

# AMERICA'S CHALLENGES IN THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST

THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION'S POLICIES

Edited by **Shahram Akbarzadeh**



AMERICA'S CHALLENGES IN THE  
GREATER MIDDLE EAST

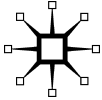


AMERICA'S CHALLENGES  
IN THE GREATER  
MIDDLE EAST

THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION'S  
POLICIES

*Edited by*  
*Shahram Akbarzadeh*

palgrave  
macmillan



AMERICA'S CHALLENGES IN THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST  
Copyright © Shahram Akbarzadeh, 2011.

All rights reserved.

First published in 2011 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®  
in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,  
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Where this book is distributed in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world,  
this is by Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited,  
registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills,  
Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies  
and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States,  
the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN: 978-0-230-11277-3

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

America's challenges in the greater Middle East : the Obama  
Administration's policies / edited by Shahram Akbarzadeh.  
p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-230-11277-3 (hardback)

1. Middle East—Foreign relations—United States. 2. United States—  
Foreign relations—Middle East. I. Akbarzadeh, Shahram.

DS63.2.U5A823 2011

327.73056—dc22

2011002899

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Newgen Imaging Systems (P) Ltd., Chennai, India.

First edition: July 2011

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America.

# CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vii
1 Obama in the Middle East: Failure to Bring Change <i>Shahram Akbarzadeh</i>	1
2 Iraq: Policies, Politics, and the Art of the Possible <i>Charles W. Dunne</i>	11
3 Saudi Arabia: A Controversial Partnership <i>Thomas W. Lippman</i>	31
4 GCC States under the Obama Administration <i>Christian Koch</i>	53
5 Egypt: From Stagnation to Revolution <i>Michele Dunne</i>	71
6 Israel and the Palestinian Authority: Resigning to Status Quo <i>Beverley Milton-Edwards</i>	89
7 The Maghreb: Strategic Interests <i>Yahia H. Zoubir</i>	105
8 Somalia: Unwanted Legacy, Unhappy Options <i>Ken Menkhaus</i>	133
9 Iran: From Engagement to Containment <i>Shahram Akbarzadeh</i>	161
10 Pakistan: A New Beginning? <i>Touqir Hussain</i>	177
11 Afghanistan: Grim Prospects? <i>William Maley</i>	195
12 Central Asia: Pragmatism in Action <i>Luca Anceschi and Shahram Akbarzadeh</i>	217

13	Turkey: A Neglected Partner <i>Paul A. Williams</i>	237
	<i>Selected Bibliography</i>	255
	<i>List of Contributors</i>	267
	<i>Index</i>	271

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project was made possible by the generous support of the Australian Research Council (DP0770266). Thanks are due to Gordon Willcock and Elizabeth Lakey for their assistance.





## OBAMA IN THE MIDDLE EAST: FAILURE TO BRING CHANGE

*Shahram Akbarzadeh*

President Barack Obama inherited an unenviable legacy from his predecessor in the greater Middle East. At the time of his inauguration, U.S. troops were involved in two theaters of war. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq had started well and allowed the United States to gain quick victories against incumbent regimes. Securing these victories, however, had proven elusive. In Afghanistan, the Taliban had managed to put up resistance, seriously curtailing the authority of the central government beyond major centers of population. The Taliban also established camps across the border, using Pakistani territory to train fighters and launch attacks against U.S. troops and those of its allies. In Iraq, a pro-Saddam insurgency soon developed into an Islamist/Al Qaeda campaign of terror, aimed at punishing the United States and instigating a sectarian war between Sunni and Shia Iraqis.

In the protracted Israeli-Palestinian dispute, President Obama inherited a challenge that tested U.S. relations with Israel and the Arab world. For over 50 years, the question of Palestinian statehood has galvanized Muslim opinions and thrown the Middle East into turmoil. Successive Arab-Israeli wars have highlighted the centrality of the Palestinian plight to the political dynamics of the region and its propaganda value for antiestablishment political actors. The ongoing construction of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, the status of Jerusalem, and the question of Palestinian refugees displaced after the 1949 and 1967 wars have hampered attempts at resolving the issue. Past U.S. administrations have made piecemeal progress toward the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute: the

Oslo Accord, which led to the formation of the Palestinian Authority, may be counted as one such achievement. The subsequent unilateral withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza Strip in 2005 has also been credited to U.S. policy, although there is little evidence to support that. Nonetheless, the dream of a Palestinian state remains as distant as ever. Former U.S. president George W. Bush was publicly supportive of a future Palestinian state. But his comments on settlements as “facts on the ground” only emboldened Israel to continue with its settlement expansion policy. President Obama has proven unable to reverse this policy.

Farther to the east, and central to the ideological challenge to the United States, stands Iran. Accused of running a clandestine nuclear weapons program and sponsoring international terrorism (justified most notably in relation to its links with the Hizbullah militia in Lebanon), Iran has proven too difficult to handle by successive administrations. The Bush response to Iran—describing it as part of an “axis of evil” and suggesting that it may be next on the U.S. hit list—did nothing to address entrenched animosities. Furthermore, U.S. action in the neighborhood only served to advance Iran’s strategic interests. The removal of the Taliban and the Saddam regimes, both of which had been hostile toward Iran and their own Shia population, was a major factor in opening up the region to Iran’s strategic reach. But this strategic leeway was delivered in a mixed package that also included an immediate threat. The stationing of U.S. troops on both sides of the Islamic Republic of Iran fueled paranoia in Tehran regarding U.S. plans for a regime change. The consequent shift toward conservatism in Iran and the ascendance of the hard-line faction at the expense of President Khatami’s reformism reflected this mix of paranoia and nationalist assertiveness. President Obama’s message of change and gestures of goodwill have had no impact on deep-seated fears and vested interest in Iran.

