kibbutz." The current level of violence at the border does constitute a substantial decrease when compared to roughly 3,000 mortars and rockets that were launched from Gaza in 2008. This improvement at the Israeli-Gaza border does not stand alone. Concerning suicide-attacks in Israel, Hamas has also refrained from engaging in any terrorist operations since 2006. Contrary to popular belief, this decline cannot be attributed to the West Bank barrier, which remains incomplete and has proven easy to penetrate.

Levitt rejects any such improvement by referring to Hamas leader Khaled Mashal's recent explanation for this change. Mashal states that "not targeting civilians is part of an evaluation of the movement [Hamas] to serve the [Palestinian] people's interest." While this statement might be criticized for lack of empathy, the shift towards non-violence and the resulting relative quiet should be welcomed. Levitt's second argument states that Hamas is currently engaged in an effort to "radicalize Palestinian society" and to "inspire Palestinians to reject compromise or peaceful solutions to the conflict." To bolster this claim, Levitt refers to Hamas summer camps, which in 2009 allegedly included "Islamic teachings" and "semi-military training with toy guns." While similar claims could easily be made for activities of public youth organizations from Russia to the People's Republic of China, it remains to be seen whether "toy gun" war games should prevent responsible decision-makers from diplomatic engagement. Indeed, it must also be asked how Hamas leaders manage to "inspire Palestinians to reject compromise or peaceful solutions," while they simultaneously engage in a widespread and public Arabic television campaign, repeatedly advocating for the parameters of a two-state solution. In Levitt's opinion, policy outlines such as Khaled Mashal's recently televised speech from Damascus should be rejected as propaganda in view of a Gaza film production on Hamas terrorist Emad Akel. The production of this feature film points to the fact that violent resistance and a cult of martyrdom remain widespread in Palestinian society. However, the screening of the film in the cultural center Shawwa—Levitt errs in writing that the film was screened at the Islamic University—can hardly be considered more authoritative than officially declared party policies as outlined in numerous election pamphlets and public statements. To base political analysis of recent Hamas positions on the study of a feature film, seems notably discriminatory to say the least. How would Levitt engage Palestinian decision-makers if they based "informed" assessments of the Obama administration on a cursory study of current Hollywood productions? Feature films certainly have a place in society and may be relevant in pertinent cultural studies courses, but should not be considered a sound basis for political analysis and responsible decision making. Furthermore, Levitt attempts to bolster his argument for an unchanged Hamas by pointing at recent Shura elections—the equivalent of a Hamas parliament. He argues that "ongoing radical activities are particularly apparent in [Hamas'] willingness to place its most militant members in positions of power." This claim is supported by listing three militant activists: Salah Al-Aroui, Abd al-Khaliq al-Natsheh and Abbas al-Sayyed. The three are widely reputed for their uncompromising and confrontational positions with Israel. What Levitt fails to mention is that the Shura Council consists of 73 persons of which he has selectively chosen three as representative of the Council in its entirety. Is the election of three hardliners truly indicative of the Council's inflexible hidden agenda? Are the statements of Hamas' politburo chief Mashal thus discredited and easily dismissed? One could argue the opposite: The fact that Hamas' current moderate policy declarations are also issued by renowned hardliners should be interpreted as the beginning of an ideological transformation rather than a dramatic tactical maneuver maliciously backed by Arab decision-makers from Cairo to Damascus. This is so especially in view of Hamas' current state-building activities on the ground, a nearly comprehensive de facto ceasefire with Israel, and open calls for a de facto two-state solution. The current attempts—especially by some factions in Israel's security establishment—to reject these new policies as "a public-relations blitz for tactical gains" are noteworthy for different reasons. First, it seems rather peculiar that Hamas statements are only taken at face value when they support Western expectations of militancy and irrationality. After all, in the last twenty years, the Hamas Charter has been quoted relentlessly to prove beyond a doubt the movement's annihilationist agenda. While Hamas statements have thus served as convenient points of reference for Western observers in the past, today, more moderate voices are rejected as mere "rhetoric." Effectively, such a circular argument leaves no room for development and progress in a meaningful peace process. Following this line of reasoning, even an official revocation of the Hamas Charter by the Shura Council would undoubtedly be rejected as strategic camouflage by experts who today demand such a move. In the end, this argument tells us more about the rigid mindset of its proponents than about the actual situation on the ground. To be clear: Hamas cannot be regarded as a democratic, just and secular force in the Palestinian Territories. The movement must be scrutinized and the ever-present idolatry of Palestinian martyrdom justifies severe admonition and continuous criticism. However, in light of recent developments, Hamas should be engaged via diplomatic processes that acknowledge the party's capacity for ideological softening and political realism. Hamas must be recognized as a relevant political player. Only such an approach will pave the way for a political process that is in the best interest of Israelis and Palestinians. The alternative to such a readjustment of Western policy would be an ongoing boycott and an unsustainable adherence to the status quo. Already in 1989, Thomas Friedman observed that this Middle East dogma could be paraphrased as "I will stop beating you as soon as you start loving me." Such a development is as unlikely today as it was twenty years ago. Certainly, love does not and will not characterize the relationship between Hamas and the West or Hamas and Israel. However, finding the means and the mechanism to stop the cycle of beating could quite simply begin with a diplomatic challenge. [3]Michael Bröning is director of the East Jerusalem office of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, a political foundation affiliated to the Social Democratic Party of Germany.

1. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65214/michael-br%C3%B6ning/hamas-20>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/08/score-one-for-hamaswood/>
3. <http://www.fespal.org/en/fes-staff-broening.php>

Matthew Levitt (2009-08-24 12:06:12)

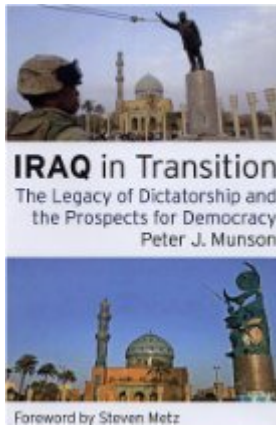
Michael Bröning's [1]response to [2]my post misses the point. Hamas actions speak louder than Hamas words. So, in my book, the [3]seizure on the Egyptian side of Rafah last week of one ton of explosive material headed for Hamas-run Gaza says more about Hamas' true intentions than its leader's unverifiable promises of moderation. Bröning's other points, while peripheral at best, warrant these quick replies: • Bröning points to public support for Hamas—perhaps as high as 40 percent—as a sign that the group does not need a public relations campaign. But in fact it does. Hamas leadership in Gaza has performed poorly, vacillating between implementing elements of Shariah law (which is highly unpopular among Palestinians generally, and even the more conservative Gazans), putting at risk the importation of goods from Israel by targeting the crossing points for attacks, and putting civilians at risk instead of going to proper lengths to protect them during December-January fighting by placing rockets and hiding officials in mosques, schools and hospitals. Moreover, as has been widely documented, Hamas' electoral victory had as much or more to do with Fatah's failures as with Hamas' success. • Downplaying the centrality of Hamas' radicalization campaign is very dangerous. To the extent Hamas succeeds in transforming the conflict from an ethno-nationalist conflict over land into a religious conflict over theology, the possibility of solving this conflict is severely undermined. If Hamas were truly interested in a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders, as its leaders have suggested, it should not be teaching Palestinian children the virtues of suicide bombers and perpetual jihad against Israelis and Jews. • True, the local Shura Council elections involved some 73 people, not just the three I cited, but many more of those elected—and especially those elected to senior positions—belong to Hamas's terrorist wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades. As Bernard Lewis has noted, our adversaries often tell us exactly what they plan to do, and we tend to ignore their warnings. Taken in this light, and against the evidence of events that have taken place since, consider that even after its sweeping electoral victory in 2006 Parliamentary elections, Hamas leaders did not soften their rhetoric. Instead of allowing participation in the political process to co-opt them into moderation, Hamas leaders underlined their intention to continue attacking Israel and make Palestinian society more Islamic. Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar insisted the group's Qassam Brigades "will remain, they will grow, they will be armed more and more until the complete liberation of all Palestine." Under Hamas, Zahar predicted, the new Palestinian government would promote "martyr tourism" to draw tourists interested in the history of armed Palestinian resistance and the ministry of culture would produce literature about jihad. If elected, a Hamas candidate from Rafah promised, Hamas would enact legislation consistent with Islamic Shariah (religious law). "We would present to the *ummah* [Muslim nation] and the Palestinian people the laws and legislation compatible with the Islamic Shariah and would do our best to nullify the non-Islamic ones." This would come hand in hand, the candidate promised, with enhanced social services courtesy of the Hamas *da'wa*." The policy readjustment must come not from the West but from Hamas, if it is indeed capable of such a readjustment. Were Hamas to couple its moderate talk with a disavowal of violence in word and deed that would be something. But promises of moderation that coincide with continued violence and radicalization are, as they say in the region, *kalam fadhi* (empty words). [4]Matthew Levitt is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/08/score-one-for-hamaswood/comment-page-1/#comment-2741>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/08/score-one-for-hamaswood/>
3. <http://www.thedailynewsegypt.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=23975>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew\\_levitt/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew_levitt/)

### 'Iraq in Transition' (2009-08-12 06:52)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Peter J. Munson is a Marine officer with more than eleven years of service, has seen several operational and combat tours in the Middle East since 2001, and has a master of arts in national security affairs with a concentration in Middle Eastern studies from the Naval Postgraduate School. His new book is *Iraq in Transition: The Legacy of Dictatorship and the Prospects for Democracy*.

From [1]Peter J. Munson



[2] While deployed to Afghanistan in 2004, I applied and was accepted to the Marine Corps' foreign area officer program, specializing in the Middle East and North Africa. In 2005, I began studying in Monterey, California, first at the Naval Postgraduate School, then Defense Language Institute. As Iraq was the most immediately important place to the military at the time, I set about trying to learn as much as I could about the country and its history.

I quickly found that the available material was inadequate for my purposes. While numerous studies and histories had been published on Iraq pre-2003, and several high profile books detailing the military and policy aspects of events in 2003 and after were beginning to show up, none explicitly linked Iraq's history and legacies to what was going on in the country post-invasion. What is more, the quickly growing literature on post-invasion Iraq focused on either policy and strategy critique or individual observations of soldiers or journalists. There was a significant gap for someone trying to learn about Iraqi society, culture, and politics in the new era.

Using democratic transition literature as my guide, I wrote several papers and a thesis on aspects of the Sunni insurgency. The transition literature pointed out key phenomena that had presented problems for previous transitions and helped me to put the Iraqi case in perspective. When I got some very positive feedback on my initial work, I decided to push ahead and attempt to expand my work into a book, incorporating the other groups in Iraq and paying close attention to the political process.

My intent was to produce a book that, instead of focusing on U.S. military actions or the popular policy debate, would explain the Iraqi side of the attempt at transition. I set out to review Iraq's recent history and the effects of that history on culture, society, and politics, and to demonstrate how those legacies were affecting events in post-Saddam Iraq. The goal was to produce a work that would be of interest to general readers, but would be documented and researched sufficiently to be of special use to service members, officials, and academics considering the problems in Iraq.

Over the next year and a half, I worked on the book while studying Arabic at Defense Language Institute. By the end of my studies there, I was able to read Arabic and incorporate a good number of Arabic sources into my research. In summer of 2007, I moved to Muscat, Oman, working at the U.S. Embassy there and traveling extensively in the Middle East. I was able to incorporate some insights gained from working with militaries in the region and from talking to a wide variety of Arabs, including some Iraqi expatriates, to hone some of my conclusions in the book. By this point, however, interest in Iraq was waning and I was unable to find a publisher until spring 2008, when two houses finally offered to give the book a chance and Potomac Books vowed to put the book out for a general audience.

The publishing timeline allowed me to incorporate a number of important updates, including the results of the provincial elections in 2009. The most important phase of Iraqi transition is yet to come, however,

with American influence waning and national elections forthcoming. The manner in which the government ultimately deals with issues such as Kirkuk, reconciliation, and constitutional amendments will also be telling. Hopefully, if interest in Iraq in Transition is strong, I will be able to incorporate these important events in a second edition.

I think it is incredibly important for Americans, and especially the professionals involved in the formulation, execution, and analysis of policy, to understand the complexities and challenges that confront political reform and democratization. At first glance, democracy promotion seems intuitive and "right," yet the reality of its implementation in other societies is not so simple. I hope that this book adds to the body of literature on democratic transition, which shows that foreign policy cannot be based on rosy assumptions and glib hopes of miraculous transformations. At the same time, just because Iraq was such a mess does not mean we should not attempt to draw insight from it. Many lessons can be learned from Iraq and used to help other states facing more gradual transformation away from authoritarian rule toward some sort of socially acceptable hybrid, if not outright democracy.

[3]Order from Publisher | [4]Amazon | [5]Excerpt | [6]Blog

1. <http://www.potomacbooksinc.com/Books/AuthorDetail.aspx?id=15638>
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51SgMxlnZL.jpg>
3. <http://www.potomacbooksinc.com/Books/BookDetail.aspx?productID=203800>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1597973009>
5. [http://www.potomacbooksinc.com/resrcs/frontm/1597973009\\_intro.pdf](http://www.potomacbooksinc.com/resrcs/frontm/1597973009_intro.pdf)
6. <http://iraqintransitionbook.blogspot.com/>

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## Is Iran's regime rational? (2009-08-13 07:01)

From [1]Philip Carl Salzman



How do we know whether our models, or, to be more modest, our characterizations of countries are correct? We try to show that the case studies and other information that we adduce support our vision. But our interpretations are seldom challenged by immediate events, and their validity is most easily assessed in the long term, by which time our views have been forgotten or are deemed irrelevant.

At a recent conference on Iran, three speakers with strong credentials made a case that the Islamic Republic government was basically rational, that it responded reasonably to variations in its political

environment, and that its goals were based on realpolitik and realistic. I had two doubts about that. First, its fundamental *raison d'être* was religious, and religious objectives, very aggressive ones, appear to be its long-term goals. Second, its extreme position on Israel appears to be fueled by a religious absolutism and triumphalism.

In recent days, I have become convinced about a third basis for doubt about the rationality of the Islamic Republic government. The Iranian national election for president was, by established procedure, already fixed. Four acceptable candidates were chosen out of the hundred-plus by the "Supreme Guide" Ali Khamenei. All four were outstanding supporters of the Islamic Republic and had held high positions.

But this was not sufficient for the "Supreme Guide" and his extremist supporters. Instead of letting the populace vote for their preferred candidate among this small coterie of loyalists, the "Supreme Guide" decided to fix the election again, in favor of the most extreme candidate, Ahmadinejad. (In Persian, the name is Ahmadi-nejad, rather than the incorrect Ama-din-ejad that one hears on the media.) So, for the benefit of choosing among the small differences in outlook of the candidates, the "Supreme Guide" decided to insure that Ahmadinejad would win, whatever electoral fraud, and preemptive announcement was required.

Was it rational for the "Supreme Guide" to jettison all pretense of electoral probity, and of a "Republic" supported by the people, for such a small gain? Was the loss of legitimacy both at home and abroad worth it? Was driving the populace, seeking small measures of personal freedom and economic stability, to a new understanding that the Islamic Republic regime was their enemy, a reasonable price for the small gain of choosing one among the selected candidates? I would suggest that it was not rational, but rather an expression of fanatical religious motivation. And that would make the Islamic Republic regime a non-rational player.

The events of the fixed election and its popular aftermath has inadvertently provided a test for a model of the Islamic Republic proposed by Amir Taheri in [2] *The Persian Night: Iran Under the Khomeinist Revolution*, published last March, before the recent election. Taheri (p. 358) says that "Iran today... is... like a heaving volcano, ready to explode."

Taheri's thesis is based on the multiple contradictions and fractures in Iranian society: revolutionary institutions versus conventional state institutions; the revolutionary armed forces versus the state armed forces; the radical mullahs who wish to control the government versus more traditional mullahs who do not wish religion to be tainted by governance; religious foundations and Revolutionary Guard enterprises versus the workers demanding trade unions; revolutionary religious surveillance of education versus teachers; the revolutionary generation versus the post-revolutionary youth; and Shi'a Persians supported by the revolutionary government versus ethnic and religious minorities.

Taheri cites as further reasons for popular discontent the oppression of the revolutionary institutions, from attacks and arrests over "improper" dress and comportment, to mass arrests of allegedly dissident populations, to the continuing closing of newspapers and magazines deemed insufficiently sympathetic to the regime, to the ever increasing blocking of the electronic media, to the blacklisting of authors and books, to "disappearances" of trade union leaders, journalists, student activists, ethnic activists, and opposition mullahs, to the ongoing wave of executions of minorities—especially Kurds, Arabs, and Baluch—and other perceived opponents of the regime. Taheri (p. 361) says that "faced with popular discontent, the Khomeinist clique is vulnerable and worried—extremely worried.... Iran today... is about a growing popular movement that may help bring the nation out of the dangerous impasse created by the mullahs."

Taheri wrote this before the recent election and the extraordinary popular demonstrations against the fixed results, and then against the regime. I think that a case can be made that Taheri's account of Iran

has been validated by subsequent events. If he were correct in his assessment, the result should have been exactly what did happen. Taheri's model has been tested by events and shown to be sound.

What is Taheri's policy advice? He says (p. 361) that "the outside world would do well to monitor carefully and, whenever possible, support the Iranian people's fight against the fascist regime in Tehran." How would he do that? "With a clear compass, the litmus test for any particular policy towards Iran will likewise be clear: does this activity, program or initiative help or hinder regime change?" (p. 362). What would not help is for foreign countries to treat with the regime in any way that would validate it and give it legitimacy. President Obama and European Union, please take note.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1594032408>

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Philip Carl Salzman (2009-08-17 11:58:14)

MESH colleagues, who have kindly [1]commented on my discussion, appear to have adopted the anthropological truisms that I force-feed my students every year. Yes, different cultures have different assumptions and distinct visions. Yes, everyone can be rational, in their fashion. Yet I fear that the discussion of "rationality" has taken us down a dead-end road, and away from the destination that we seek. The real and practical question is: How dangerous is Iran? The pertinent question about rationality here is: Is the Iranian regime rational in our terms? That is, can we deal with them on terms about which we can agree? For practical purposes, it is irrelevant that Shi'a may be perfectly "rational," on the basis of their assumptions, in wishing to blow up the world so as to bring back the hidden Mahdi to make the world perfect. From our point of view, that is not a "rationality" that can converge with our interests. And therefore a "meeting of the minds" is unlikely. If our rationality and Iranian regime rationality are on divergent tracks, then admission of past errors, appeal to common interests, and pleas for negotiation will make little headway in securing our interests. Other means will be required. [2]*Philip Carl Salzman is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/08/is-irans-regime-rational/comment-page-1/#comment-2721>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)

Josef Joffe (2009-08-17 11:55:16)

What's [1]rational? It is not necessarily "reasonable" or "restrained," let alone "responsible." It refers to an actor who weighs means and ends, risks and rewards—and then tries to get one in line with the other. It is getting the "mostest with the leastest," as in: how far do I have to climb up the tree to harvest the sweetest fruit without breaking a leg? "Reasonable" doesn't even mean "realistic," especially when it comes to regimes that must balance internal and external power considerations. Which brings us to Iran—or any other autho-totalitarian system. Screaming *Marg bar Israil* or *Marg bar Amrikah*, which in Persian means "death to both," sounds quite irrational, considering that these two nations could visit death on Iran a hundred times over. But it does make sense for regime-maintenance reasons, as in Shakespeare's Henry IV, who counsels his son and successor to "busy giddy minds for foreign quarrels" to keep his barons at bay. [2]*Meshugaas*, to use an appropriate term from the region, is good for mobilization. Long ago, Thomas Schelling taught us about the "rationality of irrationality," a bargaining strategy that makes one actor to look slightly (or mightily) crazy and so intimidates the other who will then yield. Was Hitler, that master of brinkmanship, "irrational" when he threatened war before Munich? No, that rattled Messrs. Chamberlain and Daladier to the point of letting him have the Sudetenland. Hitler was then fuming and foaming all the way to the bank, grabbing the rest of Czechoslovakia a few months later in March 1939. Is Kim Jong-Il crazy? He may be crazy, but not stupid. Since 1994 he has pocketed one concession after another, one high-level visit (most recently by Bill Clinton) after another, and yet he has tested nuclear devices twice while shooting his missiles all over the place. Not bad for a few fits of peeve. This is not "irrational," given the yard stick of means/ends and risks/rewards. He has calculated the costs (minimal) correctly. Nor does the behavior of the Iranian regime merit the moniker "irrational." It took the measure of the West six years ago and correctly decided (with a short bout of hesitation after the United States had taken Baghdad) that it could get away with its nuclear weapons program. The risks were finite, given that the United States was not going to get involved in a third war in the region and the EU "troika," incapable of any strategic option, could be strung along *ad infinitum*. Ahmadinejad is probably also correct in assuming that Israel will not go it alone. The bottom

line is: high reward, low risk—the essence of rationality. How rational has the regime been since the June election? Remember that the aftermath was not first and foremost a duel of "regime vs. people," but an intra-regime power struggle, with Ahmadinejad trying to execute a kind of putsch at the polls. The immediate target was the old guard: Rafsanjani, Moussavi et al. The target behind the target was none other than the Supreme Leader Khamenei. This struggle continued into August, with Khamenei, though aware of the threat, at first maneuvering and then coming down on the side of the President. The reason was pure *raison de régime*, and we are witnessing the outcome now: arrests, show trials, the intimidation and extinction of the opposition. Is this "rational?" It certainly is in the short run, with regime maintenance as supreme imperative, and it is in the medium-run for sure, as there won't be such a mass- and regime-based challenge soon. Also in the long run? Not if we apply Western yard sticks of rationality, as defined by economic growth, popular consent, modernization... But it is not irrational for autho-totalitarian regimes to preserve their power and crush their opponents. As long as it works. [3]Josef Joffe is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/08/is-irans-regime-rational/>
2. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/meshugaas>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef\\_joffe/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/josef_joffe/)

Raymond Tanter (2009-08-14 19:20:33)

I concur with [1]Michael Horowitz that Philip Carl Salzman and I left "rational" and "irrational" poorly defined. While I cannot speak for Professor Salzman, my use of the term "irrational" was meant to describe an ordering of preferences that departs from the usual ordering that realists posit. Realists suppose that national security is at the top of such a preference ranking, followed by other secular interests, such as the economy. The unusually high importance placed not only on religion, but on the export of Iran's religious model of government abroad, defies realist explanations of behavior. One more illustrative example was the Iranian regime's boldness in dispatching its Iraqi allies to invade Camp Ashraf, Iraq, where Tehran's main opposition, the Mujahedeen-e Khalq, is located. In attacking the camp and killing several dissidents, the regime ignored the risks of international opprobrium and further mobilized the opposition movement. [2]Raymond Tanter is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/08/is-irans-regime-rational/comment-page-1/#comment-2721>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_tanter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_tanter/)

Shmuel Bar (2009-08-20 04:00:42)

The discussion of rationality or irrationality of the Iranian regime seems to use a point of departure which is based on two (incorrect) assumptions: 1. That the prime objective of every entity—no matter what its secondary goals are—is self-preservation, and no matter what secondary goals certain actions may achieve, if they endanger the primary goal, choosing them is "irrational." 2. That the information on which "rational choices" are based is equal and know to all sides, and hence we can postulate that, given that information (which both we and the object we are analyzing know), the response that provides the most cost-effective way of arriving at the goal is the "rational" one and that which does not achieve that goal is "irrational" (particularly if it endangers other goals). Both assumptions are incorrect. If we look at individuals and societies as *gestalts* which see themselves as components of larger entities, we can easily see that an individual may sacrifice his own goal of self-preservation in the service of the self-preservation of the wider entity of which he is a part (e.g., family, country). It happens all the time and we—the rational part of the world—extol such actions as noble. For some reason we tend to draw the line at national entities and do not take into account the possibility that a collective entity (a regime or organization) sees itself as part of a larger *Umma* and that its own sacrifice may serve the preservation and victory of that larger entity. One may look at the "irrationality" of bin Laden in bringing the United States to invade Afghanistan. However, he believed that such an invasion—while it might bring about an American occupation of a Muslim country—would generate a world-wide Jihadi movement which would ultimately bring about liberation of all Muslim countries from the yoke of Western "civilizational" occupation. The loss of Afghanistan, therefore, served the higher goal. (The famed Israeli poetess Hanna Senesh, who sacrificed her life in parachuting into Nazi-occupied Hungary, wrote "blessed is the match that is burned and lit the fires in the hearts.") In the Iranian context, therefore, the question arises whether the regime does not "know" something that we may not know: that even extreme responses to its actions might be counter-balanced by a "greater good" to the goals of Islam (the appearance of the Mahdi). The fact that there is no "community of information" that we can base our assumptions on is easier to prove. True, Saddam Hussein should have known that his obstinacy in holding on to Kuwait was endangering a vital U.S. interest and that he was no match for the United States. He also "knew" that he needed only a few months to complete his nuclear program that would allow him to achieve many of his goals. Nevertheless he brought on an American response that was clearly counter-productive to his goals. Apparently, what



the Americans "knew" that they would do, he did not "know," and hence his database for decision-making (rational decision-making) was ultimately flawed. This happened again in 2003. However, there is no debate regarding Saddam Hussein's "rationality." In light of the above, we should ask ourselves not if the Iranian regime is rational but what are its assumptions and what information does it base its decisions on. We may discover that what appears to be Iranian "irrationality" derives from an incorrect reading of our world, and that were we Iranians, we would read the West and Israel in the same manner. Therefore, as Julius Caesar explained, "the fault is not in our stars (something that we can not control) but in ourselves." [1] *Shmuel Bar is director of studies at the Institute for Policy and Strategy, IDC, Herzliya, Israel.*

1. [http://www.herzliyaconference.org/Eng/\\_Articles/Article.asp?ArticleID=149&CategoryID=74](http://www.herzliyaconference.org/Eng/_Articles/Article.asp?ArticleID=149&CategoryID=74)

Michael Horowitz (2009-08-14 05:48:03)

Philip Carl Salzman [1] raises several very important questions about the factors that motivate the Iranian regime. He uses this as a jumping-off point to discuss a [2] new book by Amir Taheri concerning the internal stability of the Islamic Republic. This is important because, even as the election controversy in Iran fades into the background for most of the American public, it has become a vital part of the backdrop for Obama's foreign policy towards Iran. While I look forward to reading *The Persian Night*, I do want to raise one point about Salzman's analysis. In my opinion, he seems to conflate rational with non-religious. He writes, for example, that he had two original basic doubts about the rationality of the Islamic Republic: "First, its fundamental *raison d'être* was religious, and religious objectives, very aggressive ones, appear to be its long-term goals. Second, its extreme position on Israel appears to be fueled by a religious absolutism and triumphalism." There are many different ways to define rationality, including the most simple, which is just having ordered preferences. In that way, to the extent any state has ordered preferences uninterrupted by domestic politics, including the United States, I am not sure it is fair to call Iran irrational. If they have a clear hierarchy of policy outcomes they prefer, even one motivated by religion, that is rational. This is not meant to minimize the role of religion in Iranian government or foreign policy in the slightest. I am not an expert on Iran and I am trying to keep an open mind about what factors are most important in determining Iranian foreign policy. I am also inclined, based on my own research in other areas, to believe religion can and does play an important role in international politics in some situations. However, I am not sure why that makes someone or a government non-rational, unless you define "rational" as "following *realpolitik*." [3] *Michael Horowitz is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/08/is-irans-regime-rational/>

2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1594032408>

3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_horowitz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_horowitz/)

Raymond Tanter (2009-08-14 05:49:15)

During 2005, I had similar questions about the rationality of the Iranian regime as those [1] posed by Philip Carl Salzman, and began a year-long quantitative study to answer them, with colleagues from the Iran Policy Committee: Gen. Tom McInerney (USAF, Ret.), Gen. Paul Vallely (USA, Ret.), Capt. Chuck Nash (USN, Ret.) and R. Bruce McCole. The results were published in [2] *What Makes Tehran Tick: Islamist Ideology and Hegemonic Interests* and agree with Salzman's two main observations:

First, its [the regime's] fundamental *raison d'être* was religious, and religious objectives, very aggressive ones, appear to be its long-term goals. Second, its extreme position on Israel appears to be fueled by a religious absolutism and triumphalism.

Regarding the first point, our qualitative analysis found that grand, sometimes apocalyptic, religious goals are part of the very fabric of Iran's system of government: *Velayat-e Faqih* (Rule of the Jurisprudent), in which the highest religious authority, the Supreme Leader, also has absolute political power. While the Iranian regime will often employ "rational" strategies to get what it wants in the short term, those gambits are often part of a much less *realpolitik*, much more fanatical set of interests, such as bringing about the apocalyptic return of the Twelfth Imam, who disappeared into a state of "occultation" in the 9th century. Analysts who focus on the ostensible rationality of many of Iran's individual decisions, such as those who cite the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate to demonstrate Iran's willingness to curb its nuclear program, miss the forests for the trees. On the subject of Israel, my quantitative content analysis of Iranian statements about the United States and Israel since 1979 found that Iran's hostility toward the United States was roughly proportional to the threat Tehran perceived from the United States—about what you might expect from a rational actor. But, when it came to Israel, Tehran expressed hostility totally out of proportion to the threat perceived

from Israel. I concluded that the imperative to export the Islamic Revolution to Iran's near abroad was the primary driver of Iran's hostility toward Israel. By being even more aggressive toward Israel than its neighbors, Tehran seeks to co-opt Arab hostility toward Israel and become the leader of a pan-Islamic revolution on the Khomeini model. My researchers and I also collected and analyzed regime statements perceiving threat and categorized them according to whether the speaker perceived a threat to secular national interests, Iran's Islamic Revolution, or pan-Islamic interests. We were surprised to find that a significant majority of the statements dealt with secular interests, such as national security and the economy. But when we measured each category of statements for intensity, we found that regime officials spoke with a substantially higher level of intensity regarding threats to the Revolution and pan-Islamism than secular interests. Islamist ideology won out again. Tehran's irrationality is also apparent in its economy. The Iranian regime has validated that ideological extremists make poor economic managers; as the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and like-minded clerics have co-opted more and more of the Iranian economy, unemployment has risen, national assets have suspiciously disappeared, and inflation is rampant. As Salzman points out, the aftermath of election unrest is revealing the regime's fanaticism and its fundamental weakness, as the ideological purists are pitted against the loyal opposition. Only an extremist, paranoiac regime would feel the need to turn against an "opposition" whose leader was hand-picked to run in the Presidential election and is loyal to Iran's theological system of government. With the regime at war with itself, now is precisely the time to deny Tehran the oxygen of legitimacy. Engaging the Iranian regime was never likely to be successful, and was as much about appearing to have made a good faith effort at diplomacy to keep the anti-Tehran coalition together rather than a genuine plan for halting uranium enrichment. In the past, Tehran has used negotiations as a ploy to buy time and as a mechanism for inducing concessions from the West without reciprocating (one of those rational, short-term gambits). With the ruling clerical elites increasingly weakened and divided by street politics, the Khamenei-Ahmadinejad faction needs to take a hard line against the West for domestic political purposes against encroachment by the likes of Ayatollahs Montazeri, Rafsanjani, and Khatami. On balance, it is unlikely that the clerical elite will accept the offer of the international community for a temporary cessation of uranium enrichment so that substantive negotiations can commence. Ideological irrationality in Tehran may make a negotiated cessation of Iran's nuclear program impossible, but the upshot is that the same ideological rigidity makes the regime quite fragile. [3]Raymond Tanter is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/08/is-irans-regime-rational/>
2. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1599752980>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_tanter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_tanter/)

Ze'ev Maghen (2009-08-14 12:52:09)

The problem is not that Iran is irrational. The problem is that the rest of us are not irrational. "Irrational" motivations and aspirations are the only ones that mean anything, the only ones that pack any power. Rationality is cold and dead; irrationality is hot and bothered. Rationality is entropy; irrationality is energy. Only heat drives an engine, and only that which is "illogical" can provide a genuine and lasting *raison d'être*. Islamism's current edge over the West results, in the final analysis, from its possession of just such "irrational" motivations—morally deplorable though some of them may be in our eyes—while the "enlightened" countries of the industrialized world persist in the sorry delusion that they can run on empty, or rather on ice. We like to talk about North American and European (and some other) countries as "rational" actors or states. Much of the time it seems that this term is employed to mean something like "national entities deploying anti-idealistic policies designed to serve their own interests exclusively" or "governments focused on improving their citizens' economic welfare, physical security and individual liberties—but (God forbid!) no other dimension of their lives." In other words, in order to join the august club of "rational" states, your government must not pursue any goals that cannot be shown to be "cost effective" or "pragmatic" or "logical." Economic prosperity, social equality, democratic freedoms—yes. Faith, mystery, tribalism, nationalism, romance—no. Israel, the country that I live in, is by these "rational" criteria immediately disqualified and denied membership in the club. And thank God for that. Because if the West doesn't wake up and—instead of spending so much time decrying the "irrationality" of the Iranian regime—go out and get some good old healthy and human irrationality of its own, it is, in the long run, done for. [1]Ze'ev Maghen is professor of Persian language and Islamic history and chair of the department of Middle East studies at Bar-Ilan University in Israel.

1. [http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/zeev\\_maghen.html](http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/zeev_maghen.html)

Joshua Muravchik (2009-08-16 16:56:41)

The question of "rational" or not seems to me wholly artificial. Was Hitler "rational"? By many measures no, but he alternated bluster with professions of peaceful intent for six years to keep the democracies off balance and to encourage

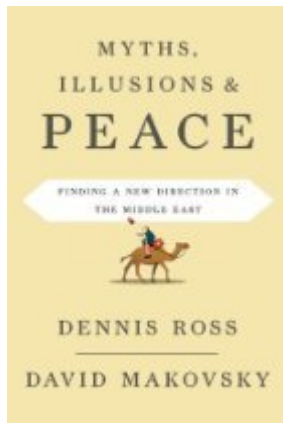
appeasement until he had reached the moment that he found optimal for launching the European war. Was Stalin rational? By many accounts he was paranoid, and his purges weakened the Red Army, for which the USSR paid a heavy price early in the war. But, all in all, he played his cards cannily enough so that he emerged the war's big winner. He accrued an empire although until then he had been extremely cautious (i.e., "rational") about military adventures. Or, consider Mao with his Great Leap Forward, Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, etc. Scarcely "rational," those adventures. Yet he raised China from a "ripe fruit," as the Japanese militarists put it, to one of the world's mightiest powers, while living a life of earthly pleasures worthy of the emperors. Unlike Hitler and Stalin, he retains his iconic status. There are fruitful questions we may ask about the motivations of Khamenei, Ahmadinejad, et al. But whether or not they are "rational" is not one of them. [1]Joshua Muravchik is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/joshua\\_muravchik/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/joshua_muravchik/)

### 'Myths, Illusions, and Peace' (2009-08-17 03:22)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. David Makovsky is Ziegler Distinguished Fellow and director of the Project on the Middle East Peace Process at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. His new book, with co-author Dennis Ross, is *Myths, Illusions, and Peace: Finding a New Direction in the Middle East*.

From [1]David Makovsky



[2] Dennis Ross and I wrote our book because we thought there is a need to base policy toward the Middle East on the complex realities that America confronts there. For too long, ideological blinders or theoretical views of the region have guided those who shaped and made U.S. policy. It is time that changed. And that is why we decided to write a book that explores the myths and the illusions that too often have driven American approaches to the region. We are not content only with exposing why certain key assumptions have been wrong and have produced mistaken policies. We want to outline and explain the key assumptions that ought to be driving what America does and how it does it in the region.

If the Middle East did not matter, we could be more cavalier in looking at wrongheaded assumptions about it. But with American interests and well-being increasingly riveted on what happens in the Middle East, we no longer have that luxury. With 9/11, we learned the hard way that the Las Vegas rule doesn't apply to the Middle East: what happens there does not stay there. Pathologies in the Middle East will not remain isolated. They can and will affect us and our security. Whether we are dealing with an ascendant Iran determined to pursue nuclear weapons, or Islamists who seek greater leverage in the region and beyond, or trying to see whether peace between Arabs and Israelis remains in the cards, we had better understand what is possible and which choices and options provide us the best possible leverage to change the behaviors of those whose behaviors must be changed.

And that, ultimately, is what we set out to do in this book. We are not just seeking to debunk mythologies. We are trying to explain the path we ought to be taking in the Middle East, while also illuminating the core set of principles and assumptions that should underpin that path. Dennis is a renowned practitioner of diplomacy and is now the head of the Obama administration's National Security Council's "Center Region" that includes the Middle East and Iran. I served as a journalist for American and Israeli publications. As a journalist, I tried not just to cover stories in the region, and not just interview leaders and those in and outside political circles. My goal was to observe the Middle East from the ground up and see the interplay of the different forces—social, economic, and political—that shape the dynamics of the region.

While Dennis and I may both look for larger trends, we understand that U.S. policy toward the Middle East cannot be shaped by abstractions such as neoconservatism or realism. Those who seek to impose grand theories on this part of the world—whether of the right or the left—miss the context from which policy must emerge. We offer what amounts to a centrist view of what to do in the Middle East. Unlike the Bush administration, we favor active diplomatic engagement. We understand the importance of power in an area characterized by conflict and coercion. But just as the military option should never be taken off the table, neither should diplomacy ever be dismissed. Nevertheless, unlike many of the Bush administration's critics—those who portray themselves as realists but who seem to reflect little understanding of Middle East reality—we don't favor indiscriminate engagement with any and all actors, including nonstate actors such as Hamas and Hezbollah. Is it "realistic" to engage diplomatically with groups like Hamas if it means we undercut Palestinians who believe in coexistence and a secular future for their people?

Our mantra is engagement without illusion. We must pursue peace without illusion while understanding the difficulty of achieving it, but recognizing the consequences of not making the effort. We must compete with the radical Islamists by using force where necessary, while realizing that only other Muslims will discredit the radicals and that any strategy for competition must rely on social, economic, political, and diplomatic tools. Engagement cannot be a panacea for peace or for preventing Iran from going nuclear, but it creates possibilities for success and produces a context for tougher policies should it fail. Developments in Iran are fluid. Yet, they point to a theme that we try to hammer in the book. Create a context whereby it is the regime in Iran and not the United States that is the issue. If international sanctions against the regime are required, it is because the world understands that it is Tehran's behavior that is problematic. Whether engagement is a successful American strategy or a failed tactic will depend upon Iran's response.

In the end, we offer a guide for a new realism—one shaped by understanding the factors that actually govern behavior in the region; one guided by always understanding the context in which our policy must proceed; and one inspired by the need to preserve hope and possibility in a region too often characterized by neither.

[3]Order from Publisher | [4]Amazon | [5]Excerpt | [6]Website | [7]Facebook

1. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC10.php?CID=6>
2. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/41d84-ch0eL.jpg>
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4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0670020893>
5. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/08/books/excerpt-myths-illusions-peace.html>
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7. <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Myths-Illusions-Peace/118303642370>

## The Egypt we have (2009-08-19 04:52)

From [1]Steven A. Cook



Mubarak is on his way back to Egypt. Well done, folks. It's amazing how much mileage we [2]can... [3]all... [4]squeeze... [5]out... of a meeting that is notable for its general lack of newsworthiness. If I had to score this one, I hate to say it, but I would give the edge to the Egyptians. I think the Obama people got snookered by the Middle East. President Hosni Mubarak came to the White House, demonstrating he is back and bilateral relations are on track without returning the favor to his host. It is true that everything—nuclear proliferation, terrorism, Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, democracy (or lack thereof), and the Arab-Israeli conflict—was on the table, but it seems President Obama did not get what he needed/wanted most: A commitment from Mubarak for an Arab gesture toward Israel.

The prevailing discourse on the Arab-Israeli conflict in the nation's capital suggests that some sort of positive signal from the Arab world to Israel will make a settlement freeze more tenable to average Israelis and encourage them to take the hard steps that lie ahead. Mubarak wasn't buying it and there is little reason to believe that he would. Egyptians argue that Cairo has a peace agreement with Israel, there is security cooperation between the two countries, and the Egyptian head of Intelligence spends a great deal of time on issues important to Israel. Why is an additional gesture necessary? More broadly, the Arab world points to the Arab Peace Initiative that then-Crown Prince Abdallah tabled in 2002, which promised Israel normalization of relations once there is a settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as the most important gesture to the Israelis. If that is not incentive enough for the Israelis to negotiate in good faith, what is? So we are left with platitudes about progress and the need for all parties to do more to create an environment for peace. I sincerely hope no one left the Vineyard for this snoozer.

In all seriousness, the result of the meeting ups the ante for Obama's planned big statement on Middle East peace. Perhaps if he throws down the gauntlet in a big forum, his international prestige will compel the parties to take the necessary steps toward peace. It is hard not believe, however, that Obama just learned a very important lesson about the limits of American power to get friendly governments to do things Washington wants.

The other items on the agenda seemed secondary, but I was not there so I don't know for sure. If Abdel Monem Said's Washington Post [6]piece is any guide, the Egyptian delegation was, among other things, seeking to enlighten its American counterpart on problems in Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen. That's all well and good. Thanks for putting it on our radar screen. Yet, what are the Egyptians bringing to the table to help Washington deal with these very difficult problems? If Egypt's response to the problem of piracy, which directly affects Egypt where it counts—in Suez Canal tolls—is any guide, Cairo does not plan on offering very much. Rather than deploy its navy to ensure safe passage in the Gulf of Aden, which leads to the Red Sea and the Canal, Egypt suggested the establishment of a regional information center on piracy, and

Mubarak proposed that merchant ships arm themselves with heavy artillery to deal with the problem.

Both President Obama and the Secretary of State Clinton confirmed that they raised human rights and reform issues, which is a good thing, but I am skeptical that the United States is going to get very far with Mubarak. It seems to me that given the nature of the regime, it's going to be [7]awfully hard for opposition groups to dislodge Mubarak or any of his likely successors even with Washington's help. I am channeling Gramsci here. It's a fantasy to believe that civil society groups can disarm the Egyptian gendarme state. It's true that Mubarak relies on coercion, the least efficient means of political control, which suggests that he is vulnerable to counter-narratives. Still, those alternative accounts of Egypt exist, whether they are liberal, Islamist, leftist, neo-Nasserist, and yet Mubarak seems secure. Yes, I know this is a generational issue. That's why I think it was good thing that President Obama and his Secretary of State raised the issue of reform even if they are intent on treating the relationship more broadly than their predecessors.

In the end, I guess the Obama administration is more Rumsfeldian than it may like to admit. You deal with the Egypt you have, not the one you want.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven\\_a\\_cook/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven_a_cook/)
2. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/16/AR2009081601760.html>
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6. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/17/AR2009081702361.html>
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Tamara Cofman Wittes (2009-08-19 17:49:39)

Steven A. Cook and Michele Dunne are [1]correct that not much of substance came out of the Mubarak visit, but I think Steven is too quick to conclude that "Mubarak came to the White House, demonstrating he is back and bilateral relations are on track without returning the favor to his host." In fact, the first sentences out of Mubarak's mouth in the [2]press availability yesterday explicitly returned the favor. He said that Obama's Cairo speech "removed all doubts about the United States and the Muslim world... the Islamic world had thought that the U.S. was against Islam, but his great, fantastic address there has removed all those doubts." The Obama administration has been working from day one to climb out of the hole dug for the United States internationally by the Bush administration. As UN Ambassador Susan Rice put it in a major [3]address last week, "in the U.S. Government [we] are reshaping and renewing American leadership for a very different era.... The United States is back." Mubarak's words and his very presence in Washington after a five-year boycott is symbolic, to the Obama administration and to the Arab world, of that renewed legitimacy. How valuable that reciprocity is, of course, depends on how deep you think the credibility hole is for the United States in the Middle East, and how valuable a commodity you think credibility is in international politics. But, if you are President Obama, and you are investing heavily in the Middle East peace process—especially if you are going to, as Steven put it, "throw down the gauntlet in a big forum"—then you probably want all the regional credibility you can get, even from somewhat impaired regional leaders like Mubarak. Personally, I am not convinced that a public pronouncement from Washington this fall, whether it is in the form of an American plan outlining a new process or American parameters for a negotiated solution, will take us very far down the path to a viable or effective Middle East peace process. The obstacles are much closer to the ground: the lack of Palestinian political consensus and the lack of Israeli political will. Efforts by third parties (like those much-sought-after gestures from Arab states) can help to work on the latter, but nothing international actors do from outside (short of [4]trusteeship) can really work on the former. Negotiating a deal with a rump Palestinian Authority while Hamas stew in Gaza is unlikely to bring security to Israelis, statehood to Palestinians, or peace to either side. Trying to do so only increases the incentive for spoilers (in Gaza and outside) to do their bloody worst. The third party with the greatest capacity to change this equation is Israel—and that issue (I mean the Gaza issue), so far, has not been a subject of much discussion between the United States and Israel. Israel's policies on access to/from Gaza and on military operations in/around Gaza are the most influential variables in altering Fatah and Hamas incentives to cut a deal for cooperation. This is not to say

that Israel could ensure the success of Palestinian unity talks if it chose; but without Israeli and Egyptian buy-in, a deal that re-opens the Gaza passages and re-introduces the PA into Gaza is not possible. It's worth exploring what such a deal would look like, how it could be packaged, and what it would mean. Even with Israeli help, factionalism might still override the effort to rebuild a Palestinian leadership with enough legitimacy and capacity to govern and to negotiate effectively with Israel. And there is a real risk that such a deal might entrench Hamas in Gaza (not that they appear to be fading now). Still, we know the consequences of not exploring this risky and uncertain path: without a Fatah-Hamas deal that reestablishes the PA's legitimate authority and reintegrates Gaza and the West Bank, there will be no change on the ground in Gaza—and without a change in the status quo in Gaza, a new Israeli military operation is only a matter of time, as myriad Israeli politicians and security professionals will tell you. A new Israeli military operation in Gaza will inevitably torpedo whatever lackluster peace process Washington has managed to gin up in the meantime, and bring us instantly back to where we were on the day President Obama took office. So, I suspect, the road to Arab-Israeli peacemaking leads less through Cairo or through Washington, so much as through Jerusalem. Let's hope that Ramadan and time on the Vineyard don't prevent the Arab and American governments alike from reaching out to Israel. [5]*Tamara Cofman Wittes is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/08/the-egypt-we-have/>
2. [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-by-President-Obama-and-President-Mubarak-of-Egypt-during-press-availability/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-President-Obama-and-President-Mubarak-of-Egypt-during-press-availability/)
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Michele Dunne (2009-08-19 11:11:29)

I agree with Steve Cook's [1]analysis of the Mubarak visit, but I disagree with his analysis of what effect U.S. actions can have on domestic Egyptian politics. First, the visit. Indeed, it seems that Mubarak got exactly what he wanted: face time with President Obama before he finalized his peace initiative, and a warm visit to show all that Mubarak is back in Washington's good books. And it is hard to see that Obama got anything. Mubarak repeated just what Obama heard from Saudi King Abdullah: the Arabs went down the road of starting to normalize relations with Israel during the peace process of the 1990s, only to have the whole venture collapse. So now they are not willing to make even limited gestures until Israel freezes settlements and restarts talks with Palestinians. Egypt will plug away at a Palestinian reconciliation and perhaps the recent Fatah conference offers a small glimmer of hope, but frankly Egypt has not accomplished much in two years of efforts and cannot promise success now. Second, what can and should the Obama administration do regarding human rights and democracy in Egypt? Here I disagree with Steve's analysis, which I view as too static. Of course we have to deal with the Egypt we have, but we also have to keep an eye on the Egypt that is coming. Mubarak won't be there forever, and we should be encouraging a gradual opening of political participation and improvement in human rights practices now and for the post-Mubarak era. It's a mistake to keep this entire relationship concentrated on a handful of Egyptians at the top of the pyramid. True, Mubarak is unlikely to do much, but he has shown the capacity to make some changes when pressed (opening up the presidency to popular election, allowing the emergence of independent media) and in any case it is important for the United States to signal to all concerned what we are hoping for in the post-Mubarak era. Civil society will not overturn the regime, but it can generate badly needed ideas for change and enlarge the field of players for a more participatory era. What did Obama and Clinton raise with Mubarak regarding democratization and human rights during the visit? Probably not much, but there was a small hint in what Mubarak said after his meeting with Obama: "And I told to President Obama very frankly and very friendly that I have entered into the [2005 presidential] elections on a platform that included reforms, and therefore we have started to implement some of it and we still have two more years to implement it." What Mubarak seems to be implying here is that Obama raised with him his unfulfilled 2005 pledge to lift the state of emergency in Egypt that has been in place since 1981. That would accord with the Obama approach as I understand it, which is to raise with Mubarak only whatever reform promises he has already made, meaning that the U.S. strategy will be shaped by Mubarak himself rather than by other elements in Egypt (civil society groups, political parties, etc). I have been thinking lately that, when it comes to democracy in the Middle East, perhaps President Bush and his team can be accused of having had too much imagination about how things could be different, or of having expected too much to happen too quickly. But so far on the democracy issue, the Obama team has shown no imagination whatsoever. [2]*Michele Dunne is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/08/the-egypt-we-have/>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele\\_dunne/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele_dunne/)

### Naïve pan-Arabism in Washington (2009-08-24 11:39)

From [1]Michael Doran



Until the end of July, the Obama administration had been signaling that the mid-August visit of the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, would be the occasion for the roll-out of a major U.S. initiative for brokering a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the weeks immediately preceding the visit, the White House scaled back expectations. On August 18, the two presidents conducted a joint press conference. At the moment in the proceedings when President Obama might have announced something substantive about the initiative, he instead treated us to the following:

George Mitchell has been back and forth repeatedly; he will be heading back out there next week. And my hope is that we are going to see not just movement from the Israelis, but also from the Palestinians around issues of incitement and security, from Arab states that show their willingness to engage Israel. If all sides are willing to move off of the rut that we're in currently, then I think there is an extraordinary opportunity to make real progress.

This statement is a bland reiteration of the doctrine of collective responsibility that the administration formulated shortly after the inauguration: everybody, including the Arab states, has to pitch in to get the bus out of the ditch. In the intervening six or seven months, the president has been doing nothing in the Middle East if not energetically wedging planks under the wheels of the peace process. In addition to dispatching George Mitchell to the region numerous times, he himself delivered his famous speech from Cairo. President Mubarak described this as a "great, fantastic address," which "removed all doubts about the United States and the Muslim world." Many seasoned observers agree with Mubarak: American credibility has been restored. Be that as it may, the speech was intended to inaugurate an era of multilateral negotiation, which, however, has not materialized. In fact, the bus might even be more deeply mired than before all of this credibility building began.

With respect to the Israelis, the administration has been crystal clear about what is expected from



them: they must freeze settlement building. For many weeks, Washington has been claiming that there is "progress" in the negotiations with the Netanyahu government over the freeze, but a mutually acceptable formula has so far eluded the two sides. This negotiation has already eaten up valuable time and slowed momentum. The administration, however, can console itself by saying that it always expected difficulty with Prime Minister Netanyahu, and an agreement will emerge sooner or later. Moreover, as President Obama recently told American Jewish leaders who met with him at the White House, putting some daylight between Washington and Jerusalem is in the interest of both parties, precisely because it bolsters U.S. credibility with the Arabs. One might disagree with the president on this particular point. Nevertheless, by the standards of his own terms of reference, prolonged disagreement with Israel is not an obvious indication of an imperiled regional strategy.

The same cannot be said with respect to the Arab response to the president's overtures. U.S. credibility, if it truly has been enhanced, certainly has not generated the expected cooperation. In fact, the Arab states have treated the president to an extraordinary rejection of his basic conception. Until just a few weeks ago, the administration was still pressing Arab states to agree to some gestures toward Israel that might arm the president with something significant to announce during the Mubarak visit. It received a resounding "No" from the Saudis, Jordanians, Kuwaitis, and Egyptians—from, that is, the closest Arab allies of the United States.

It is not all that surprising that the Arab states did not feel obliged to get out and help George Mitchell push the peace process along. What is surprising, however, was the public nature of their rejection. They made no attempt to paper over differences in order to protect and strengthen the president's supposed credibility. Instead, they openly undercut him. The Saudis led the way in announcing that the Obama doctrine of collective responsibility for peace was flawed at its core. While meeting with Secretary of State Clinton at the end of July, Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal told the press baldly that "incrementalism and a step-by-step approach has not and, we believe, will not lead to peace." It wasn't supposed to be like this. The president's advisors told him that his Cairo address, especially combined with open pressure on the Israelis, would generate a wave of Arab cooperation.

Obviously, that expectation was unfounded. This stark fact begs the question: What changes in conception must the administration make in order to recover? Here's one, modest recommendation: Drop the notion of brokering a comprehensive peace while reaching out to enemies and antagonists. This idea rests on the erroneous conception of a shared Arab interest in resolving the conflict with Israel. Anyone with a deep knowledge of Arab history knows that collective Arab interest is a shallow fiction propagated by a discredited ideology, pan-Arabism. Thirty years ago, Fouad Ajami announced the demise of this ideology in his famous Foreign Affairs article, "The End of Pan-Arabism." Although it died in the Middle East itself, the ideology continues to influence the thinking of Western diplomats and intelligence officers, who insist on using it as the prism for viewing Arab state behavior with respect to Israel. They fail to realize that the more the Arabs talk about a common interest, the further it is from a reality. In our own political culture we are attuned to the fact that loud calls to patriotism and solidarity are designed to brand somebody else as disloyal and selfish. Similarly, we need to train our ears to recognize that calls to Arab solidarity are indicative of discord, not unity.

No Arab states see any advantage to getting more deeply involved than they already are. Saudi Arabia, the most influential Arab state, has never been a major player in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and certainly does not want to start now. However, the demands of Arab politics forbid the Saudis from openly admitting as much. In order to demonstrate concern for the Palestinians, protect their leading status in the Arab system, and yet remain aloof they have formulated a position—the Arab Peace Initiative—that effectively states: "Once you guys get the bus out of the rut, we will pay for the gas." They have stuck to this position for nearly a decade.

It's about time we started building our strategies around the Saudis as they actually are rather than as we would wish them to be. For President Obama to have repeatedly and publicly called on the Saudi monarch to get behind the bus and push was to court embarrassment and failure at a moment when the president needs to build true credibility, which will be generated more by successful initiatives than by "great, fantastic" speeches.

When the president decided on his doctrine of collective responsibility, he was probably unaware that Cairo, despite enjoying good relations with Riyadh, has a limited interest in seeing the Saudis at the center of Arab-Israeli peacemaking. The Mubarak regime, precisely because it is the leading Arab interlocutor with Israel, enjoys a special status in the international system. Direct Saudi involvement would threaten the Egyptian role, thanks to the massive resources at the command of the Saudis, to say nothing of the preferential access that they enjoy both in Washington and in European capitals.

Fortunately for Mubarak, the Saudis don't covet that role anyway. Consequently we have recently witnessed the rather odd spectacle of Cairo, which already has a peace agreement with Israel, standing together with Riyadh, which does not have one, in a staunch rejection of the American call for Arab peace overtures to Israel. Both regimes can dress up their self-interested positions as a shared commitment to Arab national solidarity and Palestinian rights. We shouldn't be so naïve as to believe that a commitment to solidarity is the true engine of their shared policy. Moreover, if our closest Arab allies cannot work together in support the administration's multilateral project, what can we expect from hostile states like Syria, who have bad relations with Israel, the United States, as well as with Saudi Arabia and Egypt?

By seeking a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict while simultaneously reaching out to the enemies of the United States, the Obama administration has invited an unflattering comparison with the Carter administration. It will be recalled that President Carter's first foray into peacemaking was an initiative to re-convene the Geneva Conference, which the Soviet Union co-chaired, in an effort to bring all of the Arab states together in a process with Israel. That particular scheme ran afoul of Egyptian state interests. Sadat, who truly sought to end the conflict with Israel, was mortified by Carter's initiative, which would have given the Soviet Union, and lesser Arab states, such as Syria, a formal position from which to hold Egyptian interests hostage.

Much to the chagrin of the Carter administration, Sadat stopped confiding in Washington and opened up a secret bilateral channel with Israel. When President Carter first got wind of the Egyptian gambit, he reacted with consternation. Egypt was refusing to read from the pan-Arab script written in Washington. To his credit, however, Carter came around and dealt with the Egypt that he had rather than the one that he had wanted. Ironically, it was Sadat's rejection of Carter's pan-Arabism that afforded the American president the opportunity to broker the Camp David Accords, his greatest foreign policy achievement.

President Carter blindly shook the tree until a plumb fell into his lap. The fact that it all worked out in the end is hardly a vindication of his strategic conception—especially when one remembers that Iran blew apart in the meantime. From that shock to his worldview, Carter never recovered. Developments in Iran are again threatening to shake up the region. Let us hope that President Obama will be quicker to read the Middle East as it actually is rather than the pan-Arab fiction that his advisors penned for him.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael-doran/>

Bernard Heykal (2009-08-29 14:24:17)

The Obama administration has been pressuring the Saudis to make symbolic, even bold, steps in the direction of Israel. Crudely stated, some of the Obama advisors would like the Saudi king to act like President Sadat of Egypt when he went to Jerusalem prior to the peace treaty. This, it is claimed, will be required for Obama to pressure Israel to make concessions on the peace process—an implied quid pro quo. The Obama people clearly don't know Saudi political culture or history. It is not the Saudi style to make moves that they regard to be empty gestures, and which might backfire and show them up to be dunces in the control of the United States. Martin Indyk is correct when he states that the Saudis will not lead the peace effort, however much they might want to see the Palestinian problem resolved—and they do want this, because they would like to turn their attention to Iran and domestic economic challenges. The Saudis will act in consort with the other Arab states on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative, and will likely foot a big chunk of the bill to appease the Palestinians' sense of loss. This is as much as they will do. Like other Arabs, the Saudis also feel that Israel does not deserve to be made any kind gestures, given the recent attack on Gaza and the victory of a right-wing government in Jerusalem. It is delusional to think that the Saudis, because they are authoritarian, can afford to be so out of lockstep with the other Arab regimes and the sentiments of some many ordinary Arabs and Muslims. One last point is perhaps worth making. Saudi inertia on various fronts (Iraq, Iran, Palestine etc.) should not be understood as a result of deliberate policy decisions in Riyadh. It might in fact be the result of the inability of the Saudi royals to reach an internal consensus on a given policy, and as such they end up doing nothing. This lethargic stasis is a long-standing feature of the system, and it has often paid off in the past, when doing nothing has been serendipitously the prudent choice. [1]Bernard Heykal is a member of MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bernard\\_heykal/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/bernard_heykal/)

### Palestinian recognition of the Jewish state (2009-08-27 12:19)

From [1]Robert O. Freedman



In his June 2009 Bar-Ilan University speech, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu asserted that Palestinian recognition of Israel as a "Jewish state" was one of Israel's requirements for agreeing to the establishment of a Palestinian state. Both Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas and chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat, immediately rejected the requirement. However, if there is to be a long-lasting peace between Israel and a Palestinian state, Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state is a necessity.

Palestinians have three official objections to Israel being recognized as a Jewish state, as well as a fourth objection about which they do not speak openly, but which lies at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The three official objections are as follows:

1. It is not the task of the Palestinians to determine the nature of the Israeli state, but that of the Israelis.
2. Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state would jeopardize the position of the Israeli Arabs, who form 20 percent of the Israeli population.
3. Israel did not demand recognition as a "Jewish state" in its peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan.

The fourth Palestinian objection—which they do not assert openly lest it destroy the chances for a peace treaty with Israel—is that many Palestinians simply do not accept the legitimacy of Jewish nationalism (Zionism). For the Palestinians, and for many other Arabs as well, a Jew is defined by religion, not nationality or ethnicity, and given the position of Jews as dhimmis, or second-class religious subjects in Muslim history, the Palestinians feel that Jews have no right to be rulers, let alone rule over what they consider Muslim territory.

These attitudes, partially latent during the heyday of the Oslo peace process (1993-2000), were reinforced by the Al-Aqsa Intifada, which transformed what had been a conflict between two peoples over the same piece of territory into a religious war between Muslims and Jews, and which greatly strengthened Hamas in the process. Indeed both Hamas and non-Hamas religious leaders stressed that the Palestinians were fighting the Jews, just as Muhammad had fought the Jews who they allied with his enemies as he sought to unite the Arabian Peninsula under the banner of Islam.

What the Palestinians—and other Arabs—fail to understand is that Zionism arose as a national movement among Jews in Europe in the 19th century. Very much influenced by the national unification movements of Germany and Italy (as were the Arab nationalists of the time), as well as by the increasingly precarious position of the Jews in Eastern Europe who were beset by pogroms in Czarist Russia, Zionist thinkers such as Hess, Lilienblum and Herzl asserted that just as the French had France, the Germans had Germany and the Italians had Italy, the Jews deserved a state of their own where they could lead a "normal, national life," and the ancient Jewish homeland of Israel, then occupied by the Ottoman Empire, was chosen as the site of the future Jewish state. To be sure, the land which the Zionists wanted was already populated by Arabs; however, the Arabs who lived there at the end of the 19th century had not yet developed a national identity (that was come during the British mandate of 1922-48), and at the time primary saw themselves as Muslims or Christians, or as "Southern Syrians" or as Ottoman subjects.

This being the case, one can respond to the Palestinian reasons for not recognizing Israel as a "Jewish state" in the following manner:

1. While the Israelis alone can and should define the nature of their state, as the existential nature of the state is a central factor in the conflict (unlike, for example, the conflicts between France and Germany in the 19th and 20th centuries), then Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish State becomes central to ending the conflict.
2. There are many minorities in the Middle East, and the often negative treatment of these minorities, whether religious (such as the Copts in Egypt and the Shi'a in Saudi Arabia) or national (such as the Kurds in Turkey and the Azeris) is, in fact, linked to the nature of the country in which they live. However these minorities could be protected by treaty arrangements (currently they are not, although Turkey has begun the process of trying to address its Kurds' aspirations)—so long as they swear allegiance to the state. Indeed, should a Palestinian state which recognizes Israel as a "Jewish state" emerge, that could make it easier for Israeli Arabs to solve their own identity problems, which have become increasingly serious in recent years, as some Israeli Arab leaders have openly backed Hamas, Hezbollah and Syria in their conflicts with Israel. Thus, as part of a peace treaty between a Palestinian state and Israel, the protection of the rights, albeit not the national rights, of the Israeli Arabs could be stipulated.
3. While acknowledgment of Israel as a Jewish state was not a component of Israel's peace treaties with either Egypt or Jordan, in neither case was Israel involved in the type of existential conflict with these countries as it currently is with the Palestinians—a conflict in which it often appears that the assertion of one people's national aspirations negates those of the other people. Thus it is necessary for both sides

to recognize the legitimacy of the other's national aspirations. For the Palestinian side, this involves recognizing Israel as a Jewish State.

4. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, it is necessary for the Palestinians to recognize Israel as a Jewish state to replace the image of the Jew as dhimmi, or second class citizen, with the image of the Jew as a member of a national group exercising legitimate national rights, just as the Palestinians themselves do. Once this is done, the chances for a long-lasting peace between Israel and a Palestinian state will be greatly enhanced.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)

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Walter Reich (2009-08-28 08:13:47)

I agree in very large measure with Robert O. Freedman's [1]post. He's absolutely right not only about the three official objections by the Palestinian Authority's leadership to Prime Minister Netanyahu's requirement, in his Bar Ilan University speech, that the Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state. He's also right, I think, about the fourth, unstated, objection to Netanyahu's stipulation, which he summarizes very well. But I think that the importance of this unstated objection deserves some elaboration because of the degree to which it has become a core issue of the conflicts between Israel and its neighbors—not only the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but also the larger Arab-Israeli conflict. In fact, this core issue may even be more central, and more difficult and crucial to solve, than the traditionally-recognized core issues. Until now, those core issues have been identified as the division of Jerusalem, and the disposition of the dwindling number of actual refugees of the 1948 conflict as well as their children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, all of whom have been granted refugee status. As a result, the number of refugees is now, officially, in the millions, making their "return" to an Israel in which they never lived, perhaps for three generations, the poison pill, for Israel, of any peace agreement. A few comments about Freedman's post might clarify why the issue of the Palestinians (and other Arabs) recognizing Israel as a Jewish state may be even more important to the effort of achieving a peace treaty (that actually works) than these two traditional core issues. Freedman is right that "for the Palestinians, and for many other Arabs as well, a Jew is defined by religion, not nationality or ethnicity, and given the position of Jews as *dhimmis*, or second-class religious subjects in Muslim history, the Palestinians feel that Jews have no right to be rulers, let alone rule over what they consider Muslim territory." And he's right that these attitudes, latent during the heyday of the Oslo process, were reinforced by the Al-Aqsa Intifada. But it's important to note that the increased support for this Hamas position—not only by Palestinians but also by others in the Muslim/Arab world—was accelerated and broadened in the post-9/11 atmosphere, when this ideology was ever-more-frequently articulated and emphasized by clerics and others in that part of the world, both Palestinian and non-Palestinian. Other factors aside from the Al-Aqsa Intifada helped accomplish this transformation. One of these was the Islamist emphasis on the importance of expelling non-believers from (and reclaiming) what they considered Muslim lands, and the increasing focus by Islamists, including Al Qaeda, on what they saw as the popular issue of Palestine (using, in great measure, religious arguments, including the argument that it's forbidden for Jews to have any kind of hegemony in what they consider a Muslim lands). Freedman rightly notes that the Palestinians and other Arabs "fail to understand that Zionism arose as a national movement among Jews in Europe in the 19th century." More importantly, I think, they fail to understand—or, to be more precise, actively deny—that *religious* Zionism (as opposed to the *political* Zionism to which Freedman refers) is far older than that, and betokens a Jewish connection with the land that's very real and very ancient. In fact, the Jewish claim to the land, including Jerusalem, is so old, and so far predates Islam or the Palestinians, that it's extremely threatening and elicits repeated denials of historical reality. Thus the repeated insistence, not only by Palestinian political and religious figures but also by political and religious figures throughout the Muslim/Arab world, that the Jews have no historical basis for their claim to Israel. A few examples confined to the Jewish connection to the Temple Mount—a tiny selection of numerous examples—tellingly suffice. During the British Mandate, the Supreme Moslem Council in Jerusalem stated that the Temple Mount's "identity with the site of Solomon's Temple is beyond dispute." Yet at the Camp David summit in 2000, Yasser Arafat was adamant that a Jewish Temple had existed not on the Temple Mount but in Nablus, while Saeb Erekat—who, as Freedman notes, together with Mahmoud Abbas rejected the call by Netanyahu that Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state—said, also at Camp David (and to the astonishment of President Bill Clinton): "I don't believe there was a temple on top of the Haram [al-Sharif], I really don't." Later, Mahmoud Abbas agreed with this position, as did the Mufti of Jerusalem. And Arafat himself later decided that there had never been a Temple in Israel, the West

Bank or Gaza, including Nablus. A few years ago, a Palestinian official in charge of the Haram al-Sharif also insisted that there had never been a Jewish temple on the site. Interestingly (and not accidentally, I suspect) it was under this official that numerous artifacts from the Temple period were removed from under the platform of the Temple Mount and dumped in the valley behind the mount. Freedman is absolutely on-point in noting that a recognition by the Palestinians—and, I should add, all other Arab states that would be parties to a peace treaty—that Israel is a Jewish state would be necessary for Israelis to believe that, in exchange for evacuating numerous Israeli settlements, they’ve achieved what they’ve been seeking in every serious negotiation: a true end to the conflict, in which there are no further claims. Although Freedman believes that recognition of Israel as a Jewish state might actually, and paradoxically, be good for the Israeli Arabs (or, as they increasingly call themselves, Palestinians), I’m not convinced of this. Freedman believes that a peace treaty that included the recognition of Israel as a Jewish state could redound to the benefit of this group, which comprises some 20 percent of Israel’s population, by protecting their rights. I think that Freedman hopes that as a result of such a peace treaty, members of this group would swear their allegiance to the state. Some might, but certainly not all, or perhaps even most. Freedman also believes that the recognition of Israel as a Jewish state is important because it would replace the image among Palestinians of the Jews as *dhimmi*, or second-class citizen. But given the religious currents that have become manifest across the Arab/Muslim world in recent years—and the non-stop insistence for many years in sermons, textbooks and other teachings, especially in the West Bank and Gaza, that Jews are evil usurpers and will never have a right to be in Muslim lands—I don’t see that happening, either among Palestinians or elsewhere in the Arab/Muslim world, for a very long time, probably generations. Still, given the advantages of an official recognition of Israel as a Jewish state and of a peace treaty—whether or not it results in a durable state of peace—I think such a recognition and such a peace treaty are, for Israel, worth the uncertainty in a neighborhood that, unfortunately, has been marked (and, with the imminent ascendancy of a nuclear Iran, will be ever more marked) by the certainty of war and the possibility of extinction. [2] *Walter Reich is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/08/palestinian-recognition-of-the-jewish-state/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_reich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_reich/)