The United States has suffered from a serious decline in credibility and respect in the Middle East. The history of U.S. involvement in the Middle East in the latter part of the twentieth century and most poignantly during the George W. Bush era has tarnished the American image. The notion that the United States is anti-Islamic appears quite compelling to many in the region. The war on terror and many antiterror laws are seen as targeting Muslims and their faith. The 2008 annual survey of public opinion in six Arab states (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates [UAE]), involving more than 4,000 respondents, revealed the depth of this skepticism. It found that 83 percent of the sample

held unfavorable views of the United States and believed the United States' Middle East policy was governed by two overriding objectives: ready access to oil and the protection of Israel.<sup>1</sup> It was in the midst of this crisis of respect that Barack Obama took up the helm.

President Obama's guiding principle in the Middle East and more broadly in foreign policymaking has been to differentiate his administration from that of his predecessor and address the image deficit. The new administration and the new team of advisers felt that the decline in the U.S. standing had reached a critical point at which even established Muslim allies like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt were reticent in supporting Washington. This was evident in their response to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Although the leadership may have been privately happy to see Saddam Hussein removed from power, they could not publicly endorse U.S. actions for fear of a popular backlash. This was a significant shift from 1991, when the United States managed to form a willing international coalition in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The Obama administration set out to restore Washington's moral standing and leadership. Achieving this was a tall order, and the new president must have been acutely aware of the magnitude of the challenge.

Obama's position on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq was clear during his electoral campaign. He had differentiated between the two as a war of necessity and a war of choice. This distinction was generally shared by the international community but not by the Muslim world. Many observers had lamented the diversion of resources from Afghanistan to Iraq before the United States had managed to secure its victory, root out the Taliban, and capture Osama bin Laden.

Obama's declaration of intent to withdraw from Iraq was consistent with his campaign promises. Soon after taking office, he announced that the U.S. combat mission in Iraq would draw to a close by August 2010, bringing home some 90,000 troops while keeping a force of 50,000 to train and advise Iraqi security forces and, if necessary, engage in counterterrorism activity. The transfer of responsibility to the Iraqi security forces has been an ambitious undertaking. It is far from certain that the Iraqi security forces can cope with the terrorist threat and stay above sectarian bloodletting. The impasse in Iraqi politics compounds the challenge. It took nearly nine months for the formation of a new government in Baghdad after the 2010 parliamentary election failed to deliver a clear lead to any of the parties.<sup>2</sup>

Many observers have criticized President Obama's desire to mend fences with the Muslim world as going soft on authoritarian Muslim governments. This criticism has been particularly focused on President

Obama's attitude toward Egypt, a long-standing ally of the United States in the Arab world. Egypt is also a closed and authoritarian state with no immediate prospects for political openness. The close relationship between the two countries and the religious standing of Al Azhar University throughout the Muslim world were both influential in the choice of Cairo for Obama's message of goodwill. But this choice was interpreted as an endorsement of the Hosni Mubarak regime and a snub to Egypt's democratic opposition dissidents. This choice and the lack of direct references to the absence of democracy in Egypt were interpreted as a tacit approval of the regime.

The question of democracy in Egypt has been a hot topic in Washington for years, and this background made Obama's Cairo speech even more significant and problematic. In 2005 Egypt held a series of controversial presidential and parliamentary elections. Only a few months earlier, the United States had urged the Mubarak regime to open up the political space and make the government more responsive to popular will. Condoleezza Rice, former U.S. secretary of state, delivered a bold lecture in Cairo in June 2005 deploring the absence of democracy in Egypt and declaring that the United States was no longer prepared to turn a blind eye to authoritarian practices:

The Egyptian government must fulfill the promise it has made to its people—and to the entire world—by giving its citizens the freedom to choose. Egypt's elections, including the Parliamentary elections, must meet objective standards that define every free election. Opposition groups must be free to assemble, and participate, and speak to the media. Voting should occur without violence or intimidation.<sup>3</sup>

U.S. pressure on the Egyptian regime focused on the plight of Ayman Nour, a lawyer and former member of parliament who was disillusioned with the ruling regime and published a book in 2000 advocating liberalism. Nour was arrested in January 2005, accused of forging signatures to form an opposition party. Under intense pressure from the United States and eager to appear tolerant, the Mubarak regime released Nour in March 2005, allowing him to meet with Secretary Rice on her visit to Cairo. Nour contested the presidential elections in September that year and finished a distant second after the incumbent president. At the time, this was celebrated as a major achievement and a step forward for democracy. It soon became clear, however, that this achievement was temporary and that any gains toward electoral plurality were easily reversible. The regime

tried to limit the participation of voters aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood and started a campaign of harassment and intimidation at the November/December 2005 parliamentary elections. Despite this, candidates affiliated with the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood managed to secure 20 percent of the 454-seat assembly.<sup>4</sup> This was a shock to the regime and prompted a renewed wave of arrests and bullying, including the arrest and conviction of Ayman Nour in December 2005. Nour spent the next three years in prison and was only released in February 2009, perhaps as a goodwill gesture to the new U.S. president.

There was no surprise in the way the Mubarak regime behaved as it maneuvered internal and external pressures to consolidate its hold on power. The surprise was in the way the Bush administration responded to this obvious mockery of its authority. Washington chose to ignore this behavior and not press Egypt on reform. The apparent reversal of policy came on the heels of the Hamas electoral victory in the Palestinian territories. This victory was a reminder that open elections could indeed favor Islamist forces—and this is generally seen as putting U.S. interests at risk.<sup>5</sup> The situation was a test for Secretary Rice and her pledge to take a long-term view on democracy and U.S. interests. What transpired was a clear retreat to the familiar pattern, whereby the long-term objectives of achieving stability through democracy was overshadowed by short-term imperatives of preserving a U.S.-friendly regime in power. This pattern appears to be reproduced in Obama's policy toward the Middle East—with the significant difference that the new administration has arrived at this policy from a different angle. Obama's starting point has been to restore respect for the United States by treating the Middle East states as equals. He made it clear that the United States has damaged its own standing by a history of interferences in the internal affairs of Muslim states. Obama's position in relation to Egypt was consistent with this overarching concern. His administration refrained from "imposing democracy" from above, relented on pressing Egypt for political openness, and even offered to open direct talks with Iran because it wished to dispel the image of an arrogant bully.

Obama's Cairo speech was not devoid of references to democracy. Although Obama was careful not to criticize his host, he reiterated his long-standing commitment to democracy as the most suitable form of government for the fulfillment of popular will and long-term stability. This generic approach to democracy and the new administration's desire to disassociate itself from the Bush era, however, has led many

to see Obama as an advocate of the status quo, not change. A year after the Cairo speech, for example, Fawaz Gerges argued,

The new president has also put the brakes on democracy promotion, and instead, embraced America's traditional Middle Eastern allies—Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan, and Israel—regardless of their domestic politics and conduct towards their citizens.<sup>6</sup>

This apparent shift in emphasis is due to a number of factors. First, the democracy promotion agenda risks alienating Muslim public opinion as it smacks of imposing foreign expectations from above. The experience of Iraq and Afghanistan, which continue to struggle with communal violence, does nothing to promote them as beacons of democracy and hope in the Middle East. Instead, the U.S. democracy promotion policy has become entangled with civil unrest and violence in the minds of many. This is despite the fact that average citizens in the Middle East yearn for political accountability and justice in their governments.<sup>7</sup>

Second, this agenda puts U.S.-friendly regimes at risk. It may be ironic that the Obama administration has adopted this position as the “Arab street” genuinely received his election with enthusiasm as heralding hope and change. The exact format of the expected change was uncertain, but it was clear that a review of U.S. support for unpopular regimes would be at its heart. Instead, the Obama administration has adopted a very conventional approach that prizes immediate tactical interests over long-term strategic benefits. The shift away from democracy promotion is a clear acknowledgment that making governments accountable to popular will in the Middle East could result in the electoral ascendancy of Islamist or other anti-U.S. forces. The logic of this realist approach is consistent with Obama's desire to break with the normative agenda of the neoconservatives, which espoused the remaking of the Middle East. Instead, the Obama administration has opted not to rock the boat or interfere in the internal politics of its allies.

Third, the prominence of the realist approach reflects a tacit admission regarding the limits of U.S. influence by the administration. This is despite its impressive military might. The United States has encountered serious barriers to its diplomatic initiatives, highlighting the limits of its soft power in the region. These range from constrained relations with Pakistan over Islamabad's failure to pursue a more aggressive policy against the Taliban and other Islamists, revealed by the U.S. ambassador to Pakistan in a WikiLeaks document,<sup>8</sup> to the

refusal of Turkey (a member of NATO) to allow operational access to its territory to U.S. forces in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The most poignant example of the limits to the United States' influence may be found in U.S.-Israeli relations. As a staunch supporter of Israel, protecting it in the UN Security Council against damning resolutions, the United States is generally assumed to wield significant influence over the regulation of Israel's behavior. Instead, Israel's continued settlement activity in the face of a very public U.S. disapproval reveals significant cracks in the facade of U.S. relations with Israel. The March 2010 announcement on new Jewish settlement construction around Jerusalem, which is effectively separating the city from its Arab surroundings, coincided with the official visit of the U.S. vice president Joe Biden to Israel. Biden was in Israel as part of a diplomatic campaign to impress on the Israeli government the importance of the freeze on settlement activity to facilitate peace talks.<sup>9</sup> Instead, he was humiliated by the announcement.

Obama's Middle East policy is leaning more and more toward a realist approach that seeks not to implement change but to manage the existing institutions free of value judgments. This approach reflects the decline in the moral standing of the United States in the region. It may be argued that the Obama administration is aware of the serious limits to the soft power of the United States and is pursuing a foreign policy agenda that is more modest than the neoconservative alternative. The dilemma, however, is that such an agenda further undermines the United States' standing in the Middle East. This may already be observed in President Obama's attitude toward the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Following the failure to influence Israel, Obama stated that the issue is too complex to be resolved overnight and expectations need to be tempered,<sup>10</sup> effectively resigning his administration to managing the deadlock. This shift in attitude could not but shake the foundations of trust and hope that many people felt when Obama took office with a message of change.