Alan Dowty (2009-08-29 04:46:10)

I would respectfully differ with my good friend [1]Robert Freedman on the importance, necessity—and attainability—of formal recognition by the Palestinian leadership of Israel as “a Jewish state.” This is not to contest the desirability of such a move, were it possible; Palestinian acceptance of Israel’s Jewishness, even if only declaratory, would be a good thing. But from a strategic perspective there is little for Israel to gain in giving this demand a high priority—or by making it a *sine qua non*. Recognition of one state by another, in traditional international diplomacy, generally depends on the recognized state having effective authority within its borders and showing willingness to abide by international commitments and rules (reason enough to oppose, for example, recognition of Hamas rule in Gaza). Sometimes the recognizing state has imposed additional criteria regarding the internal arrangements of the state being recognized. But it is hard to think of cases where the state being recognized has imposed additional conditions, even as part of peace agreements. In putting such an unprecedented condition at the top of the agenda, Israel will find little understanding or support in the international community. Moreover, putting such weight on verbal formulae does not really address Israel’s core security concerns. I’ve had occasion in the past, on this weblog, to cite my mentor Hans Morgenthau’s diplomatic precept: “Give up the shadow of worthless rights for the substance of real advantage.” Governments can make verbal commitments and then ignore them; what counts in any peace agreement are the concrete arrangements left in place that give both sides an incentive to keep the peace. The vulnerability of Sinai to Israeli reconquest helps to reinforce Egyptian observance of the peace. In any Israeli-Palestinian settlement, the concrete arrangements on the ground—demilitarization in particular—will be of much greater import than any particular words extracted from the lips of the Palestinian leaders of that particular moment in time. Better real advantage than verbal shadows. It may seem contradictory to question the value of mere words while pointing out that these words are one of the hardest concessions for Palestinian leaders to make, and may in fact be a deal-breaker. (A cynic might claim that this was the purpose, in which case the demand has been brilliantly conceived and executed.) But life is full of seeming contradictions. It is pointless to contend with what others may continue to believe in their heart of hearts, but it is within the realm of possibility to ensure that they do not have the means or opportunity to act on those beliefs. [2] *Alan Dowty is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/08/palestinian-recognition-of-the-jewish-state/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)

Robert Satloff (2009-08-30 23:12:24)

I apologize in advance for having a simpleton's view of [1]this issue but here it is, nonetheless. If it is to be successful, a Palestinian-Israeli permanent status agreement will end all claims that each national group has on the other. Territory is a major element of these claims, but not the only or even the most important one. Unlike most international conflicts, which are about land, resources or national ambition, this conflict is about something deeper: rights, identity and legitimacy. Or put into a historian's lingo, a permanent status agreement—if it is indeed to end all claims, once and for all—will have to address not just issues raised by the 1967 war (e.g., what prompted Israel to act preemptively and what the repercussions of that action were) but issues left unaddressed from the 1948 war. There are many such issues, but there can be little debate that the first and foremost is recognition of what the relevant UN resolutions repeatedly called "the Jewish state." Without such an unambiguous statement of recognition, it is difficult to imagine that any agreement will indeed have ended all claims. (Of course, Israelis and Palestinians can reach many different types of accords short of a "permanent status agreement," but we should not fool ourselves into believing that the latter doesn't require what it clearly requires to live up to its name.) To me, it is not surprising that an Israeli government has made this demand a *sine qua non* of a permanent status agreement. What is surprising is that no Israeli government has made this a *sine qua non* until now. The United States voted for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine 62 years ago in the UN General Assembly. The United States should not be indifferent to Israel's request that endorsing its status as the Jewish state be enshrined in a permanent status agreement designed finally to end the conflict over Palestine, once and for all. [2]Robert Satloff is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/08/palestinian-recognition-of-the-jewish-state/>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_satloff/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_satloff/)

Adam Garfinkle (2009-08-31 13:12:00)

I find the [1]comments by Bob Freedman, Walter Reich, Alan Dowty and Rob Satloff fascinating and helpful to me. I do not wish to remark on all the points that have been raised, but to discuss just a few. I think Bob Freedman has the facts right, though I share Walter Reich's skepticism about the implications of Palestinian acceptance of a "Jewish state" on Israeli Arabs. No one seems to doubt the desirability of such an acceptance; there are differences over whether it can be secured and whether it is worth a high price, or any price, to secure it. My two related concerns, in a sense, precede this question. First, it seems to me that asking the Palestinian Authority to accept Israel as a Jewish state borders on asking its permission for Jews to be who they (most of them, anyway) say they are. Jews do not need permission from anyone to define themselves either as a people or a nation (of which more below), nor do they need from the Palestinian Arabs what they already have from the (so-called) international community, namely, legal title to most, though not all, of Mandatory Palestine—final borders pending negotiations among the parties, of course. What the current Israeli government, or any Israeli government, can and should ask is for the Palestinians to recognize the legal status of the State of Israel in international law. To ask more than that is to ask for a Palestinian intellectual consensus on an esoteric point in the philosophy of history, and that, it seems to me, is asking too much. Second, it is asking too much because even Jews do not agree fully on what a Jewish state means. This is an old argument, as everyone should know. There are three ways to mean "Jewish" as attached to the noun "state": Jewish as an ethnic description, Jewish as a cultural description, and Jewish as a religious (in the narrow Western definition) description. These correspond to Jews as a nation, a people, and a faith community. As far as current international norms go, a nation and arguably a people can have a state; a faith community cannot. These definitions generally overlap, but they are not the same things. Moreover, Zionism in its many forms has never entirely come to terms with this definitional ambiguity. In its essence, Zionism is nationalism and Jews are defined as a nation. But that doesn't quite work for all purposes at hand, because conversion into Judaism as a faith community over the centuries is what has created a population that goes well beyond an ethnic group as such. The concept of peoplehood is broader than that of nation, and it is both the essential rabbinic and (suitably secularized) the Bundist definition. And note: one can affirm Jewish peoplehood and not be a political Zionist (Asher Ginsburg, Albert Einstein, George Steiner, etc.). Ah, but as already suggested, to travel from nation to people one must engage faith community, for conversion is a religious ritual, and it is what makes the human subjects of Jewish "nationalism," lo these many centuries on, different from, say, German or Japanese nationalism, for one cannot and never could convert to be a German or a Japanese. It is, needless to say, a complex matter. In this light, asking the Palestinians to affirm that Israel is a "Jewish state" could well bring forth a question in response: "What exactly do you mean by that?" And that could well turn out to be more trouble than it's worth to answer under current circumstances. Just to illustrate how not-so-simple this is, Daniel Pipes in his blog recently [2]defined Jews as a faith community. I asked Daniel if that were some sort of error, perhaps an error of haste. He replied "no", that he had given it thought, and that, in his view, this was the original meaning of the term anyway. He also said that an ethnic definition was "Nazi"-like. I am not sure he's right that

the original definition was a religious one (see Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Origins of Jewishness* [1999]), and if an ethnic definition is Nazi-like, how is it different from that of strictly secular political Zionists—who are certainly Jews as far as I am concerned? I am by far most comfortable with the peoplehood definition, not just because I think it is the most historically accurate, but also because it excludes the least. It includes Ben-Gurion, say, who would be “out” if faith were the definitive core. It includes George Steiner, who would be “out” if nationalism were the definitive core. But the peoplehood definition is, in a way, admittedly pre-modern, pre-compartmentalized, and so hard to explain, particularly to those unaware of the peculiarities of Jewish history. (We went through all this before with the “Zionism is racism” business, of course.) To me, this suggests that if the current Israeli government wants to exert an effort to explain why and how Israel is a “Jewish” state, it should first decide what it means by that and then have a discussion with Jews throughout the world. If anyone else cares to eavesdrop, fine. But to insist that some do (Palestinians, say) and that they affirm the result—this is highly unusual, if not to say rather [3]Jewcentric. Here anyway is the acid test: If the Palestinian Authority should come one day to grant all of Israel’s terms for an end-of-conflict peace accord except recognition of Israel as a Jewish state, would you advise the Israeli government of that day to walk away from the deal? I would not. [4]Adam Garfinkle is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/08/palestinian-recognition-of-the-jewish-state/>
2. <http://www.danielpipes.org/blog/2009/08/jewish-not-the-same-as-pro-israel>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0470198567>
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)

### False comfort on Afghanistan (2009-08-31 10:46)

From [1]Michael Reynolds



The other week over at ForeignPolicy.com, in a [2]post titled “The ‘safe haven’ myth,” Stephen M. Walt offered six reasons to be skeptical of the argument that a Taliban-ruled Afghanistan would pose a significant threat to the United States. On the same website, Peter Bergen [3]rebutted Walt. Running through Walt’s six reasons one by one, Bergen argues that the historical record severely undercuts Walt’s assumptions about how a Taliban-dominated Afghanistan would have little impact on US security.

Bergen is unsparing in his criticism. Yet although he calls Walt’s sixth reason “one of his flimsiest arguments,” he misses just how flimsy it is.

Walt writes, “Sixth, one might also take comfort from the Soviet experience. When the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, the mujaheddin didn’t ‘follow them home.’” Bergen rightly responds that even before the U.S. invasion, Al Qaeda was carrying out attacks on American targets while based in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.

But what he might have stated is that self-described mujaheddin in fact did follow the Soviets home, and did so quite deliberately. Afghanistan served to support violent Islamism in former Soviet Central Asia and inside Russia in the Caucasus.



Islamist militants in former Soviet Central Asia—most famously in Uzbekistan, but also in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan—used Afghanistan as a base of training and support and cooperated with the Taliban. The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 knocked back these movements for a time. For the past several years their members have been preoccupied with defending themselves inside Afghanistan, and little was heard from them.

The resurgence of the Taliban, however, may have already made it possible for some of these militants to again take up arms in Kyrgyzstan. At the least, others inside Afghanistan are again openly talking of carrying their jihad deeper into Central Asia. For two recent reports, see [4]this one by New York Times correspondent David Lloyd Stern, and [5]this one by The Guardian's Ghaith Abul-Ahad.

Stern is a long-time friend whom I have known since our days studying Russian as undergraduates, and he has extensive experience reporting from throughout the former Soviet Union. Writing from Kyrgyzstan, he correctly notes that in the past, Central Asian governments have been quite happy to hype the threat of Islamist militants to suppress dissent and justify crackdowns. But as Abul-Ahad reports from within Afghanistan, there exist militants all too willing again to take up arms in the name of Islam against the governments in Tashkent, Bishkek, and Dushanbe as well as Kabul.

Afghanistan's Central Asian neighbors have unsophisticated armies made up of poorly trained and motivated conscripts, and had a difficult time countering these movements in the late 1990s. It is likely that this time around, their insurgent opponents will prove more capable in combat. U.S. military personnel fighting in Afghanistan have observed a steady and marked improvement in the Taliban's tactical and combat skills. This is not unusual; practice makes perfect. But it does not bode well for the Central Asians.

Were the United States to withdraw from Afghanistan, there is good reason to believe that the surrounding countries will again face violent insurgencies. This is not to predict a domino effect of toppled governments. States waging counter-insurgency campaigns can compensate for the lack of professionalism of their security forces by applying coercion and repression more widely. Uzbekistan's security forces in particular are known for their mercilessness, and it is possible that Uzbekistan and the other states could contain their insurgencies by continuing to employ draconian measures. But it is, however, to predict that the misery index in countries bordering Afghanistan will go up. True, some might argue, the United States would not be paying that cost directly, Central Asians would be, and therefore it is not a U.S. national interest. But in that case we should at least be honest about it, and not ignore it in an effort to salve our collective conscience.

The fallout from Taliban-led Afghanistan was not restricted to Central Asia, however, but extended into Russia. Boris Yeltsin's ill-advised, even criminal, attempt to crush the defiant Mafioso-state of Johar Dudaev by invasion in 1994 ignited a popular insurgency in Chechnya. Joining the Muslim Chechens who rallied to defend their homeland were self-styled mujaheddin who had trained in Afghanistan. Their ranks included Samir Saleh Abdullah Al-Suwailem, a Saudi citizen known more famously as Amir Khattab.

Khattab was a dedicated jihadist. Before coming to Chechnya, he had trained in Afghanistan and fought in Tajikistan. Although the depth of his tactical prowess has been debated, his charisma was exceptional. By 1996 he emerged not merely as the leading foreign jihadi in Chechnya, but as one of the principal power brokers inside Chechnya.

After the end of the first Chechen war and Russia's withdrawal from Chechnya in 1996, Khattab teamed up with the most famous of the Chechen warlords, Shamil Basaev. Basaev himself has stated that he had trained in Khost, Afghanistan in the spring of 1994, prior to the beginning of the first Chechen war. Together, Basaev and Khattab established their own camps inside Chechnya where they trained

volunteers from throughout Russia's North Caucasus in guerrilla warfare. Their activities, which extended to involvement in hundreds of kidnappings inside Chechnya and neighboring regions, undermined the elected government of Aslan Maskhadov and created hellish conditions for inhabitants in Chechnya and surrounding areas.

Whether by design or accident, Chechnya and its environs were coming to resemble Afghanistan. Residents were being reduced to having to choose between unbridled criminality or a rudimentary order based on a harsh interpretation of sharia. It is worth noting that during this period in 1997 Ayman al-Zawahiri, described often as the mastermind of Al Qaeda, was arrested and detained in Dagestan for five months. Zawahiri was searching for a safe haven, and had been trying to make his way to Chechnya. Upon being released from Dagestan he then made his way to Afghanistan.

The aim of Basaev and Khattab was to drive Russia out of the whole North Caucasus and unite the region in an Islamic state. To assist their cause they recruited Adallo Aliyev, a famous Dagestani poet, as their figurehead leader. (I met with Adallo on several occasions while he was on the lam in Turkey. Adallo was later amnestied by Dagestani authorities due to his age and stature as a cultural icon. He was the subject of a good [6]overview of the turbulent North Caucasus in *Der Spiegel* this past July.)

Basaev and Khattab attempted to execute their plan in 1999 and invaded Dagestan, triggering the second Chechen war. Shortly after, the Taliban "recognized" Chechnya to underscore its solidarity. It was, of course, an almost wholly symbolic act, but one that did encourage still more Chechen fighters to identify still more closely with the radical Islam of the Taliban. According to the U.S. State Department, Basaev returned to Afghanistan in 2001, and allegedly also sent Chechens to fight in Afghanistan, returning the favor, as it were.

The second Chechen war proved to be much more difficult for the jihadists. Khattab was poisoned in 2002, and Basaev was killed in 2006. But from 1995 until about 2001, Chechnya was of immense importance to the jihadi propaganda and fundraising. The example of Chechnya seemingly illustrated the underlying promise of jihad: that a small group of Muslims could defeat a major power so long as they trusted in God and their arms.

After U.S. forces entered Afghanistan in 2001, news accounts were filled with implausible claims of "Chechens" fighting in the ranks of the Taliban and Al Qaeda, to the point that the uninitiated would have thought that the Chechens were a major ethnic group inside Afghanistan, and not a nation of barely a million in the Caucasus. Clearly, these are exaggerations. The best explanation I have seen for this phenomenon is that the word "Chechen" became shorthand among Afghans for any Russian-speaking Muslim. The glory associated with Chechnya's struggle against Russia up until Chechnya's pacification popularized the Chechens and endowed them with a mythic reputation vastly larger than their numbers. Nonetheless, a multitude of sources leave no doubt that the ties between the Taliban and jihadists in Chechnya were considerable.

The presence of jihadi training camps inside Afghanistan and the Taliban's support for foreign jihadists were not the sole or even primary cause of Islamist insurgencies in Central Asia or the Caucasus, but they did contribute to the development of those insurgencies. The only consoling thought one can take from the Russian or post-Soviet experience is the suggestion that even states with limited capabilities can contain jihadist insurgencies, albeit at a high price of repression.

In short, when contemplating the consequences of a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Soviet experience should give us no comfort. To the contrary, that experience would tell us to expect that the return of a Taliban-led Afghanistan will invigorate jihadists and again facilitate the spread of militant Islam

inside Central Asia, the Caucasus, and elsewhere.

In his [7]response to Bergen, Walt makes no attempt to dispute Bergen's critique. Instead, he writes that his original post really was directed toward the omission of any cost-benefit analysis in the debate over Afghan policy. The need to weigh objectives and resources and define clear priorities in policymaking is axiomatic. Given the consistent tendency of policy wonks only to insist that their pet issue deserves a higher priority and greater resources without deigning to explain what issues deserve fewer resources, perhaps this point, however basic, bears repeating.

I actually share some of Walt's pessimism about the U.S. course in Afghanistan and I can agree that that question of whether our policies might be making things worse rather than better is an urgent one. But what I cannot agree with is the refashioning of history to make us feel better about our preferred policy choices. If Afghanistan is all about bad choices, and I think it is, we owe it ourselves to be honest about how bad those choices are when we debate them.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_reynolds/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_reynolds/)
2. [http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/08/18/the\\_safe\\_haven\\_myth](http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/08/18/the_safe_haven_myth)
3. <http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/blog/9926>
4. <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/asia/090823/kyrgyzstan-taliban-spillover?page=0,1>
5. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/aug/18/taliban-committee-kunduz-afghanistan>
6. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,640252,00.html>
7. <http://bit.ly/1zkua9>

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Walter Laqueur (2009-08-31 16:45:59)

I could not agree more with Michael Reynolds' [1]warning against refashioning of history on Afghanistan and the illusions about the harmlessness of a Taliban regime in Afghanistan. But with all this, time is overdue to think about a U.S. (and NATO) exit strategy. Today's newspapers report about the need for a new strategy because the old does not work. But what strategy will work if the forces at the disposal of the commanders are insufficient—and will remain insufficient? There is even less enthusiasm in Europe than in the United States to pursue the war in Afghanistan with the power and the relentlessness needed in order to prevail. In these circumstances a withdrawal seems to be the obvious choice. There is yet another consideration. The Taliban are a danger—but not only (and perhaps not even mainly) for the United States. However, at present the countries adjacent to Afghanistan labor under the misperception that by providing bases and the right to pass their territory, they are doing the United States a great favor for which they should be rewarded. In the absence of U.S. and NATO forces, these neighbors (SCO, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, plus India and Pakistan) would be compelled to accept Afghanistan as their problem. The SCO, which includes Russia, China as well as the Central Asian countries, has been in existence since 2001. It was probably not meant to be primarily a defense organization, but the logic of events has been driving it in this direction. Its military maneuvers in 2005 and 2007 took place very close to Afghanistan, and not by accident. It has been reported that China might be willing to accept Taliban rule, if the Taliban would refrain from intervention outside their country—such as in China. (The Uzbek leaders seem to have played with the same idea but reached the conclusion, albeit reluctantly, that it was largely wishful thinking.) Such an understanding may (or may not) work with regard to China, but almost certainly not with regard to India and the countries of Central Asia. A collapse in Central Asia, needless to say, would be a disaster for Russia. But why not try to reach an agreement now with India and the SCO about common interests and common action in Afghanistan? Because wishful thinking is not an American monopoly, everyone will try to postpone a costly and messy intervention as long as possible. Perhaps the danger is greatly exaggerated, perhaps some wise investments will solve (or assuage) the problem, perhaps there will be a major earthquake. [2]Walter Laqueur is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/08/false-comfort-on-afghanistan/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_laqueur/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_laqueur/)

## 3.9 September

### Saudi pushers, energy rehab (2009-09-01 00:41)

From [1]Gal Luft

Saudi Prince Turki al-Faisal, former ambassador to the United States, has a suggestion for America: drop this nonsense called energy independence. In a strongly-worded [2]essay in *Foreign Policy* magazine, which coincides with the 150th anniversary of Edwin Drake's discovery of oil in the United States, Turki lambastes American politicians for invoking energy independence, which "is now as essential as baby-kissing," accusing them of "demagoguery." For him, energy independence is "political posturing at its worst—a concept that is unrealistic, misguided, and ultimately harmful to energy-producing and consuming countries alike." "Like it or not," Turki concludes, "the fates of the United States and Saudi Arabia are connected and will remain so for decades to come." (He said much the same in this clip from last May; if you don't see it, click [3]here.)

[kml \_flashembed movie="http://youtube.com/v/IGOGLLT7p3E" width="425" height="350" wmode="transparent" /]

We've heard these lines before each time the United States made progress toward lessening its dependence on oil. In February, for example, Ali al-Naimi, the Saudi oil minister, warned of a "nightmare scenario" if consuming countries made progress in the development of alternative fuels. A decade ago, his predecessor, Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani, called technology "the real enemy for OPEC." This is understandable. After all, no pusher wants to see his client circling around a rehab clinic. For Saudi Arabia, a world where oil plays a marginal role is the nightmarish materialization of the Saudi saying, "My father rode a camel, I drive a car, my son flies a jet plane, his son will ride a camel."

More troubling is the parade of prominent Americans who deride the notion of energy independence, viewing it as jingoistic, unsophisticated, naive and misleading. One cannot doubt the patriotism of former CIA director John Deutch, who said "energy independence is not a constructive idea," or former secretary of defense and energy James Schlesinger, who called it a "forlorn hope," or Pulitzer Prize winner Daniel Yergin who referred to it as "pipe dream," or Andy Grove, former chairman of Intel, who called the concept "a faulty goal," or even the members of the Council on Foreign Relations energy security task force who went so far as to accuse those promoting energy independence of "doing the nation a disservice." But just like Prince Turki, all of those distinguished Americans misunderstand what energy independence really is. As a result, they underestimate our ability to get there.

Contrary to popular conception, energy independence does not mean self-sufficiency. It doesn't mean not importing any oil or walling ourselves off from the global market. Energy independence is not a function of the amount of oil we consume or import. Rather, energy independence means turning oil from a strategic commodity second to none—one that underlies the global economy and determines the course of world affairs—into just another commodity to trade.

Oil's strategic status stems from its virtual monopoly over fuel for transportation, which in turn underlies our entire way of life. Worldwide, 95 percent of our transportation energy is petroleum-based. Our cars, trucks planes and ships can run on nothing but petroleum. This is why the much-touted policies that

aim to either increase oil supply through domestic drilling or decrease its use by boosting fuel efficiency, while helpful, are insufficient as they do not address the factor that gives oil its strategic status: the petroleum-only vehicle.

Energy independence thus requires breaking the virtual monopoly of oil over transportation fuels, and this can only be done via competition in the transportation fuel sector. (Think about our electricity sector, where a variety of competing energy sources—coal, natural gas, nuclear, solar and wind—can contribute to the grid.) If our cars and trucks were able to run on other fuels in addition to those refined from petroleum, Saudi Arabia's oil would have to compete over the drivers' wallet against utility companies, alternative liquid fuels producers and natural gas suppliers. But as long as our cars are gasoline-only, oil remains the only game in town, which is exactly what Saudi Arabia wants.

A few types of vehicle technologies allow us to break oil's monopoly. The first, and most affordable, is the flex-fuel vehicle that can run on any combination of gasoline and alcohol (alcohol does not mean just ethanol, and ethanol does not mean just corn). It costs an extra \$100 per new car to make a regular car flex-fuel. All it takes is a fuel sensor and a corrosion-resistant fuel line. An Open Fuel Standard ensuring that every new car sold in the United States be flex-fuel would not only give rise to an industry of alternative fuels and the associated refueling infrastructure, but it would also drive foreign automakers to add fuel flexibility to all of their models, effectively making it an international standard.

Electricity is another transportation fuel that can compete against oil. It is cheap, largely clean, domestically produced and can be made from multiple sources. Its refueling infrastructure is widely available. All that is needed for an electric car to connect to the grid is an extension cord. Most automakers have already committed to produce models of limited-range pure electric vehicles (EV) or plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEV). The latter allow drivers to travel on stored electric power for the first 20-40 miles, after which the car keeps running on the liquid fuel in the tank, providing the standard 200-400 mile range. For the 50 percent of Americans who drive 25 miles per day or less, shifting from barrels to electrons would make the visit to the local gas station a rarity. If all of those Americans owned PHEVs, a population the size of New York, Florida and Pennsylvania combined would be off oil most days of the year. A PHEV would normally drive 100-150 miles per gallon of gasoline. If it is also made as flex-fuel and fueled with a blend of 80 percent alcohol and 20 percent gasoline, oil economy could reach over 500 miles per gallon of gasoline.

These technologies are either at or few years away from commercialization. If we only understood energy independence properly and took the relevant measures to open the transportation fuel market to competition, oil would be far less central to the world economy than it is today. If we ensure that new cars are platforms on which fuels can compete rather than perpetuate the petroleum standard, then Prince Turki's descendants, on the 200th anniversary of Drake's discovery, will be more likely to ride camels than private jets. No wonder he wants us to think otherwise.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal\\_luft/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal_luft/)
2. [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/17/dont\\_be\\_crude](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/17/dont_be_crude)
3. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGOGLLT7p3E>

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Robert O. Freedman (2009-09-11 02:44:39)

In [1]looking at U.S. energy vulnerability, I certainly agree that we should import more from Canada and Mexico. Indeed, the Obama administration, despite environmental pressure, is moving to increase imports from Canada. The problem is with Mexico. Mexican oil production is dropping rapidly, but Mexican law all but prevents foreign invest-

ment in the Mexican oil industry, which is dominated by the Mexican National Oil Company, PEMEX. PEMEX's CEO was just fired by Mexican President Calderon and was replaced by a University of Chicago-trained economist, but it is likely to take a long time before the notoriously inefficient PEMEX bureaucracy is transformed and the company is revitalized. Until Mexican law is changed—and Calderon has been trying, so far unsuccessfully, to change the law—the United States can't depend, long-term, on oil imports from Mexico. [2]Robert O. Freedman is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/09/saudi-pushers-energy-rehab/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)

Gal Luft (2009-09-13 05:12:39)

The [1]comments on my [2]post only reaffirm my original point: the policy debate is overly dominated by much-touted policies that aim to either increase oil supply through domestic drilling in North America (see Salzman and Singer's comments) or decrease its use by boosting fuel efficiency or artificially raising the price of gasoline (see Mandelbaum and Lieber's). Such policies, while helpful in preventing dollars from migrating to the Middle East, are ineffective when it comes to breaking oil's monopoly in transportation fuels, as they do not address the factor that gives oil its strategic status: the petroleum-only vehicle. Experience of the past three decades clearly shows that whenever non-OPEC producers like the United States increase their production, OPEC decreases supply accordingly, keeping the overall amount of oil in the market the same. In other words, when we drill more, OPEC drills less. What happens when we use less oil due to gasoline taxes or mandatory fuel efficiency standards? We just had a good demonstration on this last year. In 2008, gasoline prices soared to nearly \$5 a gallon. Think of it as a \$3 gasoline tax, which is much more than we would be able to impose today through legislation. As a result U.S. gasoline demand dropped by nearly 10 percent. This was as if the U.S. fleet increased fuel efficiency by 2.5 mpg overnight. Improving fuel economy by that much could have saved the United States almost one million barrels per day. What was OPEC's response? Between October and December that year, OPEC dropped production by roughly 4 mbd, which is more than the amount of oil that was actually saved due to reduced consumer demand. Strategically, domestic drilling and increased fuel efficiency are two sides of the same coin. The axiom to remember is: when non-OPEC countries drill more, OPEC drills less, and when we use less, OPEC also drills less. Playing in the same playing field with the likes of Hugo Chavez, Saudi King Abdullah, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Vladimir Putin is playing a game we can never win. They have most of the world's oil; we have—drill everywhere—barely three percent of conventional oil reserves. The sooner we adjust our thinking and focus on game-changing, transformational solutions, instead of inconsequential, time-buying policies, the sooner we can reach true and lasting energy independence. [3]Gal Luft is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/09/saudi-pushers-energy-rehab/#comments>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/09/saudi-pushers-energy-rehab/>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal\\_luft/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal_luft/)

Robert J. Lieber (2009-09-06 18:05:25)

Two points are absolutely fundamental [1]here—and have been ever since the first oil shock in 1973-74. Without these, much of the rest of energy security debate is of limited relevance. First, not energy independence, but reduced vulnerability is key. This means reduction in America's relative dependence on imported oil and greater efficiency in how we consume oil. Alas, whereas the United States imported one-third of its oil in 1973, the figure now is closer to two-thirds. Second, and as Michael Mandelbaum rightly [2]observes, raising the price of gasoline is crucial. Exhortation, incentives, and moral suasion only go so far. Without clear and sustained price signals, fundamental change in oil consumption will be slow and reversible. Without a serious, long term increase in tax policy—or an exceptional act of political courage and leadership—which congress typically sees as the third rail of politics, it may require an unprecedented crisis before this problem is seriously addressed. [3]Robert J. Lieber is professor of government and international affairs at Georgetown University.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/09/saudi-pushers-energy-rehab/>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/09/saudi-pushers-energy-rehab/comment-page-1/#comment-3104>
3. <http://explore.georgetown.edu/people/lieberr/?PageTemplateID=156>

Max Singer (2009-09-09 09:22:57)

Robert Lieber is [1]correct that energy vulnerability, not energy independence, is our real concern, but he uses the

wrong measure of vulnerability. The correct measure of vulnerability is the worldwide balance between current oil production capacity and current oil demand. It is this balance that determines world oil price. Oil storage can also potentially reduce vulnerability, and the OECD nations already have large amounts of oil in storage. The United States is hurt when the price of oil goes too high, regardless of what share of our consumption is imported. It is high oil prices, caused by production capacity being too little above oil demand, that gives oil suppliers power. If it is a buyers' market, as it often has been, and as recently as a decade or so ago, oil suppliers do not have political power—although some of them have more money than we would prefer. The worldwide balance between supply and demand is improved when anyone reduces demand, or when anyone increases production. At least for the next several decades there is ample oil in the ground—in various forms—so that production capacity can be comfortably above demand if sufficient investment is made. Oil prices could be high if total consumption ten years from now were lower than today, the same as today, or higher than today. And those prices could also be low if consumption then were higher, lower or the same. It is not the level of consumption that counts, it is the ratio of production capacity to consumption that matters. And production capacity is within our collective power to determine; it depends on investment in production equipment and facilities—and on overcoming various political barriers to production. [2]Max Singer is an independent consultant on public policy and a senior fellow at Hudson Institute.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/09/saudi-pushers-energy-rehab/comment-page-1/#comment-3322>

2. [http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff\\_bio&eid=singmax](http://www.hudson.org/learn/index.cfm?fuseaction=staff_bio&eid=singmax)

Philip Carl Salzman (2009-09-09 09:21:42)

Robert Lieber, in [1]discussing American "vulnerability" in filling U.S. oil needs, stresses the high level of dependence on importation; currently two-thirds of U.S. needs are imported. But all sources of oil are not the same, and this should be taken into account in considering various kinds of vulnerability. In 2008, the United States [2]imported 9.8m barrels of crude a day; 5.4m of that came from OPEC. But 4.4m came from non-OPEC sources, the great bulk from Canada (which supplied more crude to the United States than Saudi Arabia did) and Mexico. Would it not be realistic to consider Canada and Mexico potentially more secure and more reliable sources for crude than, say, OPEC? And if so, would not one strategy to improve U.S. oil security be to encourage Canadian and Mexican oil production, and to increase imports from those countries at the expense of OPEC? Such measures would not preclude increased efficiency in oil use, the development of alternative fuels, and so on. This rather prosaic and obvious suggestion appears to be lost on the Obama administration, which instead seems keen to lead an environmentalist crusade against Canadian oil, which, while slightly dirtier at source, is equivalent to other sources by the time it reaches the pump. [3]Philip Carl Salzman is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/09/saudi-pushers-energy-rehab/comment-page-1/#comment-3322>

2. [http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/dnav/pet/pet\\_move\\_impcus\\_a2\\_nus\\_epc0\\_im0\\_mbbldpd\\_a.htm](http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/dnav/pet/pet_move_impcus_a2_nus_epc0_im0_mbbldpd_a.htm)

3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)

Michael Mandelbaum (2009-09-01 17:37:19)

Gal Luft's excellent [1]post prompts two comments. First, the present global pattern of oil production and consumption underlies the most serious foreign policy problems the United States faces. Huge revenues accrue to the autocratic leaders of oil exporting countries—Chavez of Venezuela, Ahmadinejad and the mullahs of Iran, Putin of Russia—who use them to support policies that are consistently unhelpful to, and sometimes extremely dangerous for, the United States. Some of the oil wealth the Gulf sheikhdoms collect finds its way into the coffers of terrorist groups. Thus it is that the United States is waging a war against terrorism and funding both sides. The single measure that would do most to enhance the security of the United States, in my judgement, is to help to reduce substantially the revenues that oil producers collect by reducing substantially the American consumption of imported oil. Second, an indispensable method for doing so is to raise the price of gasoline in the United States, which would promote both conservation and the expanded use of non-oil-based technologies for transportation, of the kind that Gal Luft describes. Nothing would do more for American foreign policy than a higher gasoline tax. Here the American political system has failed miserably. Elected officials never advocate such taxes, because they believe—alas, probably correctly—that to do so is to commit political suicide. The Western Europeans and Japanese are generally anything but zealous and energetic in their defense of Western values and interests, but, with their much higher gasoline taxes, on this crucial issue they perform far better than the United States does. [2]Michael Mandelbaum is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/09/saudi-pushers-energy-rehab/>

2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_mandelbaum/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_mandelbaum/)

### Quiet dogs in Iraq (2009-09-02 14:49)

From [1]Mark T. Kimmitt

Inspector Gregory: "Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?"

Holmes: "To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."

"The dog did nothing in the night-time."

"That was the curious incident," remarked Sherlock Holmes.



The situation in Iraq appears much the same: suspiciously quiet. The recent attacks against the foreign and finance ministries attracted little more than a one-day story in the press. Yet, these attacks could be a precursor to more violence, and should give pause to those that believe the job in Iraq is done. Despite progress, there remains a significant number of unresolved grievances such as the status of Kirkuk, distribution of oil revenues, inadequate incorporation of the Sons of Iraq into the security services and, in general, a "winner-take-all" attitude by the Maliki government. Any of these could lead to a reversal on the ground and a renewal of widespread violence.

Others would suggest the opposite. They point to noteworthy reductions in attacks against, and casualties among American forces, the easing of widespread tensions between the Sunni and Shi'a communities, and a general war-weariness which often precedes a long-term reduction in violence.