The standing of the United States in the Middle East was at a low when Obama took office. The Obama administration quite rightly identified Arab-Israeli tensions—more specifically the protracted dispute between the Palestinians and the Israelis—as a pivotal issue in the political landscape of the region. The emotive topic of Holy Jerusalem under Israeli rule and the plight of the Palestinians reverberated throughout the Muslim world. Repeated studies pinpointed the centrality of the Israel-Palestinian dispute to the pervasive sense of distrust felt in the “Arab streets.” An opinion survey conducted in 2010 by the reputed professor Shibley Telhami in six Arab states,



in the series of his annual surveys, discovered palpable levels of disappointment with the way the Obama administration handled the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Despite early enthusiasm for Obama, his apparent back down in the face of ongoing Israeli settlement activity contributed to an unflattering view of his performance. Consistent with earlier assessments, an overwhelming majority of the respondents identified Israel and the United States as the biggest threats in the Middle East.<sup>11</sup>

There are two distinct factors that threaten to divert Obama's attention from the Middle East. One is the magnitude of the issues in the region that appear to have overwhelmed the administration. The Iranian regime continues to defy pressure and ignore goodwill gestures. Israel continues to build new houses and expand Israeli settlements, in effect jeopardizing the prospects of a Palestinian state. Iraq and Afghanistan continue to grapple with serious security threats and political instability. Al Qaeda may be contained, but it is not eradicated. Pakistan, a critical ally in the war on terror and a nuclear power, appears at risk of serious unrest. These have led Obama to concede that he may have been too optimistic about the prospects of significant progress in the Middle East. The second factor is the chronic financial crisis that has plagued both the U.S. and the global economy. The subprime crisis proved a major challenge to the authority of the Obama administration, pitting it against major financial corporations and absorbing significant amounts of energy and cash. Obama's wrestle with Congress over his proposed health care reforms took the gloss off his presidency. The 2010 electoral gains of the Republicans, which gave them a solid majority in the U.S. Congress, was another blow. These successive setbacks highlight the fact that Obama's second-term reelection rests on his performance domestically. Diplomatic gains in the Middle East and the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian deadlock would be an additional bonus, but they are not going to make or break Obama's chances. The exception is, of course, if the crisis in the Middle East leads to a direct security threat to U.S. interests. The combination of these pressures has raised the specter of political disengagement from the Middle East. Obama's resignation to Israeli intransigence and the authoritarian practices of U.S. allies in the Middle East may be early indications of this trend.

The irony of disengagement is that it further undermines the ability of the United States to affect political processes in the region. This presents a damaging, vicious cycle whereby the United States refrains from putting its diplomatic capital at risk by not pushing for change and as a consequence is seen as weak, even irrelevant. President

Obama's major challenge in the greater Middle East is to resist the temptation to fall into this trap, which would limit the United States to a range of reactive policy options. Instead, if Obama is to remain true to his inspiring rhetoric of the first year of his presidency, Washington needs to restore its soft power by pursuing bold and proactive initiatives that are not restricted to immediate security interests.

## NOTES

1. Shibley Telhami, *2008 Annual Arab Public Opinion Poll Survey*, [www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/events/2008/0414\\_middle\\_east/0414\\_middle\\_east\\_telhami.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/events/2008/0414_middle_east/0414_middle_east_telhami.pdf). (Accessed 29 Feb 2011).
2. Reuters, November 25, 2010.
3. "Rice Criticizes U.S. Allies in Mideast Over Democracy," *Washington Post*, June 20, 2005.
4. Sharon Otterman, "Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt's Parliamentary Elections," Council of Foreign Relations, December 1, 2005. Available on line: <http://www.cfr.org/egypt/muslim-brotherhood-egypts-parliamentary-elections/p9319> accessed 11 December 2010]
5. Shahram Akbarzadeh, "Does Hamas Victory Advance Peace in the Middle East?" *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 60, no. 2 (2006): 201–206.
6. Fawaz Gerges, "Sweetened Poison: How Obama Lost Muslim Hearts and Minds," *Foreign Policy*, June 4, 2010.
7. Mark Tessler and Eleanor Gao, "Gauging Arab Support for Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 3 (July 2005): 83–97.
8. Jayshree Bajoria, "How WikiLeaks Hurts U.S.-Pakistan Ties," Council of Foreign Relations, December 6, 2010.
9. Reuters, March 8, 2010.
10. Reuters, January 21, 2010.
11. Just under 4,000 respondents were asked to identify the two biggest threats. Israel received 88 percent and the United States 77 percent of the votes. Iran was far behind, with 10 percent of the unpopularity vote. Shibley Telhami, *2010 Arab Public Opinion Poll*, [www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2010/08\\_arab\\_opinion\\_poll\\_telhami/08\\_arab\\_opinion\\_poll\\_telhami.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2010/08_arab_opinion_poll_telhami/08_arab_opinion_poll_telhami.pdf).



## IRAQ: POLICIES, POLITICS, AND THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE

*Charles W. Dunne*

America's long military involvement in Iraq has changed both the face of the Middle East and the future of U.S. foreign policy in the region. President Barack Obama's August 2, 2010, speech to disabled U.S. veterans—delivered 20 years to the day after Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait placed the United States and Iraq on a collision course—marked another important milestone: at long last, the United States was on its way out of Iraq. By the end of August 2010, the president proclaimed, America's combat mission in Iraq would come to an end, "as promised and on schedule." Only 50,000 troops would remain in Iraq for another 16 months to advise and assist the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), down from 144,000 when Obama took office.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of Obama's determination to usher the U.S. military out of Iraq, the fraught U.S.-Iraq relationship will remain an important factor in the politics of the Middle East, and the United States will continue to be deeply involved. But a number of key questions remain. For one thing, how should the United States act to help consolidate Iraq's security and stability, the burden for which has largely been shifted to the Iraqis themselves? All American troops are scheduled to depart by December 31, 2011, but a follow-on security agreement may be needed to permit some to remain and help the ISF with the critical tasks of training, logistics, and support for ongoing counter-terrorism missions.

Second, will the United States continue to help build Iraq's democracy? Or does it prefer a "strongman"—as do many of Iraq's neighbors and some Iraqis as well—to stabilize the country at the cost

of human rights and participatory electoral politics? To judge by official U.S. statements on Iraq's political future and dwindling budgets for democracy support in Iraq, Iraq's democratic future appears to be a lesser concern for the United States today than in previous years.

Given the recent upheavals throughout the region that have toppled authoritarian leaders in Egypt and Tunisia, and threaten to do so in Libya and perhaps elsewhere, supporting an iron-fisted ruler for the sake of "stability" may no longer be a winning strategy. But benign neglect of political developments in Iraq while the United States focuses on crises elsewhere can only open the door to a deterioration of Iraq's democratic processes.

Finally, what is the future of the U.S.-Iraq relationship, and how should the relationship be integrated into America's policy in the Middle East?

These questions greatly affect the future of Iraq, U.S. fortunes in the region, and the politics and stability of the Middle East. They are now the responsibility of the Obama administration, which inherited the Iraq conflict from its predecessor, George W. Bush. But Bush himself inherited a complicated state of affairs from the Clinton administration and the administration of his father, George H. W. Bush, before that. How the United States got into Iraq—and the policy choices made along the way—have shaped the challenges, opportunities, and options Obama now faces.

## IRAQ POLICY UNDER CLINTON AND BUSH

The first Gulf War (August 1990–February 1991) ended with a United Nations–approved cease-fire that rested upon Iraqi adherence to the terms of numerous UN Security Council resolutions spelling out international requirements of Iraq. These resolutions included, most prominently, the demand that Iraq give up all weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and accede to international inspections. A new UN Iraq weapons inspection agency, UNSCOM, was formed to undertake this task.<sup>2</sup> It was given authority to access all facilities and scientists involved in Iraq's chemical, biological, and nuclear programs. In 1992 a new president, Bill Clinton, took over Iraq policy from George H. W. Bush. He was determined to manage the perceived threat from Iraq while keeping the United States out of another Gulf conflict.

During the eight years of the Clinton administration, however, Iraq refused to offer consistent cooperation to UNSCOM, granting partial access to individuals and facilities on some occasions,

usually under pressure, while denying the requests of UN inspectors on numerous others. In the process, Iraq withheld information and frequently adopted a belligerent stance toward the United Nations. This pattern of behavior, coupled with ambiguous but generally persuasive intelligence, convinced various spy agencies and investigative bodies—including UNSCOM, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, and the intelligence organizations of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany—that Iraq was hiding clandestine programs of a substantial scope or, at the very least, a residual weapons capability that could easily be reconstituted. Against this background, and looming U.S.-Iranian enmity, Clinton and his advisers opted for a strategy of “dual containment” in which both Iraq and Iran were deemed threats to the existing political and military order in the Gulf and were to be isolated and kept in check. Although considered a serious potential danger, neither Iraq’s alleged WMD programs nor Tehran’s nuclear ambitions were deemed an immediate threat to the United States. Thus, with the exception of occasional punitive air strikes on suspected Iraqi weapons sites, such as Operation Desert Fox in December 1998, neither Iraq nor Iran was to be decisively confronted. International political pressure, exerted primarily through the UN and unilateral American sanctions, was the primary tool of this policy.

As the Bush administration entered office in January 2001, it approached the Iraq problem with a very different set of eyes. Many on Bush’s national security team, some of them veterans of the George H. W. Bush administration, were deeply dissatisfied that the first Gulf War had ended without a clear-cut victory over the Saddam regime and that the UN-sanctioned cease-fire depended for its efficacy on Iraqi goodwill and international cooperation. A commitment to resolving unfinished business from the 1990–1991 Gulf War came to dominate U.S. policy councils on Iraq.

Moreover, Bush and his advisers saw the threat posed by Iraq in a different light than did the Clinton administration. The Bush team came to conclude that Iraq’s latent or actual WMD capabilities posed an imminent threat to American interests in the Middle East and, indeed, potentially to the U.S. mainland itself. Containment, they believed, had outlived its usefulness, given an unfavorable international environment. Managing the issue through the UN Security Council and international sanctions was increasingly problematic; consensus on the council was more and more difficult to obtain, and sanctions were slowly dissolving. A different approach was needed. The administration began a quiet but vigorous internal debate on what that approach should be.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, would have a galvanic impact on this debate. The attacks convinced the administration that Washington must be prepared to eliminate threats to the United States anywhere in the world, preemptively if necessary. This became a central premise of the U.S. National Security Doctrine, originally published in 2002 and updated in 2006:

The security environment confronting the United States today is radically different from what we have faced before. Yet the first duty of the United States Government remains what it always has been: to protect the American people and American interests. It is an enduring American principle that this duty obligates the government to anticipate and counter threats, using all elements of national power, before the threats can do grave damage. The greater the threat, the greater is the risk of inaction—and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy’s attack. There are few greater threats than a terrorist attack with WMD.