So which side is right? Is Iraq on the verge of backsliding, or is it moving towards a normal, albeit rocky, political situation which militates for the final departure of U.S. troops in 2011? Will 2010 be the year when it all falls apart or finally comes together? Will Iraq transform itself into a relatively pluralistic nation at peace with itself and its neighbors, and remain an ally of the United States?

On this, the United States cannot sit idly by and allow the situation to determine its own path. U.S. involvement in shaping and achieving an outcome positive to our interests is critical. However, one wonders if this can happen, given the comparatively *laissez-faire* policy embraced since the elections. I believe the current situation argues for more administration effort, and a return to direct administration involvement in order to ensure a "soft landing" in Iraq. If the goal remains the drawdown of all combat brigades by June 2010 and the complete withdrawal of all troops by the end of 2011, the administration must devote more time and effort to the problem.

The administration in general and President Obama in particular must reinforce a message and reinforce



a policy which demonstrates that success in Iraq remains a national priority. The current message seems to be, "we've won in Iraq, so let's move on to Afghanistan" or, dangerously, "we never should have been there, so let's get out as quickly as possible." Those who criticized the "forgotten and unresourced war" in Afghanistan and now devote full attention to that effort risk making the same mistake in reverse. Too rapid a shift of focus, resources and priorities from Iraq to Afghanistan, and failure to devote the required time and high-level effort to working through the unfinished business, put the hard-won gains in Iraq in peril. Despite the 2008 election rhetoric, this administration inherited the responsibility for success in Iraq. Pretending it doesn't exist, bleeding it of needed resources or failing to rally public support for the remaining hard work abrogate the responsibilities that came with the election victory.

While Afghanistan remains an important priority, it cannot be at the expense of Iraq. For a reminder of this, I often turn to an editorial published by Professor Eliot Cohen in 2003. In talking about leaving Iraq prematurely, he noted:

Cut-and-run cannot be disguised, and the price to be paid for it would be appalling. No one else would take on the burdens of Iraq; talk of handing it over to the United Nations or NATO is wishfulness, not strategy. Whatever one's view of the war's rationale, conception, planning or conduct, our war it remains, and we had best figure out how to win it.

While there has been tremendous progress since Eliot Cohen wrote this in 2003, there is still work to be done. And we had best figure out how to do it.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark-t-kimmitt/>

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Michael Young (2009-09-03 13:49:05)

On the basis of an opinion piece published this week ([[1](#)][here](#)), I've been asked to comment on Mark Kimmitt's [[2](#)][post](#). This won't make for interesting reading since I agree with virtually everything the general says. Still, perhaps I can go further than Gen. Kimmitt in my criticism of the Obama administration, and add one (very lightly) dissenting comment. The criticism first. Gen. Kimmitt is diplomatic in describing the growing American disinterest toward Iraq as a "comparatively laissez-faire policy." In fact it's much worse than that. The administration, I believe, has a fundamental psychological problem in dealing with a war it dislikes, which it associates with a former president it dislikes even more. Gen. Kimmitt writes: "Despite the 2008 election rhetoric, this administration inherited the responsibility for success in Iraq. Pretending it doesn't exist, bleeding it of needed resources [and] failing to rally public support for the remaining hard work abrogate the responsibilities that came with the election victory." What he's saying is that Iraq is an American problem, not a Republican or a Democratic one. How true; how painfully obvious, except to the Obama people. There are significant U.S. strategic interests in Iraq that require more attention and staying power than the current team in Washington has been willing to provide. My own view of the United States' role in Iraq is defined more by Middle Eastern politics and realities than domestic American ones. In strategic terms, I still have great trouble understanding how an administration among whose priorities is the containment of Iran, feels that this can be achieved by focusing so doggedly on a withdrawal from Iraq. We can all agree, supporters and opponents of the Iraq war alike, that from a balance-of-power perspective, George W. Bush's removal of the Baath regime removed a regional counterweight to Iran, while also creating an Iraqi political vacuum that Tehran has exploited very successfully. Iraqi nationalism notwithstanding, Iran today holds many of the more powerful levers in Iraq, so that an America bent on sending its troops home (or to Afghanistan) is essentially doing two things: removing that counterweight to Iran that Bush and the U.S. military struggled for years to re-establish after the initial post-2003 fiasco; and ceding to Iran a major political role in Iraq that American efforts were never quite successful in overturning. Iraq is the Middle East's Germany, a country at the region's center with a panoptical eye on everything going on around it. That's why the United States cannot afford to be so lax when it comes to grasping country's strategic importance for its own interests. Washington fought a war against Iraq to deny it a hegemonic role in the

Gulf; surely it now makes sense to defend its Iraqi stake in order to deny Iran such a role. This brings me to my dissent with Gen. Kimmitt, even if I believe we are closer on this than his post suggests. The general expresses his arguments in the context of the U.S. withdrawal: "If the goal remains the drawdown of all combat brigades by June 2010 and the complete withdrawal of all troops by the end of 2011, the administration must devote more time and effort to the problem," he writes. In all honesty (and I noticed his use of the conditional), the American effort in Iraq, if it is to be at all successful, must avoid artificial deadlines. When Iran or Syria or Al Qaeda sees the United States adhering to deadlines, their instinct is to push the Americans out twice as quickly to secure their pound of meat in the aftermath. But worse, Washington's Arab allies, fearing that the outcome of the U.S. departure will be the rise of a regionally powerful Iran that ultimately seeks to topple their own regimes, have also quietly encouraged measures preventing the consolidation of stability in Iraq. The only weapon that the Sunni Arab states can employ against Iran and the Shiite-dominated order in Iraq is Sunni sectarianism. Syria has also exploited this, allowing jihadists from the Gulf to pass through its territory to attack Iraqi targets, in the hope that this will increase its own bargaining position regionally. However, at any moment that sectarian genie can turn around and wreak terrible havoc on the region. Surely the United States can do better, given such dangers, than to put all its energies into an efficient getaway. The Obama administration needs to get over its obsession with ending its Iraq mission as soon as possible. We need to be practical: the president cannot easily reverse his Iraqi policy today; but he can give it a new impetus and sense of priority, while fudging over deadlines. As a starter, the United States must work with the Iraqis and the Kurds to build up barriers in Iraq to Iranian power. That's easier said than done, perhaps, but it is doable. To re-enter Iraqi cities is not a good idea, but the United States does need to bring home to the Iraqis themselves that their country's future is an American strategic concern, and that the United States cannot leave until it is reassured that Iraq can stand on its own against Iranian influence. Much more can and must be done to reconcile the Sunni minority with the Shiite majority in Iraq, just as more can be done to reconcile the Sunni Arab world with the Shiite-dominated order in Iraq. Washington alone has the means to sponsor such action and work with the Iraqi government to establish a stable, pluralistic, and ultimately sovereign order in Iraq. A volatile Iraq that finds itself being fought over by the countries of the Middle East is the worst alternative a U.S. administration can contemplate. The irony is that most of the states in the region fear the consequences of such an outcome, even as they facilitate it. Iraq matters to America, and proof of this is that Iraq so perceptibly matters to everyone else in the region, who evidently don't have the short attention span that leading administration figures seem to have. [3] *Michael Young is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090903/OPINION/709029903/1080>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/09/quiet-dogs-in-iraq/>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_young/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_young/)

Peter J. Munson (2009-09-04 00:19:05)

Brig.-Gen. Mark T. Kimmitt [1] comments that one side sees Iraq marching toward stability, while the other sees the quiet before the storm resulting from the numerous unresolved issues that could blow up across the country. "Which side is right?" he asks. Answer: neither. Iraq is not irreversibly marching on a path of progress, but it is not necessarily destined to blow up in another orgy of violence either. Iraq is in the throes of transition from one form of political rule to another, but that transition is far from consolidated. One of the key markers in a transition is the first peaceful transfer of power from one government to the next. That has not yet happened, although it may after elections at the beginning of 2010. Some of the country's thorniest issues have yet to be resolved. The very reason for the delay in dealing with them lies in the great stakes that various parties have in the issues and the complexity of finding a way out of the thicket that is acceptable to all. There are no good solutions to these issues. The only solutions that are palatable (barely) to all parties are second- or third-best to each group. There is no way for these issues to be solved until greater trust is built between parties and greater legitimacy is earned by the government. Trust and legitimacy are hard to come by in Iraq. With an election looming around the corner, many are holding off on their bargaining, hoping a more favorable political slate will improve their hand next year. The current parliament has lost what little effectiveness it had as coalitions fracture and new groupings begin to form ahead of the elections. New political groupings seem to be based less on shared positions on key issues than on jockeying for power in a contest to gain greater governmental spoils. None of the existing or evolving coalitions is based around a desire to tackle the remaining contentious issues, the most prominent of which are the status of Kirkuk, true Sunni-Shi'a reconciliation, greater incorporation of Sunnis into government forces and ministries, and revision of the constitution. Each of these issues is a potential flashpoint that could easily lead to renewed violence if left unresolved. In particular, battle lines are being drawn between Arabs and Kurds over Kirkuk, and the lingering insurgent/terrorist violence against Shi'as reminds us that the Sunni-Shi'a wound is far from healed. America's military presence has reduced the violence in Iraq just about as much as it can. Continued provision of security by Iraqi and American troops will help to maintain

the status quo, to prevent backsliding, and to shield the political field to allow more time for growth. The permanent reduction of violence and the removal of the flashpoints enumerated above requires political reconciliation on the part of the Iraqis. In light of this analysis, I would ask what elements of American national power can be used to shape the political outcomes that will lead to long-term stability in Iraq? Kimmitt and Michael Young [2] speak of dedicating resources and not prematurely turning our attention away from Iraq. I will not comment on policy, but I would ask them to define what resources are needed and how they propose that those resources should be used to achieve a specific end. And what end is it, specifically, that we should be trying to affect? Obviously we want a stable Iraq, free of Iranian influence, but our operational goals must be more narrowly defined to allow us to use our elements of power intelligently. What do we need to get right in conjunction with what they see us as doing wrong? [3] *Peter J. Munson is a Marine officer and author of [4] Iraq in Transition: The Legacy of Dictatorship and the Prospects for Democracy. His views are his own and do not reflect the position of the Marine Corps or the Department of Defense.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/09/quiet-dogs-in-iraq/>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/09/quiet-dogs-in-iraq/>
3. <http://www.potomacbooksinc.com/Books/AuthorDetail.aspx?id=15638>
4. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/08/iraq-in-transition/>

Jon Alterman (2009-09-04 09:39:23)

First, declining news coverage of Iraq is not a good indicator of government policy. After all, the news business is (increasingly) a business, and it has been more and more difficult to justify the ongoing heavy costs of maintaining and protecting a large bureau in Iraq more than six years after the fall of Saddam. This is especially so at a time when the economic model for news coverage is disintegrating. Second, what I detect is not so much U.S. government disinterest in Iraq as a reluctant concession that our influence is diminishing. When I saw Prime Minister Maliki here in Washington last month, it was striking how little he was seeking the approval of his audience. He unapologetically explained what he was doing, and he didn't ask for help. Some Iraqis have told me that his demeanor was an act brought on by the political realities of Iraq. I'm not so sure; even politicians with a big axe to grind care how they are perceived by their audience, and Maliki struck me as utterly indifferent. When I speak with Iraqis about what specifically it is that they want the United States to do, they're generally dumbfounded. They want things better, and they make an assumption that the United States can help. They want the United States to forge agreement. They want the United States to reign in the excesses of the various parties. But how? For years I have been struck by the remark of a senior American who traveled to Iraq in the summer of 2003. He came back talking about the "birth defects of the occupation"; how so many profound errors had been made so early on that Iraq's upside potential would be forever handicapped. That is not an excuse to "cut and run," but in fact, no one I know is calling for that. It is a suggestion that we need to right-size our expectations of what can happen in Iraq and how much capacity we will have to shape it. George Will [1] weighs in on this in today's *Washington Post*. [2] *Jon Alterman is a member of MESH.*

1. [http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2009/09/04/one\\_way\\_or\\_another\\_leaving\\_iraq\\_97132.html](http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2009/09/04/one_way_or_another_leaving_iraq_97132.html)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon\\_alterman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/jon_alterman/)

Daniel Byman (2009-09-04 14:15:33)

Gen. Mark T. Kimmitt's [1] provocation on Iraq and the responses so far have generated a useful debate—one I wish were louder in the rest of Washington. I am particularly concerned about the post-2010 environment in Iraq. It is not clear to me what level of U.S. influence the United States seeks to maintain in Iraq after the withdrawal of its forces. Do we want an over-the-horizon presence (or, given the large number of U.S. troops on the Arabian peninsula) a neighboring presence? Do we want a near-constant rotation of brigades for "training" exercises so there is almost always a ground contingent there? If, as Michael Young [2] suggests, a spike in the violence would warrant additional intervention, should we push for ensuring this capability? Given the likely weaknesses in Iraq's air and conventional ground forces, what sort of security guarantee is appropriate? And finally, if Al Qaeda reasserts itself in parts of Iraq with support from local leaders, do we want the right to conduct unilateral operations on a significant scale? The answers to these questions should shape the nature of the U.S. withdrawal and the decisions we make in this process. The Iraqi government is unlikely to agree to much of the above, particularly overtly, but there are often ways to work around formal declarations. My hope is that there are some people working on these issues even as Afghanistan sucks the oxygen out of the room. [3] *Daniel Byman is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/09/quiet-dogs-in-iraq/>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/09/quiet-dogs-in-iraq/comment-page-1/#comment-3210>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel\\_byman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel_byman/)

### 'From Empathy to Denial: Arab Responses to the Holocaust' (2009-09-14 08:12)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Meir Litvak is senior lecturer in the Department of Middle Eastern and African History at Tel Aviv University, and Esther Webman is a research fellow at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies and the Steven Roth Institute for the study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism, Tel Aviv University. Their new book is *From Empathy to Denial: Arab Responses to the Holocaust*.

From Meir Litvak and Esther Webman



[1] *From Empathy to Denial* explores patterns of continuity and change in the representation of the Holocaust in the Arab world since the end of the Second World War up to the early 21st century. It is the first scholarly, comprehensive attempt to examine and analyze the evolvement and characteristics of the Arab intellectual and public discourses on the Holocaust, and to explain the background and causes of their development.

We employ a wide array of primary Arabic-language sources such as memoirs, historical texts, newspapers and internet websites, and pursue an historical approach, combined with interdisciplinary methods of discourse analysis, social psychology and Holocaust studies. However, in view of the vast scope of sources, we focus on the leading cultural and political centers that produce the discourse: Egypt, Lebanon and the Palestinian-Jordanian arena, with occasional references to other countries.

The book was born when both of us, after working separately for several years on the spread of Western anti-Semitic ideas in the Muslim world, felt that the Holocaust had become a prominent issue in Arab political and intellectual discourse. Surprisingly, no serious scholarly research, aside from few casual references, had been done on this topic, so we decided to join forces. As we proceeded, we realized just how wide the subject was. References to the Holocaust are incorporated in different contexts and a wide array of publications of all Arab political and ideological trends. In addition to newspapers articles and books dealing directly with Holocaust-related issues, such as the German reparations to Israel, we often had to peruse whole books and dozens of magazine issues to find one significant relevant passage.

Originally, we intended to build the book thematically, ranging from denial to justification through equation of Zionism with Nazism, the charge of Zionist-Nazi collaboration in the extermination of the Jews, and Arab perceptions of Nazi Germany. But we soon realized the need to further contextualize the thematic analysis

by including studies of major cases which were instrumental in the evolution of Arab Holocaust discourse.

The first one deals with the formative years of 1945-48, which presaged all the themes that have typified the discourse ever since. The second concerns the responses to the 1952 German-Israeli reparation agreement; the third analyzes the Eichmann affair in the early 1960s; the fourth deals with the Arab reactions to changing Catholic attitudes toward the Jews, prompted by the Vatican II Council. The two final chapters deal with the effect of Holocaust terminology and discourse on the Palestinian narrative of the 1948 Palestinian Nakba, and with the emergence of a new approach towards the Holocaust in the wake of the peace process in the early 1990s—an approach favoring revision of the traditional Arab perception and unequivocal acknowledgment of the suffering of the Jews.

From the vast number of scattered references to the Holocaust, we had to select the most important and recurring ones, relying on our personal judgment. There is a subjective dimension in every historical study; no methodology can guarantee an entirely neutral, objective or transparent account of events. We are keenly aware of the pitfalls, as Jews and Israelis re-presenting the representation of the Holocaust in the Arab world. We have tried to maintain a dispassionate approach, enabling our sources to speak for themselves. Only in a few cases, where we thought that the lay reader might be misled by the distortion of historical evidence, have we supplemented those sources with scholarly studies that present a more accurate account of history.

[2]Order from Publisher | [3]Amazon

1. <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51rgK0GE6sL.jpg>
2. <http://cup.columbia.edu/book/978-0-231-70074-0/from-empathy-to-denial>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0231700741>

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## UN ponders, Iranians sacrifice (2009-09-22 05:30)

From [1]Raymond Tanter



The opening of the UN General Assembly in New York provides advocates of human rights an additional forum to embarrass President Ahmadinejad of Iran for his serial violations of the rights of Iranians at home and abroad. A hunger strike by 36 Iranian dissidents, taken hostage by Iraqi forces, continues into its second month. Hundreds of hunger strikes continue by Iranian exiles in Washington,

London, Ottawa, Berlin, The Hague, and Stockholm; an area near the UN could become a site of a hunger strike. Meanwhile, over a hundred strikers have been taken to hospitals worldwide.

As part of a book I am writing on Iran, I conducted interviews with Iranian dissidents, including hunger strikers in the area of the White House. Such interviews provide a glimpse of the nature of the protesters; what they seek and how their actions fit with the literature of social protest; and how sacrifice affects the policymaking process.

Among the many hunger strikers, I selected six who looked the most exhausted in the hot sun and high humidity of Washington. They were mainly entrepreneurs, U.S. citizens, fiercely pro-American, and gravely disappointed and puzzled that President Obama had neither responded to their presence nor to the plight of their colleagues. All had strongly supported presidential candidate Obama assuming that his call for "change" would mean recognition of their status as the main Iranian opposition group to counter the Iranian regime; protection of their hunger-striking counterparts who had been kidnapped in Iraq by Iraqi Security Forces acting on behalf of Tehran; and continuation of the "protected persons" status of the Iranian dissidents by U.S. military forces in Iraq or at least replacement of American forces with an international force.

Comparing their plight with the civil rights students in the American south, the hunger strikers often sing "We Shall Overcome," the anthem of the civil rights movement. The counterpart of this song is the Persian chant of the Iranian dissidents: *Mitavon va bayad, va hameh bayad*, loosely translated into English as, "We shall overcome because we must overcome."

One of the most articulate of the hunger strikers is Mehran Ebrahimi, a tall, handsome, entrepreneur from Reston Virginia, a bedroom suburb of Washington. He told me:

I was on my way to Disney World with my two grandchildren when I heard the news of the Iraqi attacks against our unarmed Iranian relatives in Iraq. I made it only to South Carolina and immediately returned to Washington to become a hunger striker. My sister is among those Iranians who were attacked in Iraqi forces. Just as our Iranian brothers and sisters sacrifice their bodies in Iraq, so too we shall sacrifice our bodies to protect theirs in Iraq.

Mehran Ebrahimi hit the nail on its head in his motivation to inflict suffering on himself to highlight a cause. When individuals impose such suffering, it is an act of supreme sacrifice and political protest to bring attention to their cause. Hunger strikers understand their message must get on the radar screen of the media to have any effect on policy makers. Indeed, partly as a result of the Iraqi assaults and hunger strikes in Iraq as well as at the White House, there has been increased media attention, e.g., by [2]Mohammed Hussein of The New York Times; [3]editorial page editors of The New York Times; [4]Lara Logan of CBS Television and [5]Mark Knoller of CBS Network Radio; and by [6]Robert McCartney of the Washington Post.

With the opening of the UN, there is an additional forum for communicating self-sacrifice. Hunger strikes are weapons of the weak to communicate injustice to the strong. By passively inflicting self-damage, Iranian dissidents reinforce the effects of active forms of protest, such as demonstrations near the United Nations. While the UN ponders, Iranian dissidents turn up the heat by signaling willingness to suffer. Suffering can become a source of influence by educating the international community to a cause about which they know little, signaling a sense of injustice to those informed of the facts but unconcerned with the issue of justice, and winning the attention of bystanders who may be recruited to help.

At issue is whether enhanced attention is likely to change UN policy of not interfering with the Government of Iraq's responsibility for the fate of Iranian dissidents who had been protected by the American

military. U.S. protection lapsed with the Status of Forces Agreement of January 2009 and withdrawal of Americans from urban areas; meanwhile, the UN has not assumed any such responsibilities.

But now that the Iraq Security Forces attack unarmed Iranian dissidents rather than protect them, the international community is deliberating how to handle this new situation. Dispersal of the Iranian dissidents within Iraq, repatriation to Iran, and a post-American UN force to provide protection are three prominent options.

Without the hunger strikes, it is unlikely that the United States will even contemplate meeting its [7]international legal obligations to ensure Iranian dissidents are not dispersed within Iraq, where they likely would be kidnapped and taken to Iran; repatriated to Iran, where they are likely to be [8]tortured or executed; or attacked again. Such alternatives can only be avoided if there is post-American UN force to provide protection. As the UN General Assembly opens, now is the time to consider the relevance of an international force to protect Iranian dissidents in Iraq against attacks on them, inspired by Tehran.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_tanter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_tanter/)
2. <http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/29/goingready-or-not/?scp=1&sq=MEK%20IRAQ&st=cse>
3. [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/22/opinion/22sat3.html?\\_r=2&scp=2&sq=MEK%20IRAQ&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/22/opinion/22sat3.html?_r=2&scp=2&sq=MEK%20IRAQ&st=cse)
4. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/07/29/eveningnews/main5196623.shtml>
5. <http://www.cbsnews.com/blogs/2009/08/04/politics/politicalhotsheet/entry5211740.shtml?tag=contentMain;contentBody>
6. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/29/AR2009082902278.html>
7. <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSN10467723>
8. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/22/opinion/22sat3.html>

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## Russia, America, and Iran—Again (2009-09-23 04:58)

From [1]Mark N. Katz



Iranian President Ahmadinejad's most recent statement that the Holocaust is a myth and denouncing Israel is an indication that he does not see U.S. President Obama's call for dialogue and improved relations with Iran as desirable from his perspective.

While Moscow has applauded the Obama administration's decision not to execute the Bush administration's plan to deploy a ballistic missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic aimed at Iran, Tehran is undoubtedly focusing on the Obama administration's plan to instead deploy sea-based ballistic missile defenses closer to Iran. Ahmadinejad is highly likely to see this not only as more threatening to Iran than the Poland/Czech Republic option, but also to see the Obama administration's foregoing the latter as an attempt to curry favor with Moscow in the hope of enlisting its cooperation against Tehran.

Finally, with Ahmadinejad seeing the United States as somehow orchestrating the continued Iranian democratic opposition protests against his claimed re-election victory, it all must seem to him that the Obama administration is even more of a threat to him than the Bush administration ever was. Issuing strident statements about Israel, then, is a desperate attempt by Ahmadinejad to rally support both at home and in the Muslim world.

Moscow, though, is making it clear that the Obama administration's abandoning the Poland/Czech Republic BMD deployment plan will not result in a quid pro quo from Russia vis-à-vis Tehran. While there really are forces that threaten Ahmadinejad and the Islamic Republic, Moscow is making clear that Russia is not one of them.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_n\\_katz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_n_katz/)

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### How to beat Iran's pipeline strategy (2009-09-23 08:47)

From [1]Gal Luft

While Washington is mulling over what to do next in order to weaken Iran economically, this summer the Islamic Republic has taught us a lesson in strategic maneuvering, taking major steps to bolster its economy and geopolitical posture by positioning itself as an indispensable energy supplier to hundreds of millions of people.

Last May, I described [2]here how after 14 years of negotiations, Iran, which has the world's second largest natural gas reserves, signed a deal to connect its economy with its eastern neighbor, Pakistan, via a 1,300-mile natural gas pipeline. Both Iran and Pakistan hope to extend the pipeline into India and perhaps even into China. This would not only give Iran a foothold in the Asian gas market and ensure that millions of Pakistanis, Indians and perhaps Chinese are beholden to Iran's gas, but it would also provide Iran with an economic lifeline and the diplomatic protection energy-dependent economies typically grant their suppliers.

Not wasting any time, Iran is now implementing the second tenet of its pipeline strategy. In July, it announced that by the end of 2009 it will be connected with its northern neighbor, Turkmenistan, Central Asia's largest gas producer, via a pipeline. Turkmenistan's interest in pumping its gas to Iran stems from its desire to diversify its export market. Two-thirds of Turkmenistan's gas flow to Russia, and the dependence on one major client allows Moscow to take advantage of its former republic. But why would energy-rich Iran want to import gas from its neighbor? The answer is the Nabucco pipeline.

For some years, a number of European governments and a consortium of energy companies have been lobbying for the construction of a pipeline from Central Asia via Turkey and the Balkan states to Austria, aimed to ease Europe's dependence on Russian gas. Last July an intergovernmental accord on Nabucco was signed in Ankara. Scheduled to be completed by 2014 at a cost of over \$11 billion, the 2,000-mile pipe is estimated to supply between 5-10 percent of the EU's projected gas consumption in 2020.



### The Proposed Nabucco Gas Pipeline



The problem, though, is that it is far from certain where the gas for Nabucco would come from. To date, not a single gas-producing country has signed on to the project. The U.S. position toward Nabucco has been supportive, with the caveat that no Iranian gas should supply the pipeline. But this is an exercise in self-delusion. Even if the 10-15 billion cubic meters of gas per year projected to be tapped from Azeri fields were to become available, much gas would still be needed to meet the pipeline's capacity of 31 billion cubic meters of gas a year. No doubt about it: Nabucco would have to access both Turkmen and Iranian reserves.

This inconvenient truth is well known to all those involved with the project. But in order to maintain U.S. support, European governments, Turkey—the main transit state—and the consortium of companies which have undertaken to build the pipeline have made sure to drop Iran's name from any official document or statement related to Nabucco. Tehran, so it seems, does not believe in denial. Its President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad knows well that making Europe beholden to his gas is the best insurance for his regime and that Iran is an appealing alternative to Russia for those for whom Vladimir Putin is a far bigger menace than him. Once Nabucco is constructed, it will be only a matter of short time before Iranian gas will be requested. Hence, the pipeline to Turkmenistan will also make Iran a conduit for Turkmen gas.

In Iran's effort to bring its gas into the heart of Europe, it has another project: a 1,100-mile pipeline currently being constructed from Iran's South Pars gas field through Turkey and onward to Greece, Italy and other European countries. This pipeline is expected to deliver 20.4 billion cubic meters per year.

Whether Iran's natural gas ends up powering turbines in New Delhi, Karachi or Vienna, one thing is certain: Iran will be richer and more geopolitically indispensable. As in the case of U.S. dependence on Saudi Arabia, China's on Sudan or Germany's on Russia, energy dependency is a major driver of foreign policy. Once these new gas conduits are established, it will be far more difficult for the United States to gather international support for policies aimed to reign in Iran.

All of these developments have received little attention in Washington, where sanctions on imported gasoline are the only game in town when it comes to crippling the mullah's regime. Unlike the Bush administration, which was vocally opposed to the Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline, the Obama Administration has been mute on the issue. Instead, it has pressured India to give more consideration to global warming, essentially pushing India to shift from coal-powered electricity to cleaner burning Iranian natural gas. In doing so, the Obama administration has demonstrated that environmental stewardship enjoys higher priority than nuclear proliferation. At a volatile time when the Taliban is at Islamabad's gate, the Obama administration has also refrained from pressuring Pakistan to reconsider its decision to provide Iran with an umbilical cord. As a result, should the worst happen and a Taliban-style regime take over Pakistan, the economies of the world's most radical Shiite state and that of what could be the world's most radical Sunni

state would be connected to each other for decades to come like conjoined twins.



The proposed TAPI gas pipeline

But all's not lost. The Obama administration should actively promote alternative energy corridors which will prevent Iranian gas from reaching major markets while addressing Asia's and Europe's energy needs. One potential gas-pipeline project is the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline. The project can supply Pakistan and India as much gas at a lower construction cost, while providing the impoverished Afghan government with a steady revenue stream in the form of transit fees. Most important, TAPI would allow Turkmenistan to sell its gas to India, enriching two U.S. allies (Afghanistan and Pakistan) rather than selling the same gas to Europe, enriching a U.S. enemy (Iran).

Washington should therefore impress upon Islamabad, recipient of \$1 billion-plus yearly of U.S. aid, to adopt TAPI rather than the Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline.

If the United States aims to stop Iran's ambitions for regional hegemony, it is also in its interest to advance Europe's and India's use of renewable electricity and even coal rather than natural gas. And if those two markets insist on using gas, this gas should come in the form of liquefied natural gas (LNG) which can be imported from any gas exporter rather than in the form of Iranian gas.

The United States should cooperate with India on the development of a thorium nuclear fuel cycle rather than the commonly used highly problematic uranium-based nuclear fuel cycle. Thorium cannot be used as bomb material in any way; its fuel cycle is inherently incapable of causing a meltdown; its waste material consists mostly of 233-uranium, which can be recycled as fuel; its waste material is radiotoxic for tens of years, as opposed to the thousands of years with today's standard radioactive waste; and it exists in greater abundance than uranium.

Only this month India announced that it has designed a new version of its advanced heavy water atomic reactor which will use thorium and low-enriched uranium (instead of highly enriched uranium) as fuel. At a time when the entire Middle East is going nuclear, this is a major opportunity for the United States to cooperate with India—after Australia, India and the United States have the second- and third-largest reserves of thorium—on advancing a safe pathway to globally-used peaceful nuclear power.

Finally, the United States should curb its enthusiasm toward Nabucco, take a more sober look at it and see the project for what it is: an economic lifeline for Iran. While this ambitious pipeline project may serve the interests of some European countries it would inevitably undermine those of the United States. Here the United States will find commonality of interests with Russia, the main opponent of Nabucco.

Nabucco was Verdi's opera about the difficult plight of Jews under the ancient Persian Gulf ruler, Nebuchadnezzar. What an historical irony it would be if this eponymous pipeline ended up emboldening a

modern regional ruler, one with much more sinister plans.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal\\_luft/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal_luft/)

2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/05/iran-pakistan-pipeline-irans-new-lifeline/>

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## Free media will save Turkish democracy (2009-09-29 15:25)

From [1]Soner Cagaptay



Turkey's experiment with Islamists-turned-democrats might be coming to a tragic end. When the Justice and Development Party (AKP), rooted in Turkey's Islamist opposition, came to power in Turkey in 2002 and declared that it had become a democratic movement, nearly everyone gave it the benefit of doubt. At that time, the party pushed for European Union (EU) accession, and followed a liberal reform agenda. The party also reached out to non-Islamist constituencies, suggesting a pluralist understanding of democracy and alleviating concerns about its Islamist pedigree.

Seven years later, the AKP's democratic credentials are under doubt. On September 8 the AKP slapped Doğan Media, Turkey's largest media group, composed of liberal and secular voices, with a record \$2.5 billion tax fine. The AKP has also made a habit of arresting its opponents and critics, connecting them to the Ergenekon case that alleges a coup plot against the government. Turkey-watchers are waking up from a dream that started well in 2002, but has since become an illiberal nightmare.

The AKP's slide away from its liberal stance began in 2005. As Turkey started accession talks with the EU, the AKP decided that the talks necessitated reforms that would erode its popular support, and shied away from pursuing Turkey's EU dream. Following the party's landslide victory in the 2007 elections, with 47 percent support, it moved from a pluralist to a majoritarian understanding of democracy. The AKP began to interpret its popular mandate as a blank check to ignore democratic checks and balances, and crack down on dissent, using the financial police to intimidate liberal businesses and the Ergenekon case to harass its opponents and critics.

When the AKP came to power, Turkey's liberal business lobby group TUSIAD, whose members control a large chunk of the Turkish economy, supported the AKP's liberal pursuit of the dream of a European Turkey. However, relations between TUSIAD and AKP soured as the new majoritarian-thinking AKP abandoned consensus building policies—for instance telling TUSIAD to "shut up" during the 2007 debate for a new constitution.

TUSIAD members have since come under fire from government-controlled tax police. For example, Doğan Group, a prominent TUSIAD member, was targeted after Doğan's newspapers covered a court case in Germany that dissolved a Turkish-German charity for illegal transfer of funds to various Islamists in

Turkey. Tax authorities selectively audited Doğan's businesses for a year, and slapped him with a \$600 million fine in February, alleging improper business dealings. AKP leader and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan then called on Turks to boycott Doğan's media outlets, exposing the political nature of the fine.

The AKP's stance against Doğan is a move against independent media. Turkish media continues to be free, but its independence is now checked by a government that wants political subservience.

The case against Doğan is also a move against liberal businesses. In this regard, Vladimir Putin's heavy-handed treatment of his billionaire opponent Mikhail Khodorkovsky is a telling example. When Putin jailed the Russian businessman on corruption charges, he sent other Russian oligarchs a strong message. Soon thereafter, many embraced self-imposed exile or turned into subservient figures like Roman Abramovich. The AKP's actions against Doğan suggest a striking parallel to the Russian case. The new fine brings the total charges against Doğan to \$3.1 billion, an amount larger than Doğan's worth. Should Doğan meet Khodorkovsky's fate or come close to it, the remainder of the country's rich—the safety valve of pro-Western Turkey—will be hard-pressed not to take inspiration from Abramovich.

Meanwhile, Turkey's intellectuals worry about Ergenekon. When the case opened in 2007, AKP watchers saw it as an opportunity for Turkey to clean up corruption and investigate coup allegations. But the case has become much more than that.

For starters, the case is nebulous. In a recent [2]study, Gareth Jenkins, an Istanbul-based analyst, described Ergenekon as a case that charges people "with membership of an organization which, as defined in the indictment presented to the court, does not appear to exist or to ever have existed."

Instead of prosecuting criminals, the AKP is using this fluid case to persecute its opponents. Since 2007, AKP-controlled police have taken over 150 people, including university presidents, journalists, and women's activists, into custody without evidence of criminal activity, only to release them after a few days of harsh questioning with no charges. Most have become docile intellectuals following their release. Meanwhile, some AKP opponents have been held in indefinite police custody for over a year, demonstrating to Turkey's intellectuals the cost of not supporting the AKP.