To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively in exercising our inherent right of self-defense.<sup>3</sup>

The Bush National Security doctrine not only laid the groundwork for the “War on Terror” but also tipped the balance in favor of those in the administration who supported a more aggressive approach to Iraq. Indeed, it was there that preemption would have its first real test. On March 19, 2003, the United States launched Operation Iraqi Freedom with a series of precision airstrikes on key targets in Baghdad. “Major combat operations” were declared at an end in May by President Bush aboard the U.S. aircraft carrier *Abraham Lincoln* under a banner declaring “Mission Accomplished.” But in a very real sense, the war for Iraq had just begun.

### THE TWO PHASES OF U.S. POLICY UNDER BUSH: “VICTORY,” 2003–2006

Two phases of American policy dominated the war and its subsequent aftermath. The first, from 2003 to 2006, focused on achieving “victory” in Iraq and building “a new Iraq with a constitutional, representative government that respects civil rights and has security forces sufficient to maintain domestic order and keep Iraq from becoming a safe haven for terrorists.”<sup>4</sup> The second, from 2006 to 2008, centered on a massive reinforcement of U.S. forces in Iraq and

implementation of new counterinsurgency strategy to bring ethnic warfare to heel and build a foundation for stability and political progress. The two phases took strikingly different views of just what was necessary to achieve success.

American strategy during the first phase was based on three integrated and mutually reinforcing tracks—political, economic, and security—and eight related strategic pillars<sup>5</sup> focusing on subsets of these three main tracks. The central assumption underlying the strategy in this early phase was that consolidation of the new political system and progress toward developing a “national compact”—a broad agreement on all major issues, such as power sharing among sects, distribution of petrochemical revenues, and the like—would lead to reductions in violence. Political progress would in turn pave the way for internal stability. On the military side, the Bush administration repeatedly stressed that the U.S. security commitment would be open ended and “conditions based”—in other words, without a timeline for the withdrawal of troops.

But the central ideological aim of the war was highlighted by Bush in a November 2003 speech to the National Endowment for Democracy. This was the promotion of democracy in Iraq as the foundation for its extension throughout the Middle East. In his speech, Bush noted that “the establishment of a free Iraq at the heart of the Middle East will be a watershed event in the global democratic revolution.” He went on to connect this to the regional context:

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.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, in the U.S. view of 2003, construction of a vibrant democracy in Iraq would turn back a global wave of Islamic extremism; terrorism could only be defeated if the terrorists were themselves defeated in Iraq.

The Bush administration midwived several notable successes in this first phase of its occupation policy. Chief among these was laying the basis for a fledgling democratic system and consolidating a new political order. With the determination to devolve political power to Iraqis as quickly as possible, sovereignty was formally returned to Iraq in June 2004 with the transfer of power from the U.S.-led Coalition



Provisional Authority (CPA) to the new Iraqi Governing Council. In January 2005, Iraqis elected a transitional national assembly to write a new constitution and form a government until elections for the country's permanent parliament could take place. Iraqis approved the constitution, a document heavily brokered by the United States, in an October 2005 referendum, and the first free elections for a permanent Iraqi parliament—the Council of Representatives (COR)—took place in December 2005. In each of these electoral events, voter turnout increased, indicating increasing acceptance of the electoral process. Significant, albeit somewhat mixed, progress was also made in reconstituting and training the Iraqi Security Focus.

On the international front, the United States forged an International Compact with Iraq in 2006, a process jointly administered by the UN and the Iraqi government, which secured substantial new pledges of aid from Europe, the Arab states, and other countries in exchange for broad-based economic and political reforms. This marked the first time Arab and many European states were to formally commit themselves to supporting the political and economic development of Iraq.

However, the 2003–2006 period was also marred by a number of strategic missteps that contributed to the deterioration of conditions in the country and helped undermine the U.S. strategy. Many of these can be attributed to two fundamental conceptual mistakes that framed America's Iraq policy leading up to the war and in its immediate aftermath.<sup>7</sup>

The first was a belief that defeating Iraq's conventional military and decapitating Saddam's regime would permit American and Coalition forces to pacify the country and install an effective civilian government with relative ease. Undergirding this belief were several assumptions: that the Iraqi people would unhesitatingly welcome a change of regime; that the Sunni minority would accept a major change in its political fortunes and that a sustained insurgency was unlikely; that the Iraqi bureaucracy, once its top leadership was removed, would remain intact and able to maintain at least a modicum of bureaucratic order; and, finally, that the dissolution of the Iraqi military would not lead to civil disorder. None of these assumptions proved correct.

Second, the United States underestimated both the complicated problems it would face and its own capacity to bring about the sweeping changes it envisioned in Iraq. The Pentagon's view (shaped by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his closest advisers) that the war could be fought and the country stabilized with a force smaller than that deployed to retake Kuwait from the Iraqis in 1990–1991 was fundamentally inaccurate. The military's related

planning assumption, that U.S. troops could begin to withdraw after several months, was not only inaccurate as well but severely limited the Coalition's approach to administering Iraq in the first days of the occupation.

In short, the Bush administration's policies during the 2003–2006 period created a profound political change in Iraq and laid the groundwork for a democratic future. But limitations of planning and policy inhibited efforts to provide security, improve the economy, and move Iraq's political process rapidly forward. Instability began to deepen, ethnic and sectarian violence accelerated, and Iraq appeared headed for an all-out civil war.

### A CHANGE IN DIRECTION: THE SURGE AND ITS AFTERMATH, 2006–2008

With the rise of ethnic violence and deepening political opposition in the United States to the war, the second phase of America's Iraq policy was forced upon the Bush administration. A policy review commenced in late summer of 2006 and continued throughout the fall. Political room for a reevaluation of strategy was freed up following the resignation of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld after the congressional elections in November 2006 and his replacement by CIA chief Robert Gates, considered a hard-headed pragmatist.

As internal debates continued, consensus gradually emerged around a new strategic concept: that establishing security for the Iraqi people was the necessary prerequisite for the political process to flourish and thus reconcile Iraq's ethnic and religious groups. The "population security" concept reversed the assumption that had guided U.S. policy during the previous three years—namely, that political progress was necessary before security could be established. The population security approach would become the cornerstone of Bush's strategy in Iraq in his administration's final three years. After months of intense interagency debate, the administration reached a decision to send an additional 21,000 troops to Iraq through May 2007, a tactic commonly known as the "surge."<sup>8</sup> Bush announced the shift in a speech to the nation in January 2007.

As part of the surge, the United States also adopted a new counterinsurgency strategy<sup>9</sup> that emphasized a closer partnership with the ISF, including joint patrols and common bases throughout Baghdad and other hot spots. This too marked an important shift—American forces had hitherto operated largely out of giant military enclaves outside major population centers, known as Forward Operating

Bases (FOBs), and spent little time in the neighborhoods they policed. These changes soon helped foster an increased sense of security among the Iraqi populace, improved the gathering of tactical intelligence, and enabled improved U.S. mentoring of Iraqi forces. The scope of the plans to train and equip the ISF was also expanded significantly.

But possibly the most significant change, predating the surge, was the decision to respond positively to overtures from former Sunni insurgents who had founded a movement known as the Sons of Iraq to combat the depredations of their erstwhile ally Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), which had terrorized many Sunni communities in an effort to assert its authority and establish a secure base of operations. Beginning in 2006, the United States empowered these Sons of Iraq groups with money, training, and political cover, which helped them retake control of their communities in Sunni strongholds such as Anbar Province and suppress AQI to a degree that rendered it, by and large, ineffective as a political and military force.

This new, multipronged strategy was generally successful. In the period from late summer 2007 to the end of 2008, overall violence declined dramatically, and the ISF improved significantly in size, training, equipment, and professionalism. Two months before Bush left office, the administration was able to finalize two major security agreements<sup>10</sup> with the government of Iraq that established a troop withdrawal timeline for the first time, setting December 31, 2011, as the date for the pullout of the last American forces and providing a blueprint for a far-reaching strategic partnership between Iraq and the United States.

### EVALUATING THE BUSH LEGACY IN IRAQ: IMPACT ON LONG-TERM U.S. REGIONAL INTERESTS

American involvement in Iraq from 2003 to 2008 profoundly affected long-term U.S. interests in the Middle East.<sup>11</sup> The Iraq war “and its aftermath have arguably been the most pivotal events in the Middle East region since the end of the Cold War,” as a Rand Corporation report maintained, unleashing a variety of “seismic effects” that pose long-term challenges to American interests. These include erosion of U.S. credibility and freedom of action, Iran’s rise as a would-be regional hegemon, serious setbacks for political reform and democratization, heightened sectarian tensions, and the opening of possible opportunities for Russia and China to compete with the United States for influence among the states of the Persian Gulf.<sup>12</sup>

But for all the mistakes and setbacks, the intervention in Iraq did open possibilities for future strategic gains. In the first place, the war eliminated the government of Saddam Hussein, which, in addition to being one of the most ruthlessly oppressive regimes in the world, constituted a major threat to its neighbors. Iraq is unlikely to present such a threat in the future.

Second, despite short-term negative impacts on the prospects for regional political reform, Iraq's long-term trajectory tends toward the development of democracy and the rule of law, which may in the future help Iraq serve as a transformational political power in the region. And, as the Rand study noted, the United States has cemented its position as a major regional power, which presents significant opportunities for U.S. policy makers. Among these are the opportunity to develop new regional security structures (possibly drawing in Iran and other outside powers), encourage incremental political reform, and further discredit Al Qaeda by pointing to its failures and brutality in Iraq.<sup>13</sup>

In short, the "surge" strategy and other adjustments may have salvaged U.S. hopes for a secure, stable, and democratic Iraq. But by the time the new strategy was implemented, a trail of missed opportunities and errors had severely complicated Iraq's internal political picture as well as American hopes for a strategic victory in the region. The Bush administration's policy options had been constrained, both in terms of what the Bush Administration could accomplish within Iraq and what it could persuade a disillusioned American public to accept. It would await a new administration to determine whether a radical change of course was necessary.

### OBAMA AND IRAQ: NEW BEGINNINGS, OLD PROBLEMS

The Obama administration was swept into office in part on the promise of clearing away eight years of George Bush's foreign policy. Convinced that the Bush administration relied excessively on military force and the principle of preemption, without proper attention to the views of allies and the necessity of laying diplomatic groundwork for bold action, Obama was determined to place renewed emphasis on concerted diplomacy and effective multilateralism. Moreover, Obama indicated his preference for "realism" in international relations. This included the promotion of democracy, which many in his party and the American foreign policy elite regarded as naive and misguided. The realists' approach was very much reflected in Obama's

early thinking on Iraq. As foreign policy analyst Fareed Zakaria put it, “Despite the progress in Iraq, despite the possibility of establishing a democracy in the heart of the Arab world, Obama’s position is steely—Iraq is a distraction, and the sooner America can reduce its exposure there, the better.”<sup>14</sup>

Obama’s approach was strongly shaped by the December 2006 recommendations of the Iraq Study Group (ISG),<sup>15</sup> whose members included two influential members of his future administration—Bush’s secretary of defense, Robert Gates, and CIA Director-designate Leon Panetta. The report recommended that

the primary mission of U.S. forces in Iraq should evolve to one of supporting the Iraqi army, which would take over primary responsibility for combat operations. By the first quarter of 2008, subject to unexpected developments in the security situation on the ground, all combat brigades not necessary for force protection could be out of Iraq.<sup>16</sup>

Coming out against “an open-ended commitment” to keeping a large number of U.S. troops in the country, the report also noted that in exchange for Baghdad meeting certain benchmarks on national reconciliation, security, and governance, the United States should continue to assist the Iraqi military and provide political and economic support.