Wiretaps are another tool for harassment of liberal and secular Turks. In Turkey, it is a crime to wiretap private conversations or publish conversations captured by the police. Yet pro-AKP media outlets regularly publish wiretapped conversations of the AKP's opponents, compromising their private lives and even alleging that they are "terrorists" connected to Ergenekon. The AKP does not prosecute these crimes, which terrorize liberal intellectuals.

In truth, Ergenekon has devolved into a witch hunt, reminiscent of the McCarthy hearings in the United States. Most Turks refuse to even discuss the case on the phone or via e-mail, out of fear that just by speaking of it they might be implicated in it.

This state of fear and intimidation in Turkey is nightmarish. However, things could still end up well. Whenever Turkey goes through a political spasm, analysts warn about the collapse of Turkish democracy. Yet Turkey has pulled through numerous crises in the past, thanks to the balancing power of its fourth pillar. With coup allegations, arrest of government's opponents, and a media crack down in the background, only free and independent media can clear things up. Never before has media independence been so crucial to Turkish democracy.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/soner-cagaptay/>
2. <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/silkroadpapers/0908Ergenekon.pdf>

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## Iran's diplomacy of delay (2009-09-30 09:16)

From [1]Raymond Tanter



As the Obama administration prepares for October 1 negotiations with Iran, Tehran steals a page from Pyongyang's playbook: escalate confrontation in advance of engagement. Why not? Escalation to win concessions and backtracking on promises [2]have worked for North Korea.

On September 27, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps conducted war games that included test launches of multiple short range Shahab-1 and Shahab-2 missiles, and on September 28, the Iranian regime tested a Shahab-3 missile with a range of 2,000 kilometers, capable of reaching Israel and U.S. military assets in the Persian Gulf.

Iran's war games come on the heels of the revelation of a second, previously "unknown" uranium enrichment facility in Qom (shown above)—except the facility was not unknown to Western intelligence and wasn't unknown to those who paid attention to the main Iranian opposition groups, the Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MEK) and the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI). In December 2005, the NCRI [3]revealed that tunneling activity in the mountains outside of Qom was initiated in 2000 by an IRGC engineering unit, with the goal of constructing an underground nuclear facility.

On September 24, 2009, the NCRI [4]revealed two additional sites in and near Tehran where the Iranian regime is working on detonators for nuclear weapons. The sites are part of METFAZ, a Farsi acronym for Research Center for Explosion and Impact; they undermine both the Iranian regime argument that its uranium enrichment is for peaceful purposes and the U.S. intelligence community judgment that Iran halted weaponization work in fall 2003, as [5]reported in a 2007 National Intelligence Estimate.

In accord with the Iranian opposition group's estimates (and undercutting that NIE) are the Israeli

and German assessments of Iran's clandestine efforts to design a nuclear warhead, as [6]reported in the New York Times: "The Israelis, who have delivered veiled threats of a military strike, say they believe that Iran has restarted these 'weaponization' efforts, which would mark a final step in building a nuclear weapon. The Germans say they believe that the weapons work was never halted."

Thanks to the Qom revelation, the Permanent Five members of the UN Security Council + Germany (P5+1) should have the upper hand during the October 1 meeting. Through the war games, Tehran likely hoped to regain some lost leverage. Now the issue is what Iran hopes to achieve through meeting with the P5+1.

Based on past behavior, it is unlikely that Tehran genuinely intends to cut a deal with the international community. Instead, the regime uses negotiations as ploys to buy time to continue with uranium enrichment until nuclear weapons status becomes a *fait accompli*. At the top of Iran's priorities for the October 1 meeting will be the avoidance of harsher sanctions without meaningfully curtailing its nuclear activities. To this end, the regime can be expected to make vague pronouncements about continuing to work with the international community and the desire for more follow-on negotiations. Such a posture makes rallying Russia and China around stronger sanctions more difficult.

In the past, Tehran has hid its serial deception with promises of additional talks. As far back as June 14, 2008, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said he would offer to European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana a "comprehensive" negotiation package of security, terrorism, narcotics, organized crime, and illegal migrants. In the subsequent Geneva meeting between Iran and the P5+1, talks deteriorated over the suspension of uranium enrichment; the P5+1 insisted on cessation, but Iran refused. In over a year's time since this hint of a "comprehensive" offer, the Iranian regime has succeeded in expanding its stocks of enriched uranium and consolidating Revolutionary Guards control of the Iranian political system.

Former Revolutionary Guards General and now Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad also got in on the game of using arms control rhetoric as a ploy. On April 15, 2009, during the presidential election campaign, the Iranian Students News Agency (ISNA) [7]reported him to have stated that Iran would offer a new proposal package for nuclear talks. And Bloomberg [8]reported on April 26 that his government was preparing to offer the United States and European nations an updated version of a one-year-old proposal for talks about its nuclear program. "We are reconsidering our proposed package," Ahmadinejad said in an interview on American ABC television.

Such "reconsideration" came as Ahmadinejad was facing pressure from election rival Mousavi, who criticized Ahmadinejad's hard line stance on the nuclear program. Claiming that an Iranian proposal to the United States was in the offing was a gambit to give the appearance of moderation, both domestically and abroad, while continuing apace with uranium enrichment.

Foreign Minister Mottaki [9]said on May 13 of this year that Iran was preparing a package of proposals for the P5+1 on the regime's nuclear activities and promised to deliver it as soon as it was finalized. Leading up to Mottaki's May 13 statement, the Iranian regime had begun testing more advanced uranium enrichment centrifuges at a pilot plant within the Natanz enrichment complex, according to [10]IAEA reports.

The ploy was repeated over the summer. The July 2009 G8 Summit called on Tehran to assist IAEA investigators to understand the complete nature of the nation's nuclear history and future plans. The Iranian regime announced what it called a new proposal after the summit. On July 11, the Wall Street Journal reported, "Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said that Tehran had begun work on new

proposals that will be put forward as a basis of discussion with the West, according to state media. He didn't detail the proposals, nor did he say whether any part of the package would deal specifically with Iran's nuclear program." The reporter interpreted Mottaki's statement as "a tentative signal that Tehran may be willing to start rebuilding relations after weeks of drubbing the U.S., Britain and other Western power [sic] for alleged complicity in election unrest." Rather, such empty offers are an effective distraction from unrest and are designed to give the regime an air of legitimacy through negotiation with the international community.

The Iranian regime likely judges that the most effective method of buying time to enrich uranium is to enter a vague and drawn out proposal-counterproposal cycle with the P5+1. As long as Tehran appears somewhat engaged on the Obama initiative, the regime seeks to delay Western military action against its nuclear infrastructure.

The P5+1 should be prepared for Tehran to use both threats and proposals to buy time, distract from unrest, and give the appearance of moderation, and as such should give engagement without sanctions a short leash. As British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said during the G20 meeting,

Confronted by the serial deception of many years, the international community has no choice today but to draw a line in the sand... On October the 1st, Iran must now engage with the international community and join the international community as a partner. If it does not do so, it will be further isolated.

Toward this end, the P5+1 should continue to demand progress from Tehran on halting its nuclear weapons program, while pursuing crippling international sanctions, political recognition of Iran's opposition groups, and/or threat of military strikes.

While Tehran steals a page from Pyongyang's playbook of escalation in advance of engagement, Tehran's militant and expansive ideology makes it impossible for its neighbors to live with a nuclear-armed Iran.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_tanter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_tanter/)
2. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/30/world/asia/30iht-korea.2.11531048.html>
3. [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle\\_east/article6850883.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article6850883.ece)
4. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/24/AR2009092404815.html>
5. <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1691249,00.html>
6. [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/29/world/middleeast/29nuke.html?\\_r=1&ref=global-home&pagewanted=print](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/29/world/middleeast/29nuke.html?_r=1&ref=global-home&pagewanted=print)
7. <http://www.payvand.com/news/09/apr/1170.html>
8. <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=aNc3hH0o0lqI>
9. <http://www.payvand.com/news/09/may/1139.html>
10. <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2009/gov2009-35.pdf>

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## Secret of Qom (2009-09-30 19:23)

From MESH Admin

The New York Times has produced this interactive graphic about the no-longer-secret uranium enrichment facility at Qom in Iran. Click [1]here if you cannot see it below.



[kml \_flashembed movie="http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/flash/newsgraphics/2009/0928-slug/BasicStepper.swf" width="550" height="475" wmode="transparent" /]

1. <http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/flash/newsgraphics/2009/0928-slug/BasicStepper.swf>

## 3.10 October

### Has Russia shifted on Iran? (2009-10-03 12:38)

From [1]Mark N. Katz



After months of seemingly fruitless effort, the Obama administration suddenly appears to have made progress both on improving Russian-American relations and on resolving the Iranian nuclear issue. After the Obama administration announced that it would not implement the Bush administration's plan to deploy ballistic missile defenses in Poland and the Czech Republic aimed at protecting Europe from Iranian missiles—a plan strenuously opposed by Moscow—Russian President Medvedev recently suggested that Moscow might go along with tougher sanctions on Iran for not cooperating with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the UN Security Council on its nuclear program.

Further, at the P-5+1 talks with Iran in Geneva, Tehran has agreed to send "most" of the uranium that it has enriched to Russia in order to be converted into "desperately needed material for a medical research reactor in Tehran" (so reported the Washington Post). There have even been [2]reports that Washington and Moscow are pushing Israel to cooperate with the IAEA, sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and give up its nuclear arsenal in order to create a Middle East nuclear-free zone that Iran would agree to be part of.

There may be far less here, though, than meets the eye. Instead of the advent of Russian and Iranian cooperation with the United States, what we may be witnessing instead is a limited convergence of Russian-American interests along with Iran making a show of cooperating with both Washington and Moscow in order to divide them.

Some in the West see Moscow's willingness to consider increased sanctions against Iran now as a concession to Washington in return for canceling the BMD deployment plan for Poland and the Czech Republic. The Russian press, though, has claimed that Moscow's agreement to allow the United States to transport lethal materiel to Afghanistan via Russian airspace was the Kremlin's reward to Obama for canceling the East European BMD deployments, and that Russia is not altering its policy toward Iran at America's behest.

Moscow would prefer that Tehran not acquire nuclear weapons, and could hardly ignore the American announcement that Iran has another enrichment facility in the vicinity of Qom that it had not declared



to the IAEA (as it is bound to do). Moscow's willingness to convert Iran's enriched uranium, though, is not a break with past Russian policy. Indeed, Vladimir Putin has for several years offered to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue through Russia providing all the uranium enrichment services that Iran needs for an atomic energy program (performing the enrichment through a "joint venture" either in Russia, Iran, or possibly somewhere else). If both America and Iran accepted this proposal, Russia's importance to both would be greatly enhanced: America would be reliant upon Russia to make sure Iran did not acquire weapons-grade uranium, and Iran would be dependent on Russia for restraining America vis-a-vis Tehran.

But while the Bush administration appeared willing to accept such a solution in the past, Tehran always responded that while it was willing to acquire some enriched uranium from Russia, it also insisted on enriching some of its own—which is exactly what is unacceptable to Washington and others. It was partly Putin's frustration with Tehran for not fully adopting his solution to the nuclear issue that appears to have triggered Russian support for previous UN Security Council sanctions against Iran.

Of course, when Moscow did vote in favor of sanctions, the Iranian press denounced Russia in the bitterest terms for—once again—being willing to betray Iran in order to curry favor with America. Russian officials and commentators would then attempt to appease Tehran by claiming that Moscow had actually helped Iran by watering down the much harsher penalties that America and Britain had wanted to impose on it.

Something similar could occur this time as well. Tehran's uncertainty about whether Moscow really might seriously cooperate with America in imposing harsher Security Council sanctions against it this time may well have motivated Iran to let Russia convert "most" (but not all) of its enriched uranium, in the expectation that Moscow will point to this "increased" Iranian cooperation as reason to delay imposing new sanctions against Tehran as well as watering down those already in place. Unlike the United States, which does not do much business with Iran, Russia has important economic stakes there, which it hopes to increase. While Moscow doesn't want Tehran to acquire nuclear weapons, it doesn't want to impose sanctions that would damage Russian economic interests in Iran either. What Russia wants, then, is to cooperate just enough with the United States to convince Washington that it is working with it responsibly (and perhaps obtain some concession for doing so) while at the same time preserving its important relationship with Iran.

And as for Russia encouraging Israel to cooperate with the IAEA, sign the NPT, and give up its nuclear weapons: Moscow could hardly do otherwise at a time when the Obama administration has intensified the longstanding U.S. call for Israel to do all these things. But perhaps unlike some in the Obama administration, Moscow knows full well that Israel is highly unlikely to dismantle its nuclear arsenal. Israel's position, then, allows Moscow to argue that Iran cannot be expected to make progress on nuclear disarmament unless Israel does. Israel's likely refusal to do so, then, is a convenient excuse for Moscow not to seriously join with the United States to push Iran on this.

The Obama administration is trying to get Iran, Russia, and Israel to all change their policies. But while Iran, Russia, and Israel do not like one another's policies, none of them is willing to change its own. Because of the way that these three governments interact with one another as well as with the United States, it is highly likely that Iran, Russia, and Israel will each continue to pursue its preferred policies and thus frustrate the Obama administration's efforts to get them to change them. Despite press reports to the contrary, then, Russian-American relations—insofar as the Iranian nuclear issue is concerned—are not likely to improve, and the Iranian nuclear issue is not likely to be resolved as a result of the Obama administration's current diplomatic initiatives.

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Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_n\\_katz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_n_katz/)
2. <http://www.thehindu.com/2009/10/02/stories/2009100260940800.htm>

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Robert O. Freedman (2009-10-07 08:28:44)

I basically agree with Mark Katz's [1]analysis, but I would add one proviso. So far, the rather vague statement about sanctions was made by the Russian president, Medvedev. We have not yet heard a clear comment from Putin, who holds the real power in Russia. So far, the three sets of sanctions which Russia agreed to under Putin were very minor ones, and done mostly to curry favor with Sunni Arab states such as Saudi Arabia. I remain skeptical that Russia would agree to serious sanctions against Iran. [2]Robert O. Freedman is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/10/has-russia-shifted-on-iran/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_o\\_freedman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_o_freedman/)

### Normal peace? (2009-10-08 18:29)

From [1]David Schenker



Egypt's National Democratic Party (NDP) conference is fast approaching, but the meeting—which will formally set the stage for political succession—isn't making headlines these days. On October 6, the Los Angeles Times [2]reported on how the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is reacting to sales of an Artificial Virginity Hymen Kit; still other news outlets have focused on the important decision at Al-Azhar to ban the niqab (the full-body veil) in the classroom.

Less covered in the Western media, but perhaps equally consequential, is the ongoing controversy surrounding Hala Mustafa (pictured). On October 10, Dr. Mustafa will appear at hearings before the Journalist Syndicate disciplinary committee, where she faces sanctions for meeting with Israeli ambassador to Egypt Shalom Cohen in early September.

Dr. Mustafa is a member of the NDP's elite policy committee, and a scholar at the government-sponsored Al-Ahram Center. Last month, she found herself the target of a Journalist Syndicate investigation for meeting with the Israeli ambassador to Egypt. By meeting with Cohen, she violated draconian union bylaws, which enforce the strict policy of no contact with Israelis underpinning the "anti-normalization" campaign.

In recent decades, the Egyptian professional boycott against Israel—led by Islamist-controlled syndicates—has been an effective tool in preventing a normalization of bilateral relations between the states.

While the government of Egypt has made little effort to reverse the trend, it has not seemingly endorsed the boycott—until recently.

The Journalist Syndicate appears to be looking to make an example out of Dr. Mustafa. And she's not getting any help from the government's Al-Ahram Center. Indeed, not only has the Center [3]established its own board of inquiry to investigate Dr. Mustafa, just weeks ago the Center [4]announced it too would "boycott Israelis of all levels."

Perhaps this turn of events shouldn't be surprising given that the center was founded in 1968 as the Center for Zionist and Palestine studies. Nevertheless, it seems odd that Egypt's leading research institution—a state-funded institute closely tied to the regime—would adhere to extra-legal anti-normalization prescriptions advocated by Islamist-led unions. Indeed, the 1978 Camp David (peace) Accords stipulated that after the Israelis withdrew from Sinai, the states would establish "normal relations" including "cultural relations."

While there is little doubt that the Egyptian government is committed to the absence of war with its Israeli neighbor, there remains a staunch opposition to moving toward a peace between the peoples at both the popular and the official levels. In Egypt, this incongruity is rationalized by the Israeli mistreatment of Palestinians, but even when the peace process is making progress—during the heyday of the Oslo Accords (1994-98), for example—Cairo demonstrates little inclination to change the dynamic.

The resistance to normalizing relations with Israel reaches the highest levels in Cairo. To date Hosni Mubarak—who has served as Egypt's president since 1981—has visited Israel only once, and that was to attend the funeral of former Israeli premier Yitzhak Rabin. Still, in 1995, following his return from Israel, he [5]told the Government daily Al Ahram that "I don't consider this a visit."

It remains to be seen what will transpire with Hala Mustafa's case. Syndicate insiders [6]say that the group's board of directors is inclined to freeze her membership for a year, resulting in her removal as editor and chief of Al-Demokratiya. Sadly, based on developments to date, it appears unlikely that Mubarak regime will oppose a Journalist Syndicate dictate or intervene on her behalf.

For the Obama administration—which is trying to convince states like Saudi Arabia to normalize with Israel in hopes of encouraging the Jewish state to take "risks for peace" with the Palestinians—Cairo's disposition is problematic. After all, if even peace partners are unwilling to normalize, convincing states like Saudi Arabia to do so stands little chance of success. In the search for Arab normalization with Israel, Washington would be best advised to take a more modest approach. Egypt, at peace with Israel for nearly 30 years, would seem a reasonable place to start.

MESH Admin: There is an [7]Arabic translation of this post.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david\\_schenker/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/david_schenker/)

2. <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-fake-hymen7-2009oct07,0,6868813.story>

3. <http://www.shorouknews.com/print.aspx?id=122250>

4. <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=537826&issueno=11262>

5. <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/11/09/world/assassination-israel-egypt-apathy-tinged-with-anger-cairo-over-mubarak-trip.html>

6. <file://localhost/mnt/ext/blogbooker/tmp/4p5x1k8v/www.elaph.com/web/newspapers/2009/9/485894.htm>

7. <http://arabic.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=1211&portal=ar>

Michele Dunne (2009-10-09 13:28:38)

The case of Hala Mustafa, a fellow scholar and dear friend of mine, is truly distressing. As David Schenker correctly [1]points out, it exposes an ugly underside of Egyptian political life: the fact that the government not only tolerates but in some cases encourages vicious anti-Israel and anti-U.S. rhetoric while taking billions in U.S. assistance for maintaining peace with Israel. Campaigns such as this are launched selectively to intimidate or punish an individual who has displeased the regime. Regarding the United States, this double game is somewhat less effective than it used to be; many non-governmental organizations, for example, now reject the logic that they are "agents" if they take U.S. money while the government continues not only to accept but to solicit U.S. largesse. Unfortunately, when it comes to Israel this is not yet the case. Hala's case also sheds a spotlight on the stifling conformity that still pervades much of Egyptian life. For the entire decade I have known her, Hala has been harassed repeatedly for being too liberal, too independent, too pro-American, too willing to talk to Israelis, and for being a woman who stands shoulder to shoulder with men in a society where that is still rare. I hope that, in her hearing before the Journalists Syndicate, high-ranking people from the Ahram Center and/or NDP will stand up to say that in meeting with an Israeli official, Hala has been neither more nor less patriotic than President Hosni Mubarak. I hope someone also points out how hypocritical it is of Egyptians to praise President Obama's willingness to engage Iran, an enemy nation, while Egyptians themselves refuse to meet with the ambassador of a neighboring country with which Egypt is ostensibly at peace. [2]Michele Dunne is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/10/normal-peace/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele\\_dunne/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele_dunne/)

Steven A. Cook (2009-10-20 08:24:04)

When "[1]L'Affaire Hala" broke a number of weeks ago, it was hard to be surprised. The Egyptian Journalists' Syndicate along with their brethren in the Writers Union and other professionals in the arts, culture, and sciences have long held the line against contacts with Israelis. The assassination of Ali Salem's integrity and character as a result of his visits to Israel beginning in 1994 are well known. Egypt's journalists and writers are hardly a monolithic lot, but the syndicates have been effective enforcers of the no-contact code. As Hala Mustafa is finding out the hard way, there are serious professional hazards from even a mere courtesy call with an Israeli. To be fair, Hala's colleagues within the Journalists' Syndicate are not whipping up outrage over nothing. To many in Egypt, the peace with Israel is shameful because it is a separate peace, having abandoned the Palestinians to fend for themselves in what is anything but a fair fight against the mighty IDF and the resources of the state of Israel. Over the course of the 30 years since Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin inked the peace treaty, Israel invaded Lebanon (a couple of times), poured hundreds of thousands of Israeli settlers into the West Bank and Gaza Strip (until the withdrawal from the latter in 2005), imprisoned tens of thousands of Palestinians (including women and children), and killed untold numbers. All the while, Egyptian sat on the sidelines and did very little other than "strongly condemn" or "refer to the United Nations," while continuing to host Israeli leaders in Cairo or Sharm el Sheikh. When President Hosni Mubarak recalled his longtime ambassador to Israel, Mohammed Bassiouny, in protest over Israel's handling of the al-Aqsa Intifada it was a big deal, but the peace treaty was never in jeopardy. Yet, even if we stipulate that Egyptians have every right to hate Israelis, shouldn't it be up to Hala to decide whom she entertains in her office? I don't hold a brief for Hala. I know her, but not well. I've [2]written about her journal in *Foreign Policy's* "Global Newsstand." I have heard her say some wacky things like her call for secularization of the Arab world along the lines of Mustafa Kemal's reforms in Turkey in the 1920s, but we've all written and said things that weren't necessarily analytically sound. My point is, regardless of how one feels about Hala and her work, there is a principle here. The journalists and writers who have attacked Hala are, I am told, at the forefront of agitating for personal and political freedom in Egypt. Yet, in enforcing a code of "no normalization," they are in effect doing the bidding of a regime they ostensibly revile. They may not like what she has done, but whether she meets with Shalom Cohen, Benjamin Netanyahu, Ehud Barak, Yossi Bellin, Tzip Livni or Zohan Dvir should be left to Hala's professional judgment and her own conscience. Of course, being perceived to play into the regime's double game on Israel is no doubt not a reason for Egypt's intellectuals to meet with Israelis. After all, many who support democracy in Egypt believe that a government more responsive to its citizens will be better equipped to resist the predatory policies of Israel and the United States. Still, this boycott thing seems to have gone a bit beyond reason. Writing in *al-Masri al-Yawm*, Ammar Ali Hassan called Hala's meeting with Ambassador Cohen "a crime." Others have been equally nasty and overwrought in their condemnations of Hala. It's all a bit over the top. The whole sad episode is rather revealing of the state of journalism in Egypt and, as Fouad Ajami might say, of "Egypt's men and women of letters." To be sure, there have been some bright spots in the last five years or so. The launch of *al-Masri al-Yawm* in 2004, despite Ammar Ali Hassan's diatribe referenced above,

the work of *al-Dustur* and a variety of other publications, as well as the hard work of any number of bloggers have successfully altered the prevailing political discourse in Egypt in a variety of positive ways. For example, despite the regime's effort to embed their notions of "stability and development" in the Egyptian population, many are focused on reform and change instead, thanks in part to Egypt's journalists. That said, there is a sense that the Egyptian media is falling behind its peers elsewhere in the region. Whereas *al-Ahram* (which Lebanese Christians founded) and other Egyptian publications once were serious publications, they are now for the most part tendentious, predictable, and entirely uninteresting. Much of this, of course, has to do with the authoritarian political system in which Egypt's journalists must operate, but the fault does not lie entirely with President Mubarak and his colleagues. A number of years ago, the State Department dragooned me into a two-week tour of Egypt and Saudi Arabia to discuss U.S. Middle East policy. I did the rounds in Cairo and then headed off to Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dhahran. Somewhere along the way I came to a stunning conclusion: The Saudi journalists, writers, and academics seemed far more sophisticated, worldly, well-read, and willing to wrestle with alternative ideas than the Egyptians. I got my fair share of Saudi conspiracy mongering about the "Jewish lobby" and how Washington wanted to replace Saudi Arabia with Iran as its primary interlocutor in the Gulf, but I was on the receiving end of similar ideas and much more in Cairo. The Saudis, like their Egyptian counterparts, are forced to operate in an authoritarian environment, yet in comparison they seem enlightened. After Egyptian journalists and writers are finished devouring one of their own over a boycott that has done absolutely nothing to advance the Palestinian cause, they might want to investigate why collectively they have become little more than a second rate sideshow in a region bursting with journalistic activity. [3] *Steven A. Cook is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/10/normal-peace/>
2. [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/users/login.php?story\\_id=2762&URL=http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=2762](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/users/login.php?story_id=2762&URL=http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=2762)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven\\_a\\_cook/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/steven_a_cook/)

## Afghan Hezbollah? Be careful what you wish for (2009-10-10 03:29)

From [1] Matthew Levitt



The Washington Post [2] reports that some in the administration see the Lebanese Hezbollah as a possible model for transformation of the Taliban. Describing the Taliban as a movement "deeply rooted" in Afghanistan, much like Hezbollah is in Lebanon, proponents of a Hezbollah model for the Taliban see a scenario in which the Taliban participates in Afghan politics, occasionally flexes its military muscles to benefit its political positions at home, but does not directly threaten the United States even if it remains a source of regional instability.

According to the Post, while the idea has been discussed informally "outside the Situation Room meetings," it has not yet been presented to President Obama. That's a good thing because the notion is deeply flawed, and its implementation would have dire consequences for Afghanistan, the region more broadly, and

U.S. counterterrorism efforts all.

Hezbollah in Lebanon is a destabilizing force, as is the Taliban in Afghanistan. Not only does Hezbollah maintain an independent militia in explicit violation of United Nations resolutions, it uses this private army to create semi-independent enclaves throughout the south of Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley where Lebanese Armed Forces are not allowed. In these spaces, Hezbollah maintains training camps, engages in weapons smuggling and drug trafficking, and maintains tens of thousands of rockets aimed at its neighbor to the south, Israel. Hezbollah collects intelligence on people traveling through Beirut international airport, and has built its own communications infrastructure beyond the reach of the national government.

In Afghanistan, an independent Taliban militia that controls territory of its own; maintains bases and training camps; facilitates weapons smuggling; and engages in every aspect of the narcotics production pipeline from poppy cultivation and processing to taxing delivery and smuggling abroad, would certainly seek to maintain its control over its own territory. Indeed, an increasing number of major Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) arrests over the past few months have targeted drug kingpins closely tied to the Taliban, like [3]Haji Juma Kahn and [4]Baz Mohammad.

Neither will Hezbollah today nor a similarly modeled Taliban tomorrow tolerate government challenges to its private army or other sources of power. In the words of then-Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence Donald Kerr, such groups are out for themselves, and will turn on their fellow Lebanese or Afghan citizens, respectively, when under pressure. "Events in Lebanon since May 7 [2008] demonstrate that Hezbollah—with the full support of Syria and Iran—will in fact turn its weapons against the Lebanese people for political purposes," Kerr [5]explained. "Hezbollah sought to justify its attacks against fellow Lebanese as an attempt to defend the resistance against attacks by the government." Scores of Afghan civilians have been killed in Taliban suicide bombings, including the most recent [6]attack outside the Indian embassy which claimed the lives of 17 Afghans, including 15 civilians and two Afghan police officers. It is all the more difficult to imagine a scenario in which the Taliban play a stabilizing political role in Afghanistan in light of the fact that, unlike Hezbollah, the Taliban adhere to a strict salafi-jihadi doctrine which is anathema to secular politics and requires the strict implementation of shariah law.

Commenting on the philosophical distinctions some in the administration make between the Taliban and Al Qaeda, White House press secretary Robert Gibbs distinguished between the Taliban as an Islamist element in Afghanistan and "an entity that, through a global, transnational jihadist network, would seek to strike the U.S. homeland," like Al Qaeda. But in the assessment of people like Bruce Reidel, an Al Qaeda and Taliban expert who oversaw the administration's policy review regarding Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Taliban's ties to Al Qaeda run deep. "It's a fundamental misreading of the nature of these organizations to think they are anything other than partners," [7]said Reidel. "Al Qaeda is embedded in the Taliban insurgency, and it's highly unlikely that you're going to be able to separate them."

Here too, Hezbollah—a group involved not only in politics in Lebanon but in terrorist activity worldwide—is the wrong model. Even as the Hezbollah-led March 8 coalition campaigned ahead of Lebanon's June 7 elections this summer, the group was forced to contend with the unexpected exposure of its covert terrorist activities both at home and abroad. At home, Hezbollah stands accused of playing a role in the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. Abroad, law enforcement officials have [8]taken action against Hezbollah support networks operating across the globe, including in Egypt, Yemen, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Azerbaijan, Belgium, and Colombia. Just this past week, a court in Azerbaijan found two Hezbollah operatives guilty of plotting attacks on the Israeli and U.S. embassies in Baku, among other plots, and [9]sentenced them each to 15 years in prison.

The Taliban is primarily involved in attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan, though it has been tied to at

least one plot in the United States and another in Europe. In the United States, a group of eleven jihadists in Northern Virginia [10] were found to have connections with Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and Lashkar-i-Taiba. In Europe, the Pakistani Taliban—distinct from but closely allied with the Afghan Taliban—[11] claimed responsibility for a failed plot to bomb subway trains in Barcelona in 2008. And while historically the Taliban was an adversary of Iran's, the United States believes since at least 2006 Iran has arranged frequent shipments of small arms, RPGs, explosives and other weapons to the Taliban. The Qods Force also provides the Taliban in Afghanistan with weapons, funding, logistics and military training, [12] according to the U.S. government.

As National Counterterrorism Center director Michael Leiter [13] made clear in his congressional testimony last week, Hezbollah is a very poor model for a future Taliban. According to Leiter, the U.S. intelligence community holds the following to be true:

While not aligned with al-Qa'ida, we assess that Lebanese Hizballah remains capable of conducting terrorist attacks on U.S. and Western interests, particularly in the Middle East. It continues to train and sponsor terrorist groups in Iraq that threaten the lives of U.S. and Coalition forces, and supports Palestinian terrorist groups' efforts to attack Israel and jeopardize the Middle East Peace Process. Although its primary focus is Israel, the group holds the United States responsible for Israeli policies in the region and would likely consider attacks on U.S. interests, to include the Homeland, if it perceived a direct threat from the United States to itself or Iran. Hizballah's Secretary General, in justifying the group's use of violence against fellow Lebanese citizens last year, characterized any threat to Hizballah's armed status and its independent communications network as redlines.

Modeling the Taliban after Hezbollah is a recipe for failure. It would doom efforts to promote democracy in Afghanistan and engender long-term instability in both Afghanistan and Pakistan along the traditional Pashtun tribal belt that straddles the country's shared border. It would embolden one of Iran's newer allies in the region and empower a salafi-jihadi organization with close and ongoing ties to Al Qaeda to firmly establish control over parts of the country from which it would continue to produce massive quantities of drugs that ultimately make their way to the West. Looking to Hezbollah as the model for a future Taliban displays both ignorance of Hezbollah and naïveté regarding the Taliban. No matter how you slice it, that's a dangerous combination.

MESH Admin: There is an [14] Arabic translation of this post.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew\\_levitt/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/matthew_levitt/)
2. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/08/AR2009100804329.html>
3. <http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/pressrel/pr102408.html>
4. <http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/pressrel/pr102405.html>
5. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC07.php?CID=397>
6. <http://www.freep.com/article/20091009/NEWS07/910090316/1322/Kabul-attack-kills-17-as-war-starts-year-9>
7. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/sns-dc-obama-afghan8,0,5346699.story>
8. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=3065>
9. [http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iHIWTVUCOMQj1MYpG4X1TVJ2\\_iQQ](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iHIWTVUCOMQj1MYpG4X1TVJ2_iQQ)
10. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2009/0926/p02s08-usgn.htm>
11. [http://www.expatica.com/es/news/local\\_news/Barcelona-bomb-plot-video-investigated.html](http://www.expatica.com/es/news/local_news/Barcelona-bomb-plot-video-investigated.html)
12. <http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/hp644.htm>

13. <http://www.fbi.gov/congress/congress09/TestimonyLeiter20090930.pdf>

14. <http://arabic.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=1212&portal=ar>

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Tony Badran (2009-10-13 21:48:27)

It might be useful to pinpoint the intellectual sources of the inaccurate [1]analogy between Hezbollah and the Taliban. While we cannot say for sure, the views attributed to "White House advisers" in the *Washington Post* report sound familiar. Similar views have been expressed by the White House counterterrorism adviser, John Brennan. In a 2008 [2]essay entitled "The Conundrum of Iran: Strengthening Moderates without Acquiescing to Belligerence," Brennan wrote the following regarding Hezbollah:

It is similarly foolhardy to believe that Hezbollah will not remain a potent political force within Lebanon for many years to come, as the organization has strong support within the Lebanese Shia community and well-established political and social welfare credentials throughout the country. Hezbollah's growing paramilitary strength and political and social resiliency were clearly demonstrated in 2006, when Israel showed a remarkable inability to inflict strategic damage on Hezbollah despite a major military campaign to do so. It would not be foolhardy, however, for the United States to tolerate, and even to encourage, greater assimilation of Hezbollah into Lebanon's political system, a process that is subject to Iranian influence. Hezbollah is already represented in the Lebanese parliament and its members have previously served in the Lebanese cabinet, reflections of Hezbollah's interest in shaping Lebanon's political future from within government institutions. This political involvement is a far cry from Hezbollah's genesis as solely a terrorist organization dedicated to murder, kidnapping, and violence. Not coincidentally, the evolution of Hezbollah into a fully vested player in the Lebanese political system has been accompanied by a marked reduction in terrorist attacks carried out by the organization. The best hope for maintaining this trend and for reducing the influence of violent extremists within the organization—as well as the influence of extremist Iranian officials who view Hezbollah primarily as a pawn of Tehran—is to increase Hezbollah's stake in Lebanon's struggling democratic processes. Because Israel views Hezbollah as a serious and lethal adversary, this will not be an easy sell. Washington will need to convince Israeli officials that they must abandon their aim of eliminating Hezbollah as a political force. This previously employed Israeli strategy did not work with the PLO and Fatah, and Israeli officials have adapted to the reality of engaging in political dialogue and negotiations with Palestinians formerly branded as "terrorists." A similar change must take place within the minds of Israeli government officials in regard to Hezbollah. One way to help effect this change would be if Iran were willing to press Hezbollah to cease its attacks against civilian targets and to declare so publicly. While insufficient to satisfy many Israelis who view Hezbollah as a serious military threat, it would be a positive first step.

More recently, Brennan briefly made headlines for essentially reiterating this argument at a talk he gave at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in early August. Brennan's comments came in [3]response to a question by *The Nation* correspondent, Robert Dreyfuss, whether the United States should start talking to organizations like Hamas, Hezbollah and the Taliban. Brennan focused most on Hezbollah and painted a remarkable picture of the group:

Hezbollah started out as purely a terrorist organization back in the early '80s and has evolved significantly over time. And now it has members of parliament, in the cabinet; there are lawyers, doctors, others who are part of the Hezbollah organization. However, within Hezbollah, there's still a terrorist core. And hopefully those elements within the Shia community in Lebanon and within Hezbollah at large—they're going to continue to look at that extremist terrorist core as being something that is anathema to what, in fact, they're trying to accomplish in terms of their aspirations about being part of the political process in Lebanon. And so, quite frankly, I'm pleased to see that a lot of Hezbollah individuals are in fact renouncing that type of terrorism and violence and are trying to participate in the political process in a very legitimate fashion.

Whether or not Brennan was the source for the *Washington Post* report, one can detect the similarity of the viewpoints that are evidently, as per the *WaPo* report, being raised by "some White House advisers." The main points of the argument are familiar to anyone who's kept up with the scholarly [4]literature on Hezbollah, especially the proponents of the so-called "Lebanonization" theory, chief among whom is Augustus Richard Norton. This view holds that Hezbollah has "evolved" from a terrorist group into a mainstream political party. In order to sustain this argument, its proponents have often resorted to distancing Hezbollah from terrorist activity dating after its involvement in Lebanese



politics, or, at the very least, minimizing it. This had been the norm in Hezbollah scholarship prior to the assassination of Imad Mughniyeh in February 2008. Brennan does the same in his 2008 article, claiming rather remarkably, that "the evolution" of Hezbollah into a political player was simultaneous with "a marked reduction in terrorist attacks carried out by the organization." Moreover, "increasing Hezbollah's stake" in the Lebanese political process has had no effect on Hezbollah's military operations, as evident from their involvement in Iraq, and Yemen, Egypt and Azerbaijan (as noted by Matt Levitt in his post). However, what's more problematic is the definition of "political participation." Hezbollah has made a mockery of Lebanon's constitution and parliamentary political traditions. Needless to say, the idea of a sectarian group with an arsenal that rivals that of an army, and with external foreign connections and networks, "participating in politics in a tightly balanced sectarian society" is itself an absurdity. Furthermore, those who make this argument miss the point of Hezbollah's political participation: it is precisely in order to protect its military autonomy. This was articulated by a Hezbollah spokesman in a 2007 interview with the International Crisis Group: "Paradoxically, some want us to get involved in the political process in order to neutralise us. In fact, we intend to get involved—but precisely in order to protect the strategic choice of resistance." Hezbollah has used its weapons in order to bend the political system to fit its agenda and has intimidated its political rivals by force of arms. As the author of the ICG [5]report, Patrick Haenni, put it: "Hezbollah realized that they had [to be internally involved to a greater extent], but the issue was still to secure their weapons.... Hezbollah has a real interest in making the state part of its global project." The flawed understanding of the nature of Hezbollah has led people like Brennan to posit the existence of various "wings" in Hezbollah: "extremists" vs. "moderates" and those who supposedly "renounce terrorism" vs. those who support it. While this illusory categorization has not been translated into U.S. policy, it has, alas, become British policy. Ironically, Hezbollah officials have publicly mocked this kind of artificial dichotomies. This fundamental misunderstanding of the group is captured in the wording of the *Washington Post* report, which described Hezbollah as "the armed Lebanese political movement." That has it backwards. To quote Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, Hezbollah is "first and foremost a jihadi movement that engages in politics, and not a political party that conducts jihad." One must qualify that further by adding what Na'im Qassem wrote in his book, that the jurisprudent (*al-wali al-faqih*)—i.e., Iran's Supreme Guide, Ali Khamenei—"alone possesses the authority to decide war and peace," and matters of jihad. Therefore, in effect Hezbollah is a light infantry division of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. That's not the kind of model the US wants to see in Afghanistan. [6]Tony Badran is research fellow with the Center for Terrorism Research at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/10/afghan-hezbollah-be-careful-what-you-wish-for/>
2. <http://ann.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/618/1/168>
3. [http://www.thenation.com/blogs/dreyfuss/460718/white\\_house\\_opening\\_to\\_hezbollah\\_hamas](http://www.thenation.com/blogs/dreyfuss/460718/white_house_opening_to_hezbollah_hamas)
4. <http://www.futureofmuslimworld.com/research/detail/hezbollahs-agenda-in-lebanon>
5. <http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArchiveDetails.aspx?ID=16115>
6. [http://www.defenddemocracy.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=23714](http://www.defenddemocracy.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=23714)

Philip Carl Salzman (2009-10-10 14:47:16)

Matthew Levitt has provided a realistic [1]assessment in rejecting Hezbollah as a positive model for the Taliban, because it would exacerbate conflict rather serve as the steadying effect desired by the West. And he has provided us with a lead in his reference to social base of the Taliban, "the traditional Pashtun tribal belt that straddles the country's shared border." Perhaps we should consider whether the Pashtun tribes are a problem because they are Taliban, or whether the Taliban is a problem because of its support by Pashtun tribes. Correspondingly, rather than considering how we should deal with the Taliban, perhaps we should consider how we should deal with the Pashtun tribes. The American military has had recent success in allying with once-insurgent Sunni tribes in Anbar province of Iraq, and other tribes elsewhere in Iraq. They did this, in part, by dealing directly with the tribes, rather than through the framework of the Iraqi government. There is a good reason that such direct ties were successful: tribes are by their nature not units of states, but alternatives to states; tribes detest interference, and strongly prefer independence to state control. As long as the intervention in Afghanistan places state-building as its highest priority, tribes will naturally lean toward resistance. So what is more important: building a state apparatus, or stabilizing the region and removing threats to external parties? In the short- and medium-run, treating with the tribes may be the most effective way to stabilize and neutralize the region. [2]Philip Carl Salzman is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/10/afghan-hezbollah-be-careful-what-you-wish-for/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)

**Iraq's elections in peril? (2009-10-14 04:19)**

From [1]J. Scott Carpenter



The Obama administration has finally woken up to the fact that Iraqi parliamentary elections scheduled for January 16 are in real danger of not taking place as scheduled. The realization has been lamentably slow in coming and, with just two days to go before an Iraqi government-imposed deadline expires, may have come too late.

Just over a month ago, on September 16, during his second trip to Iraq, Vice President Biden gently urged Iraqi lawmakers to act "as quickly as possible" on the draft law that would create the legal framework to allow the elections to take place on time. Last week, perhaps beginning to sense greater urgency, President Obama reportedly urged Iraqi President Jalal Talabani "to adopt an election law soon." Yesterday, the U.S. embassy in Baghdad along with MNF-I ratcheted up the rhetoric a notch issuing a joint statement urging the Iraqi parliament to "act expeditiously" on the draft bill which has been languishing in committee for months. The UN Special Representative in Iraq, Ad Melkert, had expressed similar views the day before.

At stake is Iraq's nascent democracy and the prospects of a smooth American withdrawal from Iraq. If elections are postponed for any reason beyond January, Iraq will be operating in a constitutional vacuum that could very well contribute to broad-based political instability. Iraq's Independent High Election Commission has stated that unless the bill is passed within a few days of the October 15 deadline, it will be forced for technical reasons to carry out the elections under the previous law that governed the 2005 elections. This is not a solution, however. The 2005 law was profoundly flawed as it included a blind, closed-list system that limited voters to a choice between party names. Only after the election results were known did the party leadership determine who would actually fill the seats. Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani has reportedly indicated that he would urge a boycott of the elections if they were held under this law.

Since Sistani's admonition, most political party leaders, including the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq's (ISCI) new leader Amar al-Hakim, have dutifully come out in favor of an open list. But their claim of support rings hollow. An open list system makes it much easier for broad coalitions, such as the coalition being put together by Prime Minister Maliki, to form and flourish. It also allows such coalitions to squeeze as many votes out of individual communities as possible since people are much more likely to vote for individuals they know and respect from within their communities. Deeply unpopular parties like ISCI prefer the archaic provisions of the 2005 law so that they can hide behind a popular "brand"—e.g. United Iraqi Alliance—that will hopefully allow them to retain more seats in the subsequent parliament than they could have possibly achieved if voters actually knew for whom they were voting.

The Kurds are also a challenge, however. They risk holding up the entire election process over the question of how elections are conducted in Tamim province, the capital of which is Kirkuk. In the past, the United

States, Iraqi politicians and the international community as represented in the UN have all "kicked the can down the road" on Kirkuk, hoping for more propitious circumstances to settle the problem later. In January, for instance, provincial elections were not held in Kirkuk. It would be a shame not to hold parliamentary elections in Kirkuk as well, but vastly preferable to the alternative proposed by various nationalist groups that would introduce a Lebanese-like ethno-religious quota for the province.

But among some there is a sense that the Kurdish leadership may be raising the Tamim problem to take care of both Tamim province and the open list system question. For the KDP and the PUK, open lists pose a problem. Both successfully avoided having open lists during their provincial elections held this past July and do not want to be forced to include them at the national level. Open lists always weaken party leaders since people who get elected directly are less dependent on their party bosses for their individual victories. If the Kurds are hoping for such an outcome, they may well get it if Iraq is forced to revert back to the 2005 law. In 2005, Tamim was treated like any other governorate as well.

With time so short, it is difficult to envision what the Obama administration can do, except cross it collective fingers and hope for the best. Iraqis have demonstrated in the past their ability to pull rabbits out of the hat and may well do so again. Ambassador Chris Hill should have been more directly engaged on this issue much earlier, instead of [2]seeing it as "by and large an Iraqi issue of Iraqis talking to Iraqis, rather than Americans talking to Iraqis." He should also have moved to replace departing Ambassador Tom Krajeski ,who served as the senior advisor to Ambassador Crocker for Northern Iraq affairs, with someone of similar stature instead of leaving the critical post empty.

Still, as the rueful experience in Afghanistan teaches, it is important to get the process right. If the choice is between a constitutional crisis and taking the time necessary to establish a transparent electoral law framework so that the elections can be conducted in a manner likely to be seen as legitimate by the people, the latter is clearly preferable. The United States should lean heavily on Maliki and the Kurds to agree a compromise on Tamim and get an amended law through the parliament. If the Kurds and Maliki agree, ISCI will be isolated and the Iraqi people—and Ayatollah Sistani, it seems—will take care of the rest.

MESH Admin: There is an [3]Arabic translation of this post.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j\\_scott\\_carpenter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j_scott_carpenter/)

2. <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/babylonbeyond/2009/07/interview-with-the-us-ambassador-to-iraq-christopher-hill.html>

3. <http://arabic.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=1214&portal=ar>

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## Turkey's foreign policy flip (2009-10-14 22:11)

From [1]Michael Reynolds



The past several days have witnessed not one but two momentous, even stunning, developments in Turkish foreign policy that are reverberating through the region. Both are the work of Ahmet Davutoğlu, a former university professor who became Turkish foreign minister last year. Before that, Davutoğlu (shown on far right with his Syrian counterpart Walid Muallem) served for several years as the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's chief foreign policy advisor. In a manner perhaps befitting a university professor, Davutoğlu has aspired to give Turkish foreign policy a comprehensive and consistent conceptual basis. He laid out his vision in his book *Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Position* (*Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu*). According to this vision, whereas in the past the Turkish Republic followed a policy of quasi-isolation and self-imposed quarantine from its neighbors, today it should instead seek to take advantage of the cultural and historical links it shares with other countries in its region. As foreign minister, Davutoğlu has been working tirelessly to put his stamp on Turkish foreign policy. The past week has offered two dramatic examples of Turkey's new foreign policy orientation.

An opening to the East. The first took place on October 10 in Zurich where the Turkish and Armenian foreign ministers signed a protocol agreeing to open their border and establish diplomatic ties between their two countries. Up until recently, observers – Armenian, Turkish, and foreign alike – generally regarded the idea of a Turkish-Armenian rapprochement as sheer fantasy. Precisely because their histories are intertwined, the rift between the Armenian and Turkish peoples is deep and multi-dimensional, going beyond already contentious geopolitics to extend into the very hearts of modern Armenian and Turkish identities and the founding myths of the Turkish and Armenian republics. Attitudes on both sides are so sensitive that despite even lengthy and meticulous preparation by the Armenian and Turkish foreign ministries, the signing of the protocol was almost consigned to remain the realm of fantasy right before it took place.

At the last minute both foreign ministers objected to the public statement planned by the other. The ceremony was saved only when, apparently at the suggestion of Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, the two foreign ministers compromised by agreeing simply to refrain from making any statements at all. Such is the fragility of the rapprochement. Moreover, to come into force, the legislatures of Armenia and Turkey must first ratify the protocols. Multiple constituencies opposed to the normalization of relations exist inside (and outside) the two countries, and they may well prove skeptics and nay-sayers correct.

Nonetheless, the mere fact that Davutoğlu was able to bring the two countries this close in itself represents a fundamental change in Turkish foreign policy. And whereas the likelihood of failure in these sorts of sensitive and politically charged undertakings typically deters most, Davutoğlu's tack is to capitalize in these situations on the power of boldness combined with persistence to change first expectations and then reality. Simply by striving for seemingly unthinkable change, Davutoğlu reckons, one demonstrates that change is possible, and thereby one changes fundamental calculations of all parties. The fact that Davutoğlu was able to coordinate both American and Russian support for this Caucasian gambit reflects his exceptional diplomatic skills and the considerable momentum he has already generated for normalization. Turkey's opening to Armenia will have an impact on everything from stability in the greater Caucasus and Caspian region through world energy supplies and the future of NATO.

An opening to the South. As momentous as Turkey's opening to its east in the Caucasus might be, its opening to the south has the potential to change regional dynamics even more. For most of its existence, the Turkish Republic has enjoyed at best cool relations with Syria. During the 1980s and 1990s, Turkish-Syrian ties were outright confrontational as the two states sparred over such issues as Turkish control of the waters of the Euphrates and Syrian support for the Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan or PKK) inside of Turkey. Relations hit a nadir in 1999 when Turkey threatened to invade Syria if it continued to provide sanctuary to the head of the PKK, Abdullah Ocalan. This period of heightened Turkish-Syrian tension overlapped with the establishment of a security partnership with Israel that became one of the constituent elements of the regional balance of power.

Relations between Syria and Turkey began to improve slowly after 1999, while ties to Israel became noticeably more strained in the wake of Israel's 2006 military operations against Hezbollah in Lebanon. But this week, what remained of the old architecture of regional relations came crashing down. First, in a pointed gesture, Turkey retracted its invitation to Israel to participate in the aerial war games known as "Anatolian Eagle." Turkey has hosted the war games annually since 2001, and it has routinely involved Israel in them. This year, however, Turkey refused to allow the Israeli air force to take part as form of protest over Israel's policies toward Gaza and in particular Operation Cast Lead.

The United States and Italy subsequently pulled out of Anatolian Eagle in protest. If this gesture was intended to cow Turkey, it failed. Lest there be any misunderstanding about Turkey's motives for excluding Israel, Davutoğlu clarified matters on October 13 when, in what Turkish newspapers described as a "warning" to Israel, he demanded that the "human tragedy in Gaza" end and that "respect be shown to the al-Aqsa mosque, the Noble Sanctuary, and East Jerusalem, which are sacred to Muslims." The day before, the Turkish foreign ministry on its website described the public interpretations and commentary of Israeli officials regarding Anatolian Eagle as "unacceptable" and chided those officials to use "common sense" in their future statements and actions.

No less significant than the content of Davutoğlu's "warning" was the place where he chose to issue it, in the Syrian city of Aleppo at the first ministers' meeting of the newly formed Turkish-Syrian High Level Strategic Cooperation Council. Whereas a decade ago common opposition to Syria served as a glue binding Turkey to Israel, today Turkey's foreign minister issues appeals from inside Syria to Israel to heed the sensitivities of Muslims toward their holy sites in Jerusalem.

During his visit to Syria, Davutoğlu underscored that the opening up to Syria is neither a matter of tactics nor temporary, but is constituent part of the new Turkish foreign policy. Thus, for example, when he announcing the introduction of visa-free travel for Syrian and Turkish citizens, he described the occasion as a third common holiday for Turkish and Syrian citizens alongside the two major Islamic feasts Eid ul-Fitr and Eid ul-Adha. Davutoğlu brought to Syria nine cabinet members and revealed a raft of projects ranging

from educating Syrian students in Turkey through the removal of mines from the Turkish-Syrian border to the transformation of Aleppo into a major logistical hub for expanded Turkish trade with the Arab Middle East. The Turks hope to use Aleppo to meet Arab demand for Turkish foodstuffs.

There is a certain poetic irony to the Turkish dream of exporting food throughout the Middle East via Syria. Damascus' Ottoman-era fame for its sweets gave rise to a Turkish saying that aptly summarized official Turkish attitudes from the 1920s through the end of the century toward all things Arab: *Ne Şam'ın şekeri, ne Arabın yüzü*, literally "Neither sweets from Damascus nor an Arab's face," which can be roughly translated as, I don't want to have anything to do with the Arabs, even if they do have tasty sweets.

Instead, while in Aleppo Davutoğlu uttered an entirely different phrase to describe Turkish-Syrian relations: "A common fate, a common history, a common future."

Israeli Anxieties. Needless to say, the developments of the past several days have thrown Israeli politicians and policymakers into confusion and no small bit of anxiety, with some urging caution and others hinting at forms of retaliation against Turkey ranging from ending Israeli arms sales to withdrawing support for Turkish lobbyists in America. At this point, however, it would seem that there is little to be gained from responding quickly in the hopes of either assuaging Ankara or deterring it from similar demarches. The Turkish-Israeli strategic partnership is no longer in crisis, but has essentially ended. Indeed, unconfirmed reports in the Syrian and Turkish media promise the conclusion of a formal Turkish-Syrian strategic partnership in the near future.

Not surprisingly, Davutoğlu's criticisms of Israel and expressions of solidarity have met with great enthusiasm inside Syria. Without a doubt, the sound of cheering crowds in a country long known to the Turks as an obstinate and troublesome neighbor must deeply gratify Davutoğlu. That gratification will certainly only increase as others in the Arab world and beyond join in to hail the change in Turkey's regional orientation away from Israel to the Arabs. Turkey's expanded engagement with the Arab world may well turn out to be a boon for all involved, as Davutoğlu surely hopes. Turkey has a great deal to offer by way of its relative political openness and economic dynamism to the Arab world. If done correctly, Turkey's engagement could help point the way for the Arabs to transform their societies into more open, competitive, and democratic ones.

But that will be no easy task, nor will it be a short one. Initiatives such as student exchanges and increased business contacts can help change societies, but they require decades to yield fruit and provide little gratification after their inception.

Turkey's engagement also carries real risks if the course of influence runs in the opposite direction, i.e. from the Arab countries to Turkey. This was the reasoning behind the traditional Kemalist desire to keep all things Middle Eastern at arms length and under control. Turkish officials saw the Middle East as a cultural swamp from which Turkey must escape, not a realm of common culture in which it could thrive.

As Davutoğlu must recognize, the problems of the Arab world, and the sources of its misery, are greater and deeper than the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Arab countries are politically dysfunctional and most are economically moribund. There is little that they can offer the Turks aside from perhaps oil and gas and markets for Turkish consumer goods. In earlier eras, others such as Nasser and Saddam Hussein sought to expand their influence throughout the region by appealing to Arab sympathies against Israel, but their efforts did nothing but bring their own societies to ruin and leave the Arabs as whole worse off. Today, Ahmadinejad is attempting something similar with his backing for Hezbollah and routine denunciations of Israel. Yet, one need only look at Iran's recent elections to answer the question of whether Ahmadinejad's version of statecraft is serving anyone but himself and those close to him.

Israel's policies are not above criticism, but if Davutoğlu truly aspires to have Turkey play the role of an effective regional leader, he will have to direct some of his criticism toward those entities, such as Hezbollah and Hamas, that celebrate violent confrontation with Israel over the development of their own societies. And he will have to do so soon. With Iran in determined pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability, an enigmatic Obama administration sending mixed signals to the Middle East, and Hamas and Hezbollah maintaining their romantic commitments to violence, the sight and sound of Turkey closing ranks with Syria will not spur Israelis to step back and announce a "kindler, gentler" Israel to soothe its neighbors. Instead, it will only magnify existing fears among Israelis that their country does indeed face an unprecedented existential threat that only desperate action can solve. Better than most people, Davutoğlu should understand that precisely what Israel lacks is the sort of strategic depth Turkey possesses, and this has consequences for Israeli policymaking.

But does Davutoğlu understand this? Right now, the indications are that he does not, or at least does not care.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael\\_reynolds/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michael_reynolds/)

## Books take prizes (2009-10-25 23:00)

From [1]Robert Satloff



[2] On Saturday, October 17, at The Washington Institute's annual Weinberg Founders Conference at Lansdowne, I was privileged to serve as master of ceremonies for the announcement of our second annual Book Prize for outstanding books on the Middle East published in the previous year. This is a major literary award, one of the most lucrative for non-fiction works in the world. And this year's winners—chosen by a three-person panel of jurors that included Washington Post/Newsweek columnist Lally Weymouth; former State Department counselor (and SAIS professor) Eliot Cohen; and Emory University Middle East professor Ken Stein—merited every dollar in prize money... and more.

The first prize, worth \$30,000, went to Ronald and Allis Radosh's [3]A Safe Haven: Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel; the second ( \$15,000) went to Ali A. Allawi's [4]The Crisis of Islamic Civilization; and the third ( \$5,000) went to Martin Indyk's [5]Innocent Abroad: An Intimate Account of American Peace Diplomacy in the Middle East. What a broad, fascinating and provocative array of books! They include a history of what was perhaps the most contrary decision an American president has ever taken on Middle East policy (Harry Truman's decision to buck the Foggy Bottom establishment and recognize the new Jewish state of Israel); a bold and courageous account by an Iraqi intellectual cum public servant about what ails Muslim societies and how to fix it; and a wonderfully introspective retrospective on a scholar-diplomat's time on the front lines in the Middle East (and the no-less-violent battles about the Middle East back in



Washington). I have no role in these decisions—we are scrupulous about having an independent, omnipotent jury whose members don't even know the identities of their fellow jurors—but I was thrilled with how their deliberations came out.

For more information on our Book Prize winners, [6]click here.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_satloff/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_satloff/)
2. <http://washingtoninstitute.org/templateC11.php?CID=518>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0060594632>
4. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0300139314>
5. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1416594299>
6. <http://washingtoninstitute.org/templateC11.php?CID=518>

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### AKP reshuffles Turkey's neighbors (2009-10-26 23:54)

From [1]Soner Cagaptay



Turkey's ties with its neighbors have been transformed since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power almost seven years ago in November 2002. Some analysts have described the AKP's foreign policy as a "zero problems with neighbors" approach. Under the AKP, Ankara has indeed eliminated problems and built good ties with some neighbors, such as Syria and Iran, and signaled a thaw with Armenia, with whom Turkey shares a closed border. On the other hand, Ankara's traditionally good ties with other neighbors such as Georgia and Azerbaijan have deteriorated under the AKP, and Turkish-Israeli ties could unravel despite diplomats' best efforts. The AKP's foreign policy, far from producing "zero problems with neighbors," has resulted in significant ups with some neighbors and significant downs with others—especially those that are pro-Western.

For starters, the AKP's foreign policy has focused heavily on the Muslim Middle East. Some analysts have referred to the party's foreign policy as "neo-Ottomanist," suggesting "secular" imperial ambitions or desire to achieve status as a regional power. But the AKP's foreign policy energy has not asserted Turkey's weight equally in all the areas that were under Ottoman rule, namely the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East. Instead, the AKP has focused its energy on the Middle East, with a slant towards Islamist and anti-Western actors, while building a finance-based relationship with Russia.

In this regard, the party's use of diplomacy is evocative: a study of high-level visits by AKP officials to the Middle East, Balkans and Caucasus reveals that the party focuses asymmetrically on anti-Western Arab countries and Iran, while ignoring Israel, the Balkans and the Caucasus. Between November 2002 and April 2009, the Turkish foreign minister made at least eight visits to Iran and Syria, while paying only one visit to Azerbaijan (a Turkic nation once considered to be the closest country to Turkey) and one visit to Georgia (despite the fact that after Georgia's independence, Turkey had acted as a mentor for that nation). During the same period, the Turkish prime minister made at least seven visits to Qatar and Saudi Arabia, while



paying only two visits to Greece and Bulgaria, Turkey's two immediate European and Balkan neighbors.

Much of the AKP's energy in the Muslim Middle East has been focused on Syria. In the 1990s, Turkey viewed Syria as an enemy, because of its support of the Kurdistan Workers Party's (PKK) terror attacks against Turkey. Yet, on October 13, Turkey and Syria opened their borders, which facilitated visa free-travel, and set up joint cabinet-level meetings which encouraged a meld in bilateral policymaking. Turkish-Syrian rapprochement began in the late 1990s when Damascus stopped supporting the PKK, but the past seven years of rapprochement under the AKP have brought about a significant strengthening of Syrian-Turkish ties. The AKP's sympathy towards Turkey's Arab neighbors, and its tendency to analyze the Middle East through an "us versus them" religion-based political lens, as well as to side with anti-Western causes in the region, have helped build Turkish-Syrian relations. Today, diplomats describe Turkish-Syrian relations as perfect.

Turkey's ties with Iran have also improved under the AKP's leadership, although not to the same extent as Turkish-Syrian ties. This is due to the fact that Tehran is a regional power which, unlike the Baath regime in Damascus, does not need patrons to survive. Still, Turkey defends Iran's nuclearization, and as international pressure to prevent it mounts, Iran will likely launch diplomatic overtures to strengthen its bonds with Turkey. Trade links, including Turkish purchase of and investment in Iranian natural gas, will upgrade bilateral ties. Yet they will also create tensions between Ankara and the West, which will view AKP-promoted investments in Iran as undermining efforts to isolate Iran economically.

As Turkey's ties with Iran have improved, Turkish-Israeli relations have significantly deteriorated under the AKP. The party's critical rhetoric regarding Israel, which has eroded all Turkish public support for ties with Israel, had been dismissed for a long time in the West and in Israel as domestic politicking. However, that evaluation changed earlier this month. On October 7, the AKP dis-invited Israel to "Anatolian Eagle," a NATO air force exercise that has been held in central Turkey with U.S., Israeli and Western states' participation since the mid-1990s. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan justified his party's decision by saying that Israel is a "persecutor." Yet, the next day, the AKP announced that it had requested that Syria, whose regime persecutes its own people, participate in joint military exercises. A proverbial mountain is moving in Turkish foreign policy: the AKP's "us versus them" mindset, which does not see nations but rather religious blocks in the Middle East, is corroding the foundations of Turkey's 60-year-old military and political cooperation with Israel.

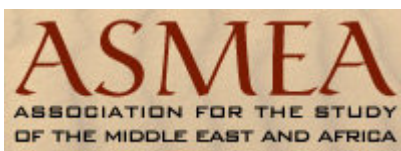
Rather than being pro-Western or neo-Ottoman in a "secular" sense, the AKP's foreign policy is asymmetrically focused on anti-Western Middle East powers, as well as Russia. Rather than having a "zero problems with all neighbors" approach, the AKP's foreign policy is a mixed bag, eliminating problems with some neighbors, yet souring previously good ties with other neighbors, especially pro-Western ones. The question is: how is that good for the United States?

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/soner-cagaptay/>

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### ASMEA meets again (2009-10-27 16:08)

From [1]Mark T. Clark



On October 22-24, 2009, the [2]Association for the Study of the Middle

East and Africa (ASMEA) held its [3]second annual conference, entitled "The Middle East and Africa: Historic Connections and Strategic Bridges." At the welcoming reception on the first night, Vice President Peter Pham announced the creation of the new, refereed journal, *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, to be released early in 2010. The subjects for the journal—as a reflection of the unique approach of the association—will fall within a broad range of geography, encourage multi- and inter-disciplinary perspectives, and will not shy away from offering scholarship that will have policy-relevance as well as academic merit. As much as we value high quality scholarship at ASMEA, we also believe it is imperative to share such scholarship with elements of the government—and anyone else for that matter—who seek a deeper understanding of the issues in our regions.

ASMEA has made tremendous strides in just two years from its founding. For its first annual conference, it had 19 presentations, two roundtables, and a keynote speech by the association's co-founder, Bernard Lewis. Lewis and Fouad Ajami co-founded ASMEA to defend free inquiry, expand the boundaries of scholarship, and respond to the growing need for a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary approach to studying the cultures, histories, and issues of the Middle East and Africa. It was therefore fitting that in his [4]speech, Lewis examined the threat to the freedom of scholarly inquiry and the prospects for improving the discipline. As a result that conference, Praeger Security International will soon release ASMEA's first edited book, entitled [5]*Political Islam from Muhammad to Ahmadinejad*, in November 2009. The book is based on many of the presentations given at that conference, edited by ASMEA's Treasurer, Joe Skelly.

For its second conference, ASMEA accepted over 50 presentations from over 100 submissions, with some 42 universities represented on three continents. We also had three special presentations. Ambassador John Bolton, Dr. Gerard Prunier, and Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez made up the roster for the special presentations on topics ranging from the UN in Africa, to racism in the Sudan, to evaluating the sources of interpretations of Soviet involvement in the Middle East from 1967 to 1973. We also had our first cooperative effort with Marine Corps University, in which professors from MCU held their own unique panel of presentations on teaching about this region.

Bernard Lewis gave the keynote speech for the conference. In fact, it is probably fair to say that he, again, stole the show with his lunchtime presentation on "The Iranian Difference."

The presentations were as diverse in their subject and disciplinary perspectives as is the membership of ASMEA. Members of ASMEA are citizens from 46 different countries, have established a presence on over 350 university campuses in 38 different countries. Members with Ph.D.'s have them in 41 different academic disciplines. All the academic papers that were given at this conference are in the running for selection for ASMEA's new journal. We welcome submissions from others, as well.

In my view, the energy, excitement, and enthusiasm for this new community of scholars was palpable at this conference. Anecdotally, many people made exceptionally favorable comments on the conference. Several members of MESH were also present, and I would appreciate their evaluation of the conference as well.

We will soon post the video of Lewis' new talk on ASMEA's [6]website and list the papers that were presented. Look for announcements of our new journal's publication. And start planning now to attend next year's conference.

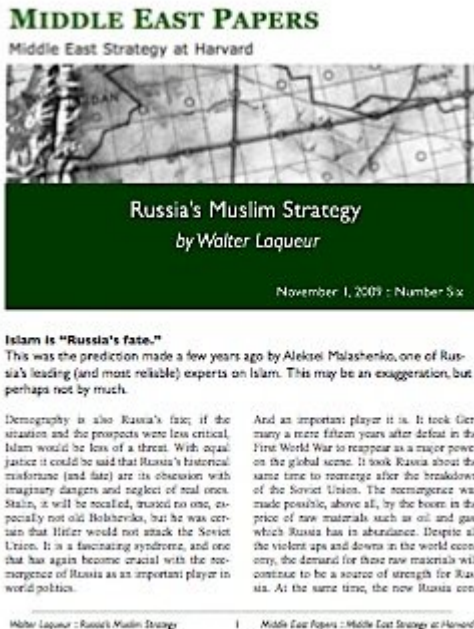
1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_t\\_clark/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_t_clark/)
2. <http://www.asmeascholars.org/>
3. [http://www.asmeascholars.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1322&Itemid=82](http://www.asmeascholars.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1322&Itemid=82)
4. <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-1044841988153378321>
5. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/0313372233>

6. <http://www.asmeascholars.org/>

## 3.11 November

### 'Russia's Muslim Strategy' (2009-11-01 11:03)

From MESH Admin



[1] Walter Laqueur contributes a [2]new paper to MESH's Middle East Papers series, on Russia's Muslim strategy. That strategy, barely coherent, is riddled with contradictions, as Russia vacillates between resentment of the American-led world order and fear of an ascendant Islam. For now, it's the resentment against the West that dominates the Russian outlook, resulting in a makeshift approach to Islam at home and abroad that may prove inadequate as Russia's own Muslim minorities and neighboring Muslim states grow stronger. Download [3]here.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/10/russia\\_islam\\_laqueur.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/10/russia_islam_laqueur.pdf)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/10/russia\\_islam\\_laqueur.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/10/russia_islam_laqueur.pdf)
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/10/russia\\_islam\\_laqueur.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/10/russia_islam_laqueur.pdf)

Mark N. Katz (2009-11-03 15:15:43)

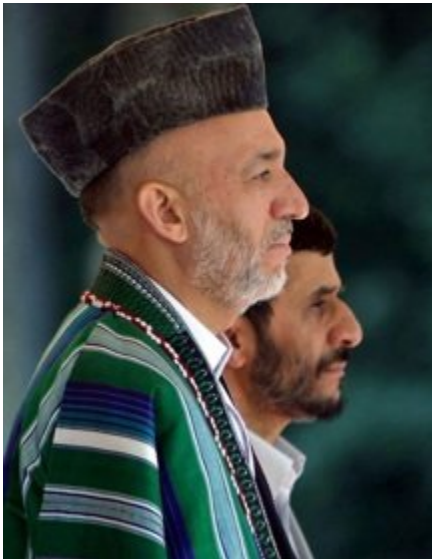
Walter Laqueur's [1]paper on Russia's Muslim strategy provides us with another example of the insightful analysis which we have long grown to expect from him. In the opening paragraph, he states the conundrum Russia faces neatly and concisely: "Russia's historical misfortune (and fate) are its obsession with imaginary dangers and neglect of real ones." Under Putin in particular, Moscow has been obsessed with a threat from America and the West which does not exist, and has usually refused to seek the assistance of America and the West for dealing with the very real challenge Russia faces from the growth of Islamic radicalism both inside and outside of Russia. There are, of course, many Russified Muslims in Russia. As I tell my students, a typical Muslim one encounters in Russia and Central Asia is a Tolstoy-reading, vodka-drinking, mini-skirt wearing young lady who is deeply frightened by the prospect of

Islamic fundamentalism and who regards Russia as a branch of Western civilization which offers her both protection and opportunity. The rising xenophobia inside Russia, however, is alienating many Russian Muslims as well as those who come to work there from Central Asia. Outsourcing Chechnya to the Kadyrov clan—former rebels who have imposed their own thuggish version of Islamic law and who increasingly appear to see Moscow as dependent on them and not vice versa—is hardly a recipe for stability. Moscow’s willingness earlier this year to allow the United States to ship weapons across Russia to Afghanistan indicates that the Kremlin understands that if the United States fails in Afghanistan, it is Russian-backed regimes in Central Asia and Russia itself that will suffer most from a resurgent Taliban. But even if the United States increases its commitment to Afghanistan and successfully pushes back against the Taliban, this will not do much of anything to salvage the deteriorating security situation that Moscow faces in the North Caucasus. A large part of Moscow’s problem in dealing with the North Caucasus relates to Laqueur’s observation about Russia being obsessed with imaginary dangers and neglecting real ones. To even acknowledge that Russia is facing an increasingly serious challenge in the North Caucasus would require acknowledging that Russia has not reemerged as the great power that the Kremlin loudly proclaims it to be. A logical consequence of acknowledging the seriousness of the threat in the North Caucasus would also require Moscow to acknowledge that it needs help from America and other nations—badly—in order to counter it. While doing this might actually enhance Russian security, it would also deeply undercut the image of Russia as a great power that the Kremlin has sought to project abroad, at home, and—not least—to itself. This something that the Putin/Medvedev “leadership” may not just be unwilling, but actually unable to do. [2]Mark N. Katz is a member of MESH.

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/11/russias-muslim-strategy/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_n\\_katz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_n_katz/)

### Iran’s second front in Afghanistan (2009-11-02 23:34)

From [1]Raymond Tanter



The role of Iran in fueling insurgency in Iraq, particularly attacks against U.S. forces, has been well-documented and forms one front in Iran’s proxy war against the United States. Receiving much less attention than Iraq, is the role Iran has played in supporting anti-NATO insurgents in Afghanistan as a second front against U.S. and NATO forces.

At first blush, such support seems bizarre given the intense antagonism between radical Shiites in Tehran and the fringe Sunni Taliban movement, each of which sees the other as lying outside the bounds of true Islam. Indeed, the two were at odds throughout the 1990s, at times approaching what some [2]considered a full-blow regional crisis. Late 1998 saw the Taliban murder of hundreds of Shiites in Mazar-e-Sharif and an Iranian buildup of Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps troops along the border with

Afghanistan.

By 2000, however, the Taliban had [3]dispatched an emissary charged with reaching out to the Iranian regime, Khirullah Said Wali Khairkhwa. Cooperation, even with ideological enemies, fits with Tehran's pattern of willingness to work with any ally to oppose the United States. (Iranian regime support for Al Qaeda in Iraq is part of this trend.)

During a January 2000 meeting in Iran, its representatives offered weapons assistance in light of the Taliban's inability to procure weapons on the open market; and at a November 2001 meeting, Iranian diplomats offered anti-aircraft weaponry to the Taliban for use in impending action with the United States and NATO and offered safe passage of fighters, weapons, and money across the Iran-Afghanistan border.

Direct Iranian government assistance to the Taliban was first [4]alleged by U.S. officials during 2007. In January of that year, Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns alleged that "There's irrefutable evidence the Iranians are now doing this and it's a pattern of activity.... It's certainly coming from the government of Iran. It's coming from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard corps command, which is a basic unit of the Iranian government."

A 2007 Treasury Department [5]Fact Sheet identifies the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Qods Force as Tehran's main vehicle for providing the Taliban with financial and weapons support. Secretary Gates has [6]argued that the quantity of materiel proffered to the Taliban from Iran requires senior Iranian government involvement. Such support, even if not directly ordered by senior political leadership in Tehran, is certainly known of and allowed to continue unabated.

The same Explosively-Formed Penetrator IEDs Iran [7]ships to Iraq are turning up in western Afghanistan, a previously quiet area compared to the eastern border with Pakistan. There have been 15 U.S. deaths in western Afghanistan in the last five months. One Taliban commander [8]told BBC News in mid-2008 that Iranian businessmen sell Explosively Formed Penetrators, called "Dragons," at a premium price to select Taliban commanders. In addition to businessmen who sell the weapons, the Taliban commander added that "There are people inside the state in Iran who donate weapons." The Afghan press is [9]reporting in October 2009 that Afghan security forces confiscated 860 Iranian-made land mines in northern Afghanistan. Tehran is also escalating by sending shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles to Afghanistan, which would greatly complicate NATO operations.

General Stanley McChrystal, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, [10]alleges in his September report to the White House that in addition to supplying weapons, "The Iranian Quds Force is reportedly training fighters for certain Taliban groups."

As U.S. forces gradually shift from Iraq to Afghanistan, Tehran likely sees the opportunity to bog down the American military in a way it was unable to do in Iraq. Such an analysis accords with American assessments that see the U.S. position in Afghanistan as tenuous at best.

The Permanent Five members of the UN Security Council (P5+1) initiative to end Iran's nuclear weapons program, and use maximum leverage to do so, diminishes the ability of NATO countries to use diplomacy to discourage Iranian support for the Taliban. Success against Iranian infiltration in Afghanistan will almost definitely require changing the security environment on the Afghanistan side of the border, rather than transforming the behavior of Tehran on the Iranian side of the border.

As President Obama weighs General McChrystal's request for some 40,000 additional troops to execute a population protection counterinsurgency strategy, it is important to bear in mind that with external

support from the likes of Tehran, the Taliban is unlikely to be defeated by anything less than rejection by the Afghan people themselves. To this end, the United States may be well-advised to seek support of members of Pashtun tribes that have formed alliances of convenience with the Taliban. A counterinsurgency strategy with enough U.S. forces to win the trust of locals by providing security will be essential to allow the American military to wean some of the Taliban's tribal Pashtun allies away from the insurgency.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_tanter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_tanter/)
2. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/1998/09/www8915.html>
3. [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/07/iran\\_and\\_the\\_taliban.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/07/iran_and_the_taliban.php)
4. <http://www.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/asiapcf/06/13/iran.taliban/index.html>
5. <http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/hp644.htm>
6. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/13578/>
7. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/10/07/eveningnews/main5370148.shtml>
8. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7623496.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7623496.stm)
9. [http://quqnoos.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&lang=da&id=3592](http://quqnoos.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&lang=da&id=3592)
10. <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-afghan-spies22-2009sep22,0,3144734.story>

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### Bungled again: Israel and Goldstone (2009-11-03 13:01)

From [1]Alan Dowty



As the Goldstone report on the Gaza war wends its way up the UN food chain, casting further opprobrium on Israel at each level, it is legitimate to question Israel's handling of this challenge. Did the Israeli response lessen or aggravate the damage?

There are serious critiques that could have been levied against Goldstone's mandate even before a single accusation was heard. UN investigations of wars, including this one, typically focus on *jus in bello*, on the laws of war on the battlefield, and ignore *jus ad bellum*, the justification for going to war in the first place. It can be argued with great cogency that it is unreasonable to judge the conduct of a war with little or no reference to its causes; echoes of this can be heard in Israeli complaints about the lack of attention to claims of self-defense.

A second critique is that international law has not kept pace with changes in warfare. Most contemporary armed conflicts involve what Rupert Smith has called "war amongst the people," rather than classic set-piece battlefield scenarios from which laws on wartime conduct (*jus in bello*) were drawn. These laws seek, quite rightly, to minimize casualties among civilians, but how should they be applied when the very blurring of the military-civilian distinction is a basic strategic axiom of one party? Are insurgents entitled to more rather than less immunity if they refuse to wear uniforms (as required by conventional law)?

So Goldstone's approach was already blinkered by the framework in which he, without audible complaint, was thrust. This was then compounded by the lack of an Israeli defense to the specific accusations that were brought. Having no "official" explanation that needed to be taken into account, as a straight-laced jurist he then not only accepted any claims of atrocities at face value but also attributed them to deliberate policy rather than the mistakes, negligence, and misconduct out of which most wartime violations are compounded.

Ruth Lapidoth, who has represented Israel in many international legal frameworks, and other leading Israeli jurists have argued that it was a mistake to leave Israel unrepresented in the presentation of evidence and argument before Goldstone. It may be that the final product would still not have been to Israel's liking, but presenting one's case in full force would make it more difficult to ignore the basic limitations of the framework (lack of attention to causes, unconventional warfare) and to assign to deliberate policy what could be attributed, in "the fog of war," to deviations from the rules of engagement that the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) had in fact set out.

A second effective means of damage control would be to address forthrightly the specific cases in the Goldstone report and to draw the necessary conclusions: a clear statement of the facts if the accusation is not warranted, and appropriate disciplinary action if it is. In fact, in international law, taking this step would remove the threat of prosecution abroad that now appears to hang over the head of top-level Israeli military commanders. The army that can fight a bloody conflict in an urban setting, without any cases of misconduct among its ranks, has yet to be created.

According to recent report, it was Defense Minister Ehud Barak who prevailed on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to boycott the UN inquiry. If so, it is further testimony to Barak's inability to learn from experience, and it comes as no surprise that the latest poll predicts that, if elections were held now, his Labor Party, once the dominant force in Israel, would be reduced to an abysmal seven seats.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan\\_dowty/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/alan_dowty/)

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Walter Reich (2009-11-12 17:06:56)

In focusing on the changed nature of war in our time, Alan Dowty [1] puts his finger on one of the central dilemmas facing not only Israel but also all states that attempt to defend their citizens. In many arenas of conflict, especially in the Middle East, military forces deliberately fight from zones of civilian habitation. They routinely use as staging areas places that, traditionally, are off-limits to military responses or other actions: hospitals, schools and mosques. These forces also routinely make sure that civilians are in the area from which they are firing their rockets or other weapons—either by inviting those civilians to be there or forcing them to be there—in order to protect themselves from return fire by armies that are reluctant to hurt civilians. These military forces understand that the media war is often immensely more important than the ground war, and that photos of attacks on hospitals, holy places or schools, attacks on fighters dressed as civilians and especially attacks on actual civilians provoke worldwide condemnation and mobilize widespread sympathy for the enemy cause. No traditional military forces or coalition of forces—not U.S. forces, not NATO forces and not Israeli forces—have managed to find a way to cope with this now-common form of warfare. Dowty notes the damage caused to Israel by that country's decision to not cooperate with the Goldstone investigation. He refers to the comments by a number of Israeli jurists who have also felt that Israel should have cooperated with the investigation and should have provided the kind of testimony and evidence that Ambassador Dore Gold presented in his [2] debate with Richard Goldstone at Brandeis University on November 5—evidence that, in the debate, Goldstone said he regretted not having seen. So should Israel have cooperated with the Goldstone investigation? I don't think the answer is so simple. If one looks at it as some Israeli officials looked at it at the time the investigation was launched, it's not surprising that they decided to boycott it. The UN Human Rights Council, and the United Nations itself, has shown itself to be implacably focused on using every opportunity to batter Israel. It doesn't fail to condemn that country even as it ignores massive violations of human rights by other countries,



including the members of the Council itself. The outcome seemed inevitable, and probably was. Richard Goldstone is, no doubt, a decent and honest person, but he was, in my judgment, either naïve or foolishly over-confident when he seems to have convinced himself that he could carry out an investigation or issue a report that would not become, inevitably, a political cudgel against Israel. In retrospect, however, the Goldstone report—and the uses to which it has been put and will continue to be put—has done so much damage to Israel that my sense is that Israel should have cooperated with it despite the inevitable outcome. I don't think the result, in terms of public opprobrium, would have been worse—and, in this case, might have been better. The larger question, I think, has to do with future repetitions of this kind situation. It will surely happen again. It happened when Israel fought Hezbollah in Lebanon, which fired rockets from schools and other civilian zones, and stored them there—and, should it fight another war with Israel, will do so again. And it happens in other theaters of fighting in the Middle East, including Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan, where it's not Israel that has to decide how to contend with this problem but other powers. Should such forces—American, NATO, Israeli—cooperate with investigations of such incidents, even if the investigation is almost certain, for political reasons, to find them guilty? No situation repeats itself exactly. The next time it won't be Richard Goldstone but someone else who will head the investigation. The certainty of an unjust outcome may be even greater. Still, I suspect that it would be best to cooperate—even as it continues to be necessary to fight an enemy part of whose military strategy is to hide behind civilian shields. This is indeed the new face of war, and countries, even as they do everything possible to limit civilian casualties to a minimum, must find ways of defending themselves, their interests and especially their citizens. In his November 5 debate with Dore Gold, Richard Goldstone seemed at a loss as to what would have constituted a "proportionate" response on the part of Israel. The definition of "proportionality" he had in mind seemed to make no sense in military terms. If a country, confronted with the challenge of this kind of warfare, concludes that it just can't fight, then that country will be unable to defend itself. In the case of Israel, such a decision would result in its destruction. It, and other countries facing this dilemma, will have to devise, in response to this new face of war, a new way of dealing with it—one that enables it to defend itself even as it minimizes, to the extent possible, civilian casualties. [3] *Walter Reich is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/11/bungled-again-israel-and-goldstone/>
2. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DxLa9f1Md34>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_reich/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_reich/)

### The real linkage: Afghanistan and Iran (2009-11-04 13:48)

From [1] Adam Garfinkle



As President Obama decides how to proceed in the Afghan war, he needs to add one more variable that is rarely mentioned: Iranian determination to acquire nuclear weapons. An ongoing Afghanistan campaign means that resort to force against Iran would be tantamount to starting a second war. The politics being what they are, that will knock the military option against Iran off the table, with negative implications for an empowered diplomacy toward Iran.

Consider the timelines of the Afghan and Iranian policy portfolios, as President Obama must. Whether



or not Iran parts with some of its fissile material in coming months in accord with the recent Geneva deal, it will still have enough nuclear "stuff" for one at least bomb within 18 months. (It may have more than that if, as looks increasingly likely, the recent Qom revelation displayed the tail end of a significant and protracted effort.) It will probably have overcome its weaponization and delivery-system challenges within 36-48 months. In 36-48 months U.S. and NATO forces will probably still be fighting in Afghanistan, whether Obama decides on a minimalist, counterterrorism-plus approach or General Stanley McChrystal's counterinsurgency-minus one.

The logic and overlapping timetables of the Afghan-Iran linkage suggest a need to choose. How should we think about that choice?

Both problems are consequential, but an Iranian nuclear breakout poses more serious long-term security dangers to the region and to the United States than any likely fallout from the Afghan war. Losing in Afghanistan could boost the morale of Islamist extremists worldwide, harm NATO and possibly exacerbate the situation in Pakistan. But acquiescing to an Iranian nuclear capability would spell the collapse of the Non-Proliferation Treaty regime and likely set off a proliferation race in and around the region that could catalyze a regional nuclear war. Unlike the Cold War deterrence relationship many of us remember, which involved just two sides with mostly secure weapons and command-and-control systems, a multifaceted nuclear Middle East without stable second-strike arsenals would be extremely crisis unstable and accident-prone, and could "leak" dangerous materiel to terrorists, as well. It is facile to assert that a deterrence relationship which worked in one context will also work in others; that assumption with respect to Iran is a textbook example of the "lesser-included case" fallacy.

If American interests require the prevention of an Iranian bomb, then major combat operations in Afghanistan must end before the moment to decide on Iran is at hand. That's not the track we're now on. General McChrystal's plan is a stop-loss effort that cannot achieve a level playing field upon which to drive a new Afghan diplomacy, let alone achieve anything remotely resembling victory in three years or less.

There are only two alternatives to preserve a credible military option, and hence a credible diplomacy, with regard to Iran: accept defeat in Afghanistan, whatever we may call it, and leave; or surge militarily to reverse the perception of Taliban ascendancy, and then drive a new political arrangement there to end the war within the next 18-24 months.

Either option is preferable to a protracted and inconclusive bloodletting, but the latter option—depending more on air power and avoiding the massive (and counterproductive) garrisoning of the country with foreign forces—is preferable. It would avoid the optic of defeat. A new Afghan coalition government, blessed by a Loya Jirga within and supported by high-level contact-group diplomacy from without, would have at least a chance of creating a stable environment over the longer run—something that cannot reliably be said about the current regime in Kabul.

A success in Afghanistan also would lift the admittedly modest prospects that diplomacy can persuade the Iranians to step back from the nuclear precipice, just as failure to turn the tide would likely tempt them forward. And if the Iranians do not step back, a success in Afghanistan will better undergird the diplomacy that must accompany any military operation directed toward them.

Clearly, however, no McChrystal-plus option is on the table. This suggests that, barring some major out-of-the-blue event, like the collapse of the Iranian regime, the administration will be unable to consider using force against Iran when the time comes to decide, even if it might wish to do so. And Tehran's knowledge that all U.S. military options are off the table is not liable to be helpful.

If U.S. policy eventually founders in Afghanistan and fails to prevent an Iranian nuclear breakout, and Iraq's relative stability begins to crumble—not a far-fetched possibility, regrettably—then we will face a trifecta of real trouble in the Muslim world and beyond. To avoid that debacle, the beginning of wisdom is to recognize that when President Obama finally decides on Afghanistan, he will be constraining or expanding his options on Iran.

One wonders whether this link is well appreciated.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam\\_garfinkle/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/adam_garfinkle/)

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### Obama's missive to Iran (2009-11-04 19:31)

From [1]Philip Carl Salzman

"It is time for the Iranian government to decide whether it wants to focus on the past, or whether it will make the choices that will open the door to greater opportunity, prosperity, and justice for its people."

—President Barack Obama, [2]statement on the 30th anniversary of the seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran, November 4, 2009



The assumption represented by the fresh [3]statement by President Obama on Iran is that all people and peoples are the same: at heart, all people and peoples basically want the same things, basically understand the world in the same way, basically are prepared to come to terms in the same way as everyone else. This is particularly clear in the assertion that what the people of Iran seek is "universal rights." Such a culture-free world as envisioned in this statement would make communication and agreement a lot easier. The reality, however, is that cultures do differ, and that people and peoples do not see life and existence the same way, and may disagree on goals. Iranian regime goals of Islamic and Shia domination are not secret; these are the explicit *raison d'être* of the regime, not to be negotiated away to build "confidence" and a "more prosperous and productive relationship with the international community."

Similarly this statement appears to assume that there are not real conflicts of interest between countries, or between the regimes running those countries. In this view, disagreements are basically misunderstandings, which, with good will and open communication, can be resolved to everyone's satisfaction. But power, control, and honor are gained and held only at the expense of other parties. There are winners and losers. Regimes wishing to improve their positions cannot do so by compromising with other parties. Furthermore, it is notoriously necessary in Middle Eastern despotic regimes to control the populace through confrontations

with external enemies, real, imagined, or manufactured. Improving relationships with identified "enemies" is not in their interests and not on their agendas.

Finally, what good does it do to acknowledge the "powerful calls for justice" of the Iranian people when you are about to throw them under the bus by trying to make deals with the regime that is shooting them down in the street, torturing them in prisons, and executing them?

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip\\_carl\\_salzman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/philip_carl_salzman/)
2. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2009/11/04/irans-choice>
3. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2009/11/04/irans-choice>

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Raymond Tanter (2009-11-05 17:39:31)

Philip Carl Salzman's [1]post about President Obama's [2]statement on the 30th anniversary of the seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran suggests that the president is dangerously naïve about the Iranian regime's aims. Salzman observes that

Iranian regime goals of Islamic and Shia domination are not secret; these are the explicit *raison d'être* of the regime, not to be negotiated away to build "confidence" and a "more prosperous and productive relationship with the international community."

On the basis of a study of thousands of Iranian statements over most of revolutionary Iran's existence, a book I coauthored, [3]*What Makes Tehran Tick: Islamist Ideology and Hegemonic Interests*, provides evidence to support Salzman about the central role of ideological aims for Tehran and its pursuit of hegemonic interests. We conclude that ideology is a driving force in the Iranian regime's decision making and makes American-style carrot-and-stick diplomacy unlikely to succeed. The nature of the regime in Tehran is important because it explains why the Iranian leadership perpetually seeks to confront Israel and the United States despite deterrent threats from both and offers to cooperate from Washington. Threats and promises have little effect on a regime whose leaders perceive the very existence of those two nations as a danger to continuation of their theocratic regime. Our study finds that the Islamic Republic perceives itself as engaged in two struggles: one for leadership of the Islamic world and the other a clash of civilizations with Western values of democratization, secularization, and globalization as embodied by Israel and the United States. In addition to considering Israel as part of the West and thus a regime threat, quest for leadership in the Islamic world may be responsible for vitriolic rhetoric toward the Jewish State. There is no historical reason why Persians should engage in antagonistic behavior toward Jews, such as President Ahmadinejad's [4]appointment of a leading holocaust denier as deputy culture minister for media affairs in the Iranian cabinet. And because of the perceived ideological confrontation with the West, it is not surprising that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei [5]spoke so harshly about the United States in a speech in which he characterized as "arrogant" the American attitude toward nuclear talks. The bottom line is that Salzman is correct about the key role of ideology in Iran. Those who view the Islamic Republic as a normal state with which we can do business are unlikely to succeed because of the ideological nature of the regime. [6]*Raymond Tanter is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/11/obamas-missive-to-iran/>
2. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2009/11/04/irans-choice>
3. <http://astore.amazon.com/harvard-20/detail/1599752980>
4. [http://www.rferl.org/content/Ahmadinejads\\_Holocaust\\_Adviser\\_Named\\_Deputy\\_Culture\\_Minister\\_/1867427.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Ahmadinejads_Holocaust_Adviser_Named_Deputy_Culture_Minister_/1867427.html)
5. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/04/world/middleeast/04iran.html>
6. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond\\_tanter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/raymond_tanter/)

**Farewell and thanks (2009-11-08 13:11)**

From [1]Tamara Cofman Wittes



This will be my last post on MESH for the foreseeable future. On Monday I will take up new responsibilities that will take me away from the wonderful discussion that unfolds on this page. I'll be serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, with specific policy responsibilities that include democracy and human rights (and, yes, the Middle East Partnership Initiative) along with public diplomacy.

MESH has done what some thought impossible: built a successful and well-read group blog on Middle East affairs, one that produces a sustained, relatively unpoliticized, thoughtful, and empirically grounded discussion among academics and policy analysts on the politics of the contemporary Middle East. I'll admit that, at the start, I was skeptical about the project Stephen Peter Rosen and Martin Kramer proposed—but they convinced me to give it a try, and they, along with my excellent colleagues on this blog, have built a rich conversation that brings together multiple perspectives and disciplines in a way that is always fresh, and very often truly enlightening, even for experts in many regional policy topics. I have learned a lot here, and for that I am grateful to Stephen, Martin, and all my smart and dedicated fellow MESH members.

The associated paper series, conferences, and other activities have built on the value of this unique forum and demonstrated the payoff from continued dialogue between the ivory tower and those inside the Beltway over Middle East policy. That's a lesson I'll certainly bring with me into the State Department, and I look forward to reading and learning from my MESH colleagues in the months and years to come.

Comments are limited to MESH members and invitees.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara\\_cofman\\_wittes/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/tamara_cofman_wittes/)

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Robert Satloff (2009-11-09 12:15:15)

We should all be cheered that Tammy Wittes is [1]joining the State Department to take over the democracy, human rights and public diplomacy portfolio within the Near East Bureau. For lots of reasons—some political, some policy, some bureaucratic—Tammy has her work cut out for her, but this is a profoundly important portfolio to which the Secretary of State has made one of her most inspired appointments. I know that all MESH members join me in wishing Tammy great success. (And if, in the wee hours, when the in-box has been reduced to sub-Everest altitudes, she has the urge to engage in some irreverent policy planning with MESH members, I am sure we all promise to keep her musings confidential and to offer only constructive critiques and helpful advice.) [2]*Robert Satloff is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/11/farewell-and-thanks/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert\\_satloff/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/robert_satloff/)

Michele Dunne (2009-11-09 12:16:03)

The Obama administration could not have made a [1]better selection for this position than Tamara Cofman Wittes. Not only is she a true regional expert, but she has spent the last several years studying and critiquing U.S. democracy promotion and development programs in the Middle East. At last there is an address for these issues in this administration, someone who will ensure that they are included in policy deliberations as well as assistance decisions. Deputy Assistant Secretary Wittes, we expect great things of you. [2]*Michele Dunne is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/11/farewell-and-thanks/>
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele\\_dunne/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/michele_dunne/)

Stephen Peter Rosen and Martin Kramer (2009-11-09 12:14:18)

We're grateful for the [1]very kind words of Tamara Cofman Wittes, and we'll feel her absence acutely. Tammy has been one of the most active MESH members, with an [2]impressive string of posts and comments in some of this blog's most interesting (and contentious) threads. She's been a dedicated member from the outset, and she also attended our inaugural symposium in Cambridge last fall, where she delivered a fine [3]summation of her own view of what must change in U.S. policy. We wish her success in her new career as a practitioner, and we promise to take her right back when her mission is accomplished. (Now, Tammy, can anyone else promise you that?) [4]*Stephen Peter Rosen and [5]Martin Kramer are the co-conveners of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/11/farewell-and-thanks/>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/category/members/tamara-cofman-wittes/>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/our\\_shaky\\_coalition\\_and\\_how\\_to\\_save\\_it/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/10/our_shaky_coalition_and_how_to_save_it/)
4. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)
5. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)

J. Scott Carpenter (2009-11-09 18:04:14)

President Obama and others in his administration have said nice things about democracy and human rights in the Middle East but I have been deeply skeptical about the seriousness of their approach. [1]Until now. In any administration, policy *is* people and Tamara Cofman Wittes personifies this particular job. Redefining a policy that can work to advance U.S. interests while reshaping programs to support it will require thoughtfulness, tenacity, creativity and bureaucratic smarts. Thankfully, each of these Tamara has in abundance. So let me join my fellow MESHers in wishing you all success and reminding you, as Rob Satloff [2]did above, that we're here for you if you need a sounding board. [3]*J. Scott Carpenter is a member of MESH.*

1. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/11/farewell-and-thanks/>
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/11/farewell-and-thanks/comment-page-1/#comment-4304>
3. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j\\_scott\\_carpenter/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/j_scott_carpenter/)

## How the Saudis radicalized U.S. troops (2009-11-10 17:06)

From [1]Gal Luft



The tragic killing of the 13 U.S. soldiers in Fort Hood by Army Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan is one in a string of events involving Muslim soldiers and veterans who have gone astray, raising delicate questions about the role and trustworthiness of the 3,000 Muslim soldiers in the U.S. military. The major incidents include the March 2003 attack in Camp Pennsylvania in Kuwait by an American Muslim soldier, Asan Akbar, who rolled grenades into three tents where officers of the 101st Airborne's 1st Brigade were sleeping, killing one serviceman and wounding 15; the six Islamic radicals who in May 2007 plotted to storm New Jersey's Fort Dix Army Base with automatic weapons and execute as many soldiers as possible; and John Allen Muhammad, the Beltway Sniper, a Gulf War veteran and convert to Islam who was responsible for 16 shootings and 10 murders and who is scheduled to be executed today.

It would be inappropriate to malign or even question the loyalty of the hard-working Muslim men and women wearing the uniforms of the United States. But it would be equally irresponsible to ignore the amassing evidence that subversive and combustible elements with radical Islamic persuasion have infiltrated our military, often putting our personnel at bigger risk in their own bases than from their enemies on the battlefield.

While Muslim soldiers have served in uniforms loyally for decades, it is the rising number of Wahhabi-trained and converted Muslims that is a relatively recent phenomenon. Since Wahhabism is one of the most radical and puritan strands of Islam, the penetration of Wahhabi thinking into the ranks of the military must be treated with care.

The genesis of radical Islamic thinking within the military was in the 1990-91 Gulf War, when nearly half a million soldiers and marines were deployed in Saudi Arabia to liberate Kuwait and defend the oil kingdom from Saddam Hussein's aggression. While the Saudis were adamantly opposed to any expression of religious practice by their guests, including a ban on Christmas carols, bible classes and Christian and Jewish prayers, they embarked on a well-orchestrated and generously funded effort sponsored by the Saudi government to convert as many American military members as possible to Islam.

[2]According to General Norman Schwarzkopf's aide Rick Francona,

Saudi officers appeared to have been directed by their senior military or religious leadership to spot and assess potential converts to Islam among American military members. Once a particular American was 'targeted,' [...] a few Saudi military officers, including a military imam, would attempt to meet the American in either a purely social setting or at least outside of the work

area. These approaches usually included fairly generous gifts and of course, literature about Islam. The gifts included expensive briefcases, pens, books and other personal items. Americans who decided to convert to Islam were rewarded handsomely [...] including all expenses paid trips to Mecca, and payments as high as \$30,000.

The commander of Saudi forces in the Gulf, Prince Khaled bin Sultan bragged in his memoir that more than 2,000 American troops converted to Islam through this campaign. "These Muslim troops are now the messengers of Islam in the U.S. forces," [3]said Dr. Abu Ameena Bilal Phillips, a Jamaican-born convert to Islam (1972) who worked during the Gulf war under the auspices of the U.S. Air Force while converting U.S. troops to Islam in his spare time. After the war, Phillips moved to the United States to "set up Islamic chapters in the U.S. Defense Department."

Nearly two decades have passed since the Saudi conversion campaign, and most of the converts may no longer be in uniforms. But the seeds sown during the Gulf War have germinated, creating scores of radicalized Americans who are a threat to their comrades in uniforms as well as to their civilian communities.

Fort Hood's Hasan yelled "Allahu Akbar"—Arabic for "God is Great"—just before the shooting. As Camp Pennsylvania's killer Akbar was being led away after the incident, fellow soldiers [4]heard him shout: "You guys are coming into our countries and you're going to rape our women and kill our children." Allahu Akbar, "you guys," "our countries"—strong words which tell us that it is time to investigate what exactly happened back then in the desert and assess how serious and deep-rooted the damage is.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal\\_luft/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/gal_luft/)
2. <http://www.francona.com/commentaries/conversion.html>
3. <http://www.way-to-allah.com/en/journey/philips.html>
4. <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/wire/chi-0303240201mar24,1,2253526.story>

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## MESH seeks support (2009-11-12 10:18)

From [1]Stephen Peter Rosen and Martin Kramer



As MESH approaches its second anniversary, we seek foundation support to allow us to continue our work and expand in new directions. Interested? Please [2]contact us. And if you have ties to a foundation, please recommend MESH.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/about\\_mesh/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/about_mesh/)
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/contact/>

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## Disrupting Iran's weapons smuggling (2009-11-13 01:33)

From [1]Matthew Levitt





Even as the West seeks to engage Iran in negotiations over Tehran's nuclear program, Iran continues to arm rogue regimes and terrorist groups in blatant violation of UN Security Council [2]Resolution 1747. Such aggressive behavior on the part of Iran in support of terrorist groups and rogue regimes highlights a critical shortcoming of current international sanctions on Iran. In the latest case, last week, the Israeli Navy [3]intercepted the *Francop*, a vessel carrying five hundred tons of weapons, including thousands of mortar shells and long range rockets believed to be bound for Hezbollah in Lebanon. Israeli officials released photographs of Katyusha rockets seized last week by UNIFIL forces in Lebanon that are the same make as those seized on board the *Francop*. [4]According to U.S. officials, the arms shipment was "clearly manifested from Iran to Syria" in violation of a March 2007 UN arms embargo and provides "unambiguous evidence of the destabilizing proliferation of arms in the region."

It is high time to back up the tough talk with action. The good news is that there are ways to effectively disrupt Iran's international weapons smuggling. The question is whether the *Francop* episode will provide the political impetus for the international community to take action. Previous cases of Iranian arms smuggling prompted no such action.

Indeed, the *Francop* is just the most recent Iranian violation of UNSCR 1747's ban on Iranian weapons trafficking. In January, the U.S. Navy [5]stopped another vessel, the *Monchegorsk*, while it was transiting the Red Sea en route to Syria with components for mortars and thousands of cases of powder, propellant, and shell casings for 125mm and 130mm guns. The *Monchegorsk* was chartered by Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) which, just four months earlier, the Treasury Department [6]blacklisted for its proliferation activities, noting that IRISL "facilitates the transport of cargo for UN designated proliferators" and also "falsifies documents and uses deceptive schemes to shroud its involvement in illicit commerce."

In recent years, a number of similar incidents exposed Iranian efforts to transport military materiel and arms by sea, land, and air to allies and surrogates. During the second Palestinian Intifada, Iran helped facilitate arms shipments to Gaza through Hezbollah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine to Gaza (by means of floating waterproof containers) by using [7]two civilian vessels, the *Santorini*, seized by Israel in May 2001, and the *Calypso 2*. In January 2002, Iran [8]attempted to deliver fifty tons of weapons to the Palestinian Authority aboard the *Karine A*, whose shipment was seized by the Israeli Navy in the Red Sea.

During the 2006 Hezbollah-Israel war, Israeli intelligence [9]charged that Iran was resupplying the Shiite movement via Turkey. Such claims gained credibility in May 2007, when a train derailed by PKK terrorists in southeastern Turkey was [10]found to be carrying undeclared Iranian rockets and small arms



destined for Syria—possibly for transshipment to Hezbollah.

Existing UN and EU legal guidelines provide the authority to take action against Iran weapons smuggling, but on their own are insufficient. In [11]February and [12]April 2007, the EU imposed a number of sanctions on Iran in order to implement UN Security Council decisions, including a ban on Iranian transfers of military materiel, arms, and missile technology. Similarly, Resolution 1747, adopted in March 2007, prohibited the transfer of “any arms or related materiel” by Iran, and urged UN member states not to facilitate such efforts. In addition, [13]Resolution 1803, passed in March 2008, calls upon all states, “in accordance with their national legal authorities and legislation and consistent with international law,” to inspect IRISL cargoes to and from Iran transiting their airports and seaports,” provided there are reasonable grounds to believe that the aircraft or vessel is transporting [prohibited] goods.”

Getting countries to act on these authorities, however, has been sketchy at best. As these cases indicate, serious gaps exist in the available policy tools to deal with Iranian arms transfers to its allies and surrogates. To close these gaps, the United States should work with its allies on multiple levels.

For example, the EU could expand its current policy banning the sale or transfer of arms to Iran to include a ban on the purchase or transfer of arms from Iran. Indeed, only the latter actually address the export of arms. Individual countries and regional organizations both—especially in South America and South and East Asia—should adopt legislation pertaining to Iranian arms and technology transfers, to enable them to fulfill their UN and EU obligations.

Government engagement with the private sector, drawing attention to the risk of doing business with IRISL, its subsidiaries, and other banned entities, could also have a significant impact. As the U.S. Treasury [14]noted when it designated IRISL: “Countries and firms, including customers, business partners, and maritime insurers doing business with IRISL, may be unwittingly helping the shipping line facilitate Iran’s proliferation activities.” Since then, Dutch Customs automatically [15]label merchandise shipped by IRISL or Iran Air at the highest risk category and inspect the cargo. Last month, the United Kingdom also [16]sanctioned IRISL, banning British firms from doing business with the Iranian shipping line.

Given Iran’s history of deceptive financial and trade activity, extra scrutiny should be given to any ship that has recently paid a call to an Iranian port. Countries should be encouraged to require ports and/or authorities to collect detailed, accurate, and complete data regarding all cargo being shipped to or through their countries (especially from risk-prone jurisdictions like Iran), to conduct rigorous risk assessments, and to proceed with actual inspections as necessary. According to [17]press reports, the Francop docked in Egypt before it was boarded some 180 kilometers of the coast of Cyprus.

Recent events show that even as the Obama administration seeks to engage Tehran, the Islamic Republic has continued to work to undermine Western interests and to support anti-Western elements around the world, as demonstrated by its ongoing efforts to resupply Hamas and Hezbollah and assist insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan. Disrupting Iran’s ability to arm allies and surrogates hostile to the interests of the United States and its allies would enhance Washington’s leverage in possible negotiations with Tehran, contain Iran should such diplomatic efforts fail, and prevent Iran from contributing to the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East and beyond.

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2. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/sc8980.doc.htm>
3. <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism-+Obstacle+to+Peace/Terrorism+and+Islamic+Fundamentalism-/+nava-force-intercepts-Iranian-weapon-ship-4-Nov-2009.htm>
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### Saudis into Yemen (2009-11-14 01:02)

From [1]Daniel Byman



Saudi Arabia is once again sailing in dangerous waters as it increases its military involvement in Yemen. The recent New York Times [2]article on the subject is welcome, because the growing violence in Yemen is perhaps the most neglected news story in the Middle East.

Yemen is racked by no less than three distinct sources of violence, beyond the traditional tribal uprisings that have always wracked the country. The "Houthi" rebellion involves Zaydi Shi'a in the northwestern part of the country near the Saudi border. Also in revolt are some disgruntled southerners, bitter at their steady loss of power since north and south Yemen unified in 1990, and also at their loss in the 1994 civil war. Yemen is also home to many jihadists tied to Al Qaeda of the Arabian peninsula. They have shown up in Iraq and elsewhere, and are increasingly active in Yemen itself and in Saudi Arabia. Yemen was always loosely governed, but the levels of violence are high even by a historical standard. The various rebels do not work together, and their agendas are not harmonious. But together they weaken the state and stretch Yemen's military forces.

Much of the attention is on the Iran-Saudi competition in Yemen, as the New York Times story notes, because the Houthi rebels are Shi'a. However, their Zaydi interpretation of Shiism is different than the Twelver Shiism of Iran, and the two communities historically have not been close. For now, Iran's support seems limited at best. (Despite Yemeni government claims to the contrary, I have not seen a credible account of serious Iranian backing, though given the dearth of reporting on this topic that omission is less meaningful than it might otherwise be.)

Saudi Arabia, however, feels it has more at stake in Yemen than just Iran. Riyadh has always felt a proprietary interest in the tribes in the northwest, particularly as some of them straddle the Yemen-Saudi border. Drugs and weapons also come to the Kingdom from Yemen. The Saudis, moreover, have also always felt that they should be the dominant power in Yemen, and for decades have meddled extensively in the country's domestic politics. (One policymaker I know compared the Saudis' obsession with Yemen to the U.S. concern over Cuba.)

The danger, however, is that growing military involvement will create political problems for the Saudis and strengthen the insurgents. The Houthis are not likely to suffer more than a minor tactical setback from Saudi Arabia's military effort (more threatening to the insurgents would be Saudi efforts to patrol the border and stop smuggling). Moreover, the violence seems to be creating some sympathy for the rebels in Iran. Perhaps most important, Yemenis agree on little in general, but there is a strong resentment of Saudi meddling. Saudi intervention delegitimizes the Yemeni government further and may create more support for the rebels.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel\\_byman/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/daniel_byman/)
2. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/10/world/middleeast/10yemen.html>

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## Whither Yemen? (2009-11-18 01:21)

From [1]Mark N. Katz



There has been much press coverage about how the Saleh regime in Yemen is facing important security challenges.

There is the Houthi rebellion in the north of the country which has been going on since 2004 (see a brief, excellent [2]analysis by Gregory Johnsen). There is the growing movement to restore the independence of South Yemen (which April Longley Alley and Abdul Ghani al-Iryani have [3]written about). And there is an Al Qaeda presence in Yemen which has been widely reported on, though it appears (as Johnsen has [4]pointed out) to be far less of a threat to the Saleh regime than either the Houthis or the southern secessionists.

A fourth threat is one that Alley pointed out in her 2008 Georgetown University Ph.D. [5]dissertation, "Shifting Light in the Qamariyya: The Reinvention of Patronage Networks in Contemporary Yemen": the fracturing of the alliance between the Saleh clan on the one hand and the Al Ahmar clan on the other. Abdallah Al Ahmar, chief sheikh of the Hashid, helped Saleh come to power in 1978, and strongly supported Saleh for almost three decades thereafter. With Saleh increasingly working to ensure that the presidency

is transferred to his own son, Ahmad, President Saleh has, as Alley pointed out, increasingly marginalized Abdallah's son, Hamid—who retaliated by actively supporting Saleh's electoral rival in 2006 (see Chapter V of her dissertation). Sheikh Abdallah again sided with Saleh on this occasion, but his passing away at the end of 2007 means that he is no longer present to manage the rivalry between his sons and nephews on the one hand and Saleh and his kin on the other with regard to the succession or any other issue. Needless to say, a growing rift within the ranks of the regime's top elite will not help it in dealing with security challenges from opposition forces.

There is also an international dimension to the crises in Yemen. As has been widely reported recently, Saudi forces have joined the fight against Houthi rebels near the Saudi-Yemeni border. Riyadh is helping Saleh in this instance, but it must not be forgotten that Saudi-Yemeni relations have often been tense. Under Saleh, tension arose between the two governments when Sanaa sided with Saddam Hussein during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis and when Riyadh sided with the southern secessionists in the 1994 Yemeni civil war (which Saleh's forces won). Saudi-Yemeni relations have improved greatly since the two governments signed a border agreement in 2000. If, however, Riyadh concludes that Yemen is fracturing, it will undoubtedly seek allies to support there—perhaps including the southern secessionists whom they backed over a decade ago.

Recent Yemeni government statements that Iran has been helping the Houthis have raised alarm in many quarters. The Houthis are indeed Shi'ites, but belong to the Zaidi sect and not the Twelver sect predominant in Iran (indeed, the two sects have historically been rivals). Many Western sources ([6]including the Washington Post) have mistakenly portrayed the Houthi conflict as a Shi'ite rebellion against a Sunni government. But as Johnsen [7]pointed out, "Saleh and numerous other leading figures of contemporary Yemen are of Zaidi origin." Iran has denied that it is involved in this struggle, and the Houthis have declared that the Saleh government is falsely claiming that Tehran is supporting them in order to get support from America, Saudi Arabia, and other GCC countries for himself. As Johnsen further noted, the Yemeni government "has yet to provide any firm evidence of direct Iranian support." Indeed, up until October 2009, Yemeni-Iranian relations appeared to be quite good. Even since then, Tehran has called for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, warning outside powers to stay out.

The Saudis, though, insist that Iran is involved. It is not clear whether they really believe this or are simply going along with Yemeni government claims in order to obtain a larger role inside Yemen—something that Sanaa has traditionally resisted, but now appears to welcome. Interestingly, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula leader Muhammad Abd al-Rahman al-Rashid also recently claimed (on Al Jazeera, November 10) that "Persian Iran" is supporting the Houthis (among others).

As with previous conflicts within and between the two Yemens before unification in 1990 and the 1994 civil war, the current conflicts inside Yemen have local causes. But as with previous conflicts, these Yemeni conflicts have international ramifications and could draw in other actors. Saudi Arabia is already involved. If Iran is not yet involved, it could be. The same is true, of course, for the United States.

So what are the goals of the various protagonists in Yemen?

The Houthis want to restore the Zaidi Imamate that ruled North Yemen between the departure of the Ottomans at the end of the First World War and the 1962 North Yemeni "revolution." Presumably, they also want to rule over South Yemen—which, though ruled by the British until 1967, was claimed by the Imamate. The South, though, is overwhelmingly Sunni. If anything, the Southerners have even less desire to be ruled by a Shi'a Imamate in Sanaa than by the Saleh regime.

Al Qaeda does not appear strong enough to come to power in Yemen, but it may be satisfied with a

chronic state of conflict there that provides it with maximum freedom to launch attacks against Saudi Arabia and other countries.

The Al Ahmars may see the growth of any or all of these opposition movements as further proof (as if they needed it) that the Saleh regime can no longer govern Yemen effectively, and to use their considerable resources to displace it. Saleh and his kin, of course, simply want to suppress all opposition and remain in power.

And what are the possible outcomes to the current conflicts?

One is that the Houthis take power in the North and the secessionists restore the independence of the South. This would lead to a situation somewhat similar to the 1967-90 period when there were two Yemeni states. As then, the two are likely to have hostile relations and to seek external assistance from rival great powers (or even not so great powers) against each other.

Another is that Yemen will descend into chaos, with none of the various actors strong enough to defeat all the others nor weak enough to be completely defeated either. In this scenario, all the various Yemeni protagonists are likely to seek external assistance. And to a greater or lesser degree, all might receive it.

A variation on this theme is that Yemen will come to resemble Somalia—another country which was previously divided, then united, but then became divided again. As in Somalia, the more populous region (the South in Somalia; the North in Yemen) could descend into a prolonged state of chaos while the formerly British-ruled portion (the North in Somalia; the South in Yemen) could emerge as a relatively coherent—albeit impoverished—state. Unlike Somaliland (North Somalia), which the West has largely shunned in deference to the African Union, Saudi Arabia and Oman might well recognize a re-emergent South Yemen (or South Arabia, as the British referred to it), thus easing the way for the West and other Arab states to do so.

Or, the Al Ahmars might overthrow the Salehs and establish a more effective regime that inspires popular support, peacefully resolves the conflict with the Houthis (who have a very personal grudge against Saleh), defuses the southern secessionist movement by fostering both autonomy and democracy, and cooperates with America, Saudi Arabia, and others against Al Qaeda. (The Al Ahmars, of course, could manage to oust the Salehs, but not succeed in some or all of these other tasks.)

Finally—and seemingly against all odds—Saleh might prevail over his adversaries. He has, after all, a track record of doing just this through a combination of co-opting many while at the same time playing them off against each other, and enlisting allies (both foreign and domestic) to isolate and defeat still others. Saleh has always played a poor hand well. The example of Syria also shows that it is possible for a father to successfully transfer power to a son in an Arab republic. But as the prospectuses of mutual funds warn: past performance is no guarantee of future results.

Whatever its future, the period ahead for Yemen is likely to be, to paraphrase Hobbes, "nasty and brutish." This nasty and brutish period, though, is not likely to be short.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark\\_n\\_katz/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/mark_n_katz/)
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### Lebanon on UN Security Council (2009-11-23 12:27)

From [1]David Schenker



In October, Lebanon was elected to one of ten non-permanent member seats on the United Nations Security Council. Come January 2010, Lebanon will assume Asia's "Arab League" seat, replacing Libya for a two-year term on the critical international body.

The UNSC seat was the brainchild of Lebanon's president Michel Suleiman, who used his 2008 UN General Assembly [2]address and his [3]side meetings during the 2009 gathering to press Lebanon's candidacy. The notion of a seat on the council reportedly appealed to Suleiman, who prides himself on returning Lebanon to the "international political arena."

Washington quietly opposed Lebanon's candidacy. Senior administration officials were concerned about potential problems for the bilateral relationship that could arise from Lebanon's voting decisions. While the pro-West March 14 coalition won the June 2009 elections, it was clear—even prior to the formation of the government in November—that Hezbollah and its local and international allies Syria and Iran would exert preponderant influence within the new government and the state's foreign policy. Indeed, in the current government as with the previous one, Hezbollah—via its subsidiary Shiite party, Amal—controls the foreign ministry.

It's not difficult to envision the kind of problems that will ensue. In the coming year, for example, it is all but assured that a resolution to implement "crippling sanctions" against Iran will come before the Security Council. Given Hezbollah's influence—and the ever present threat of violence—the best Washington could hope for during a UNSC vote would be a Lebanese abstention. More likely, under pressure from Syria and Iran, Lebanon might vote against such a resolution.

Worse still, if history is any indication, Lebanon's ambassador to the UN, Nawaf Salam—who himself is sympathetic to March 14—could be ordered to abstain or oppose Security Council resolutions in connection to UNSCRs 1701 and 1559, if not the Hariri tribunal, which Hezbollah and its allies do not support.

An [4]article from the Lebanese opposition daily Al-Akhbar published on November 17 hinted that a resurgent Damascus—whose influence in Lebanon, according to Vice President Farouk al-Sharaa, is stronger now than it was when it maintained troops in the country—would try to take advantage of Lebanon's seat to

promote its own interests in the Security Council. Here's a translation of the short article:

On the sidelines of the summit that brought together the Lebanese President Michel Suleiman and Syrian President Bashar Assad in Damascus, Assad's political and media advisor Buthaina Shaaban agreed with the delegation accompanying Suleiman to raise the level of coordination between Lebanon and Syria's mission to the United Nation in New York, and that Syria will increase the number of its representatives (at the UN mission) to coincide with the Lebanese increase that came after Lebanon was elected a non-permanent member of the Security Council.

So in addition to flexing its muscle in Beirut, according to Al-Akhbar, Damascus is looking to control Lebanon's UN mission more closely.

Given the potential pitfalls, Washington discouraged the government of Lebanon from moving forward, and reportedly even asked Riyadh to forward Saudi Arabia's candidacy instead. Saudi Arabia wouldn't bite, and Lebanon wouldn't back down. So in January, Beirut will take its seat on the UNSC, a position that not only promises to annoy the administration and Congress—which has to sign off on the significant aid packages to Beirut—but also to be yet another source of increased tensions at home.

Despite the inherent problems associated with the Lebanese seat, Suleiman, not surprisingly, is exceedingly [5]pleased. Some Lebanese scholars are, too. Carnegie's Paul Salem recently [6]told the Daily Star: "I'm very, very happy about it.... It boosts Lebanon's presence in the UN and the Security Council... to push the items on its agenda."

While Lebanon's international profile might be raised, it's hard to see how the benefits to Beirut outweigh the downsides.

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2. [http://www.cedarsrevolution.net/jtphp/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=2194&Itemid=2](http://www.cedarsrevolution.net/jtphp/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2194&Itemid=2)
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## Will more sanctions against Iran work? (2009-11-29 00:06)

From [1]Raymond Tanter



On November 27, 2009, the International Atomic Energy Agency

(IAEA) voted a strong [2]resolution that expressed "serious concern that Iran has constructed an enrichment facility at Qom [Iran] in breach of its obligation to suspend all enrichment related activities." This censure of Tehran was preceded by a November 16 report that the IAEA reportedly [3]suspects Iran may have additional hidden nuclear facilities beyond the previously undisclosed underground enrichment facility at Qom revealed during October. Parallel, clandestine nuclear fuel cycle facilities make sense. Without additional secret facilities, if Tehran enriched its low-enriched uranium (LEU) to bomb-making level, it would have to divert fuel from IAEA-monitored facilities.

The IAEA resolution and report coincide with Iran [4]renegeing on a tentative nuclear deal reached in Geneva during October. That understanding would have allowed Iran to ship some of its LEU out of the country for processing into fuel for use in nuclear reactors, but not nuclear weapons.

Heightened fears about Iran's secret nuclear capabilities and stumbling nuclear talks point toward yet another round of UN sanctions. Previous U.S. and UN sanctions against Iran have been "smart" sanctions—targeting individuals and entities related to specific behavior, while leaving the overall economy unaffected. The next round, likely to involve restricting Iran's imports of gasoline, represents a different approach, designed to have a macroeconomic impact to change the strategic calculus of Iran's rulers.

The success of such sanctions centers on restriction of Iranian imports of refined petroleum depends on the degree of economic hardship and whether it threatens the regime's hold on the population; economic impact depends on whether Iran's refined petroleum suppliers participate in sanctions.

[5]According to the Energy Information Administration, as of 2008, Iran's internal refining capacity is 1.5 million barrels per day (bbl/d), with plans to increase capacity to about 3 million bbl/d by 2012. Today, consumers are allowed 32 gallons of gasoline per month at the 37 cents/gallon subsidized price. Of the approximately 400,000 bbl/d of gasoline consumed, Iran imported about 94,000 bbl/d by the end of 2007.

Gasoline is important among refined petroleum products because of regime subsidies. In times of gasoline scarcity, Tehran faces a difficult decision between reducing subsidies to raise prices and depress demand or keeping scarce gasoline cheap and allowing pumps to run dry. Either choice is politically perilous. During summer 2007, Tehran instituted limits on the amount of subsidized gasoline for purchase, resulting in [6]riots at gas stations across the country. A substantial disruption in supplies of imported gasoline could precipitate additional riots and reinvigorate the Iranian opposition.

Unilateral options for the United States to restrict such imports are limited because Washington already [7]prohibits U.S. persons from conducting business with Iran, particularly in the oil and gas sector; it is doubtful that import denial via naval blockade is among options on the table at this time for the Obama administration, although there is [8]sentiment on Capitol Hill for blockade.

Unilateral steps short of blockade will have only a marginal impact. [9]The Iran Sanctions Enabling Act of 2009, which passed the House and Senate during mid-October, would allow state and local governments to divest from companies doing business with Iran's petroleum and natural gas sector. But divestment is unlikely to compel corporations to cut ties with Iran.

The [10]Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act of 2009 would have teeth, as it would authorize the President to deny U.S. government contracts to companies selling gasoline to Iran, and firms tangentially involved, such as shippers and those insuring tankers. Versions of the bill passed the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senate Banking Committee.



But despite Reliance (of India) [11]cutting off gasoline sales to Iran, it is doubtful that Royal Dutch Shell, Total, Lukoil, Zhuhai Zhenrong, or any of Iran's other gasoline suppliers would sacrifice lucrative contracts with Iran because of a threat of being cut off from U.S. government contracts. Russia and China could lose economic investments in Iran if those countries participated in gasoline restrictions.

That said, the toughly-worded resolution of November 27 [12]reportedly "had unusual backing from Russia and China, broadening the message of international displeasure with Iran that is frequently voiced in the West." Beijing is apparently sensitive to the [13]argument that without support for tough diplomatic stance against Tehran (perhaps including another round of sanctions), Israel is likely to take military action that would interfere with Chinese supplies from Iran. The jury, however, is out whether China would vote for sanctions that target Iran's economy.

The United State has [14]reportedly persuaded the UAE and Saudi Arabia to surge oil exports to China in the event Iran cuts off oil exports in retaliation for Chinese participation in gasoline restrictions. Given Saudi dedication to oil price stability, however, it is unlikely any surge in oil exports will be large enough to make up for China's loss of Iran as Beijing's number two supplier of oil.

Even if some of Iran's international suppliers were recruited to stop selling gasoline to Tehran, the Iranian regime has options to plug any supply gap. For one thing, the IRGC is heavily involved in [15]smuggling goods, oil and gasoline included.

Venezuela has signed a [16]deal with Tehran to supply 20,000 bbl/d of gasoline, which would help plug any shortfall created by sanctions. If Russia so wished, it has enough excess refining capacity to plug the gasoline gap. And though there is always cause for skepticism about Iran's [17]technical-industrial prowess in the petroleum sector, Iran's expansion of refining capacity to make the country self-sufficient in gasoline production could be in place by 2012, making import restrictions irrelevant: Any sanctions storm will only need to be weathered for about two years.

Given the Iranian regime's continued refusal to surrender its nuclear programs in response to economic incentives and threats—what Iranian President Ahmadinejad has [18]characterized as "chocolate in exchange for gold"—gasoline sanctions are unlikely to have enough impact to cause a strategic rethinking in Tehran.

This is not to say they should not be tried, because any economic pressure, even if it not decisive, is welcome. And producing consensus for another sanctions round is useful in case force has to be used later. But there is little leverage to compel international corporations to suspend gasoline sales to Iran, and Tehran has options for plugging the shortfall and dampening economic damage. Because of the low likelihood of success of another round of sanctions, the breakdown in nuclear talks, and the absence of a regime-change alternative focusing on the Iranian opposition, the West is moving toward having to decide between accepting an Iranian nuclear bomb or bombing Iran.

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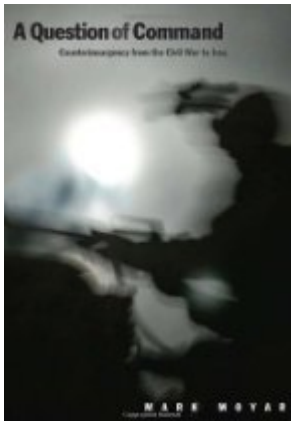
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## 3.12 December

### 'A Question of Command' (2009-12-01 14:41)

MESH invites selected authors to offer original first-person statements on their new books—why and how they wrote them, and what impact they hope and expect to achieve. Mark Moyer is professor of national security affairs at the Marine Corps University, where he holds the Kim T. Adamson Chair of Insurgency and Terrorism. His new book is *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq*.

From [1]Mark Moyer



[2] I started writing *A Question of Command* in the middle of 2007, near the nadir of the Iraq war, in large part because I was distraught at the daily slaughter in Iraqi cities. Having recently completed a book on the first half of the Vietnam War, I had started on the sequel but decided to put it on hold in order to write something of more immediate value to the Americans serving abroad. The United States, I was convinced, was not providing its military officers with the proper instruction before sending them into battle in Iraq and Afghanistan. I believed, in addition, that America's strategic and policy decisions had suffered badly from a lack of understanding of counterinsurgency that stemmed, in considerable measure, from the scarcity of good books on the subject.

For the preceding three years, I had been teaching mid-career officers at the U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College in Quantico, Virginia. During that period, a new colonel took charge of the college and re-oriented the curriculum towards counterinsurgency, as a result of his experiences commanding a Marine regiment in Fallujah. I had responsibility for identifying new instructional material for one of the core courses taken by all of the students, so I rapidly gained familiarity with historical and theoretical works on counterinsurgency that lay outside my lane of the Vietnam War.

As I waded into new sources, I reached the same conclusion I had reached in the course of writing two books on Vietnam—that most of the scholarship did not delve adequately into the actual business of how to defeat insurgents. Too much of it focused on high-level strategy and policy and on theoretical questions. There were only a few noteworthy exceptions, and they were historical works rather than theoretical treatises, like Brian Linn's *The Philippine War* and Andrew Birtle's *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine*. Teaching experienced military officers, many of whom had already served in Iraq or Afghanistan, allowed me to see better the lack of practical usefulness of so much counterinsurgency research.

My broadening awareness of the counterinsurgency literature also revealed that Vietnam specialists were not the only people who accepted too readily the "hearts and minds" theory of counterinsurgency, which claims that counterinsurgencies should be defeated primarily with social, economic, and political reforms, not with military force. Through many years of research on Vietnam, I had concluded that the hearts and mind theory did not work in the case of the Vietnam War, and I came to the same conclusion for many other counterinsurgencies. In *A Question of Command*, I argue that security and good governance, rather than sweeping reforms, are the key activities in counterinsurgency, and that success in those two activities is principally a function of leadership. Rather than focusing on finding the right methods, as the "hearts-and-minds" school recommends, counterinsurgents should concentrate on finding the right leaders.

With the publication of *A Question of Command*, I hope to influence three specific audiences, in addition to the general public. The first is the U.S. military's officer corps. Through its historical analysis and theoretical analysis, the book illustrates the leadership attributes and methods that have produced success in the past and are likely to do so in the future. It explains how to develop leaders, put them in the right positions, delegate authority efficiently, co-opt new groups of leaders, and influence an ally's leadership. These subjects have been ignored almost entirely by previous scholars, in favor of topics of considerably less value to practitioners.

The second audience is policymakers, who are apt to make bad decisions in counterinsurgency situations if they do not understand the dynamics of counterinsurgency leadership. For example, American policymakers would not have barred Iraq's traditional ruling class from the new Iraqi security forces had it known that building security force programs on a crash basis without experienced officers is a recipe for disaster.

The third audience is the scholarly community, particularly in the areas of history and political science. I am hoping to convince them that they have given insufficient attention to the role of leadership in counterinsurgency, and will therefore redirect attention in such a way as to promote greater learning in this area.

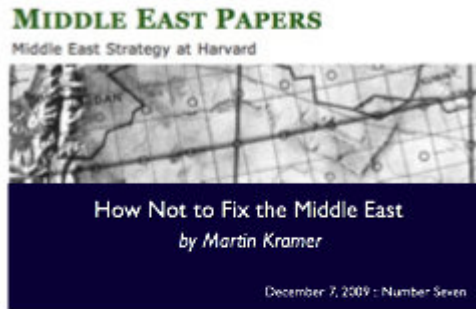
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'How Not to Fix the Middle East' (2009-12-07 07:39)

From MESH Admin



"Which area of the world do you consider to be of greatest strategic importance to the United States?"

Forty-six percent of American international relations professors say the Middle East, in a 2008 poll.

Thirty percent say East Asia including China; a mere six percent name the former Soviet Union. Yet when the same international relations professors are asked which region will be of greatest strategic importance twenty years from now, the Middle East loses its place of primacy: 68 percent predict it will be East Asia, only 11 percent predict it will be the Middle East.

Why? Embedded in this prediction is perhaps the anticipation that China will grow might-

ier. Perhaps there is also an expectation that alternative energy sources will diminish the importance of the Middle East. But no doubt the prediction rides on some expectation that by then, the United States will have fixed the Middle East, so that it no longer generates the kinds of crises that have put it in the cockpit of world politics. Interestingly, these same professors also professed Barack Obama over John McCain by about ten to one. No doubt they imagine that this shift will begin on his watch, and that his new ap-

Martin Kramer :: How Not to Fix the Middle East | Middle East Papers :: Middle East Strategy at Harvard

[1] The Middle East policies of the Obama administration in its first year are the subject of a new number of Middle East Papers by Martin Kramer. The paper (delivered last month as a public lecture at Columbia University) argues that President Obama's ambitious agenda has been thwarted by an internal contradiction:

The administration promised it would bring all its weight to bear on resolving the region's conflicts. Yet at the same time, it mumbled that United States had lost a lot of weight. The administration promised to do more, even while saying, quite openly, that America must resign itself to doing less.

The result has been a power vacuum, which the region's "middle powers" are now jostling to fill. [2]Download here.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/12/obama\\_kramer.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/12/obama_kramer.pdf)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/12/obama\\_kramer.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/12/obama_kramer.pdf)

## From Sovietology to Jihadology? (2009-12-10 09:18)

From [1]Walter Laqueur



[2] David Engerman is the author of a [3]new study of American Sovietology during the Cold War and its impact on U.S. policy. In a recent [4]article in Foreign Affairs he expresses

his belief that the model of Sovietology should guide the study of today's threats, specifically Jihadism.

It is true that the United States greatly helped the emergence of Sovietology in its early phases by financing research centers, the publication of the Current Digest of the Soviet Press and other useful tools. As a result, Soviet studies did not just serve the immediate interests of government but gained respect by making serious scholarly contributions. Engerman is also right in stressing the importance of studying cultures and not just "threats." Many of the first generation of Soviet experts were deeply steeped in Russian culture, but such interest and knowledge predated U.S. government educational initiatives. Such wide, often passionate, interest in Russian cultural traditions (think for instance of Alexander Gerschenkorn) could not be taken for granted as far as later-day Soviet experts were concerned.

The subsequent story of American Sovietology was somewhat less inspiring. In the late sixties and the years after, the belief gained ground that the Soviet system was a developmental dictatorship of social justice aimed at making the Soviet people not only more prosperous but also freer. Books appeared claiming that Stalinism had many positive aspects because it had carried out a cultural revolution. Anyway, the purgers and the Gulag had been greatly exaggerated; only relatively few Soviet citizens had suffered or lived in fear. Altogether, the Soviet system was more democratic and less aggressive than a previous prejudiced generation of Sovietologists had thought. It was a different kind of democracy, and while still somewhat behind the Western living standards, it was gradually catching up. In brief, the West had a great deal to learn from it.

Of course, such views were not shared by all Sovietologists, and it is also true that during this period they had hardly any influence on the shaping of U.S. policy. (But it should not be forgotten that even CIA in these years greatly overrated Soviet economic performance.) In brief, the story of academic Sovietology, with all its achievements, is also a story of pitfalls of every kind and misjudgments. In a recent [5]memoir, I have tried to explain why things in this and other area studies can go wrong.

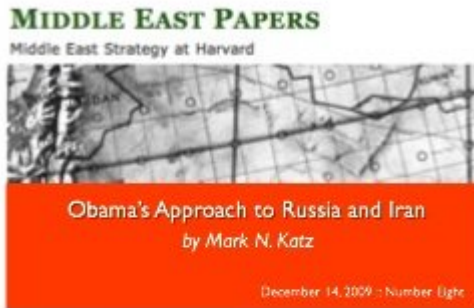
So Engerman means well, but he underrates the problems arising when the attempt is made to transfer the model of Sovietology to Jihadology (even if we use the less offensive term political Islam). There is bound to be resistance from the very beginning. Is this a legitimate field of study, it will be asked, or a mere construct by Islamophobes? Even if such a field exists, would its study not generate more friction and conflict at a time when sympathy and an effort to understand are needed? Are Westerners at all capable (post-modernists and post-colonialists will argue) to understand cultures and belief systems that are not their own? What would be the point of republishing in translation the material generated by political Islam? It would be only grist on the mills of the Islamophobes, incapable of understanding its real meaning and simply using it for hostile propaganda. Would not collaboration with the U.S. government fatally compromise the bona fides of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies?

On occasion, Soviet studies—despite an endeavor to be objective and even "scientific"—became emotionally charged. But this cannot even begin to compare with the supercharged climate that has prevailed for some time in the mainstream of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies. What Engerman suggests may still be possible, but those who engage in it should be aware of the enormous resistance they are likely to encounter.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter\\_laqueur/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/walter_laqueur/)
2. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/12/sovietology.jpg>
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## 'Obama's Approach to Russia and Iran' (2009-12-14 07:25)

From MESH Admin



**The Obama administration is optimistic about improved relations with Russia and Iran. Is this optimism realistic?**

The Obama administration came into office last January seeking to improve American relations with Russia and Iran. Improved relations with Iran, it was hoped, would (among other things) persuade Tehran to end all activities that would turn Iran into a nuclear-armed state. Improved relations with Russia, it was also hoped, would lead (again, among other things) to greater Russian cooperation with the United States on the Iranian nuclear issue.

After over ten months in office, the Obama administration has not succeeded in improving relations with Iran. There has been a limited improvement in Russian-American rela-

tions, but the overall relationship remains poor, and Russia has not proved willing to "help us" with Iran, as so many hoped and even expected that it would.

Yet the Obama administration reportedly remains optimistic about improved relations with both Iran and Russia, and for progress on the Iranian nuclear issue. Is this optimism realistic? I will address this question by exploring how the administration plans to overcome the resistance of both Iran and Russia, how the Russian government views cooperation with the United States vis-à-vis Iran, and how the Iranian government views improved relations with the United States.

Mark N. Katz - Obama's Approach to Russia and Iran | Middle East Papers - Middle East Strategy at Harvard

[1]

A journalist has described President Obama's approach to foreign policy as "applying the same tools to international diplomacy that he once used as a community organizer on Chicago's South Side." In a new number of Middle East Papers, Mark N. Katz explains why these tools are likely to be ineffective in influencing Iran's nuclear drive and Russia's willingness to cooperate with the United States to stop it. (The paper originated in a recent lecture at New York University.) [2]Download here.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/12/russia\\_iran\\_obama\\_katz.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/12/russia_iran_obama_katz.pdf)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/12/russia\\_iran\\_obama\\_katz.pdf](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/files/2009/12/russia_iran_obama_katz.pdf)

## MESH in hibernation (2009-12-30 06:25)

From [1]Stephen Peter Rosen and [2]Martin Kramer



[3]

We launched Middle East Strategy at Harvard (MESH) on December 7,

2007. At the time, we [4]wrote: "We believe that each of our members, at some point, will have something to say that's best said here. Our task is to show them those opportunities, and to exercise just enough editorial judgment to make sure the site works for them and for you." Two years later, we think it's fair to say that MESH has made a mark. Its name is well-known and well-regarded by thousands of influential readers around the globe.

We always conceived of MESH as an experiment. We now think it is time to revisit the format, mobilize new resources, and expand the circle of participants. This will take time and effort. Rather than invest both in perpetuating the existing format, we have decided to put MESH in hibernation, until such time as we arrive at a new formula. As we reconfigure the platform, we urge our readers to [5]contact us with their suggestions.

The rich archive of MESH's posts and comments (over 700 in number) remains fully accessible. (The best way to search it is from [6]here.) And if you want to be sure not to miss a future relaunch, subscribe to MESH via one of the options on the sidebar.

We would like to thank the [7]members of MESH, past and present, for their contributions over the past two years. MESH has never offered its members a cent of compensation: their posts and comments came to us as gifts, offered in pure delight at the prospect of intellectual challenge and exchange. On two occasions, we made our virtual community real, with symposia at Harvard. We owe a large debt to Ann Townes, who performed all the many tasks that made these symposia possible and who, beyond that, expertly and cheerfully handled the many administrative chores related to our operations. We are also grateful to Steven Bloomfield, the executive director of the Weatherhead Center (our sponsor), who has always been a pillar of support for our far-fetched ideas.

1. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen\\_peter\\_rosen/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/stephen_peter_rosen/)
2. [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin\\_kramer/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/members/martin_kramer/)
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