These recommendations, which commanded wide bipartisan support on Capitol Hill, were taken to heart by the Obama campaign and appear to have strongly influenced the candidate’s approach to Iraq. Writing in the July–August 2007 edition of *Foreign Affairs*, then-senator Obama described the war as a “strategic blunder” compounded by the “incompetent prosecution of the war by America’s civilian leaders.” He decried the prospects for imposing “a military solution on a civil war between Sunni and Shiite factions.” But recognizing the importance of bringing the war to a “responsible end,” he called for a “phased withdrawal of U.S. forces, with the goal of removing all combat brigades from Iraq...consistent with the goal set by the bipartisan Iraq Study Group.”<sup>17</sup>

In his first week in office, Obama announced that he had “asked the military leadership to engage in additional planning necessary to execute a responsible military drawdown from Iraq,” in accord with his campaign pledge to “end the war.” But—implicitly recognizing the success of the Bush “surge”—the Obama administration toned down its campaign rhetoric and indicated it supported the security

agreements negotiated between the Iraqi government and the Bush administration.

The new administration's May 2010 National Security Strategy spelled out in greater detail how it would approach Iraq during the withdrawal period and beyond. The strategy speaks of completing a responsible transition to Iraqi control as the United States ends the war, and it refocuses Iraq policy on three core objectives. First is providing security in Iraq as the United States prepares for full withdrawal by the end of 2011; second is ramping up the presence of U.S. civilian officials and agencies to manage the broad array of diplomatic, economic, and security issues that will remain; and third is expanding regional diplomacy to ensure that U.S. withdrawal from Iraq would help provide "lasting security and sustainable" development in both Iraq and the rest of the region.<sup>18</sup> Although considerably pared down from Bush's more complicated and far-reaching goals, the broad elements were remarkably consistent with the previous administration's policy. Thus, far from reversing Bush's Iraq policy, Obama adopted its broad outlines as his own.

One significant modification was made, however: the addition of a preliminary drawdown to approximately 50,000 U.S. troops by August 31, 2010, a self-imposed deadline primarily political in nature and one not envisioned in the U.S.-Iraq bilateral security agreements. The troops would engage in advising and assisting the ISF and undertake counterterrorism operations as required. Beyond this, no wholesale change in strategy was adopted.

In two important areas, however, Obama's administration did shift ground, or at least emphasis. First, the administration redefined the nature of the bilateral relationship to a subtle but important degree; and second, it deemphasized the American commitment to democracy in Iraq.

With regard to the first issue, the administration downgraded the level of political and diplomatic attention paid to Iraq, with Vice President Biden and not Obama himself taking the lead for managing the relationship, a marked contrast with Bush.<sup>19</sup> The official U.S. emphasis on "responsible withdrawal" from early 2009 on convinced many U.S. and Iraqi observers alike that withdrawal itself is the United States' main goal in the country and that other considerations, such as political stability and sustainable democracy, are secondary.<sup>20</sup>

This shift has caused significant worry in Iraq and contributed to the sense of political uncertainty. U.S. Embassy officials in Baghdad now insist the future bilateral relationship should be "normal"<sup>21</sup>—in other words, it should be on the same footing as U.S. relationships

with most other countries in the region and not the “special relationship” it has with certain states. However, the significant problems Iraq faces are likely to require continued high-level political attention from the United States; indeed, the strategic partnership concept negotiated with the Bush administration and endorsed by Obama implies a much greater, sustained role for the United States in Iraq. Many Iraqis have concluded with some justice that the U.S. commitment is waning, and with the loss of American commitment and influence, Iraq will be unable to resolve its internal conflicts, maintain stability, and avoid negative interference from Iran and other regional states.<sup>22</sup>

The second issue—Obama’s commitment to the continued promotion of democracy in Iraq—likewise has important implications for the country’s future. As we have seen, the Bush policy strongly emphasized democracy as the chief political goal of the war and subsequent nation-building exercise. Obama, by contrast, has rarely referred to democracy’s importance, preferring instead to discuss an Iraq that is “just, representative and accountable.”<sup>23</sup> Although the 2010 National Security Strategy notes in passing that the United States will continue to support the development of Iraq’s democratic institutions, it primarily places the burden on Iraqis themselves and does not emphasize support for democracy in Iraq as a key part of the overall U.S. strategic approach.

This is reflected in the administration’s position on funding democracy programs. As a report by the Project on Middle East Democracy observed,

The administration is leaving Iraq’s governance to Iraqi institutions. As the U.S. military draws down its presence in Iraq, the budget is also beginning to decrease large-scale bilateral funding for democracy and governance in Iraq, which is reduced 46% from existing levels.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, the report notes, the administration’s overall budget request for Iraq has shifted heavily to military and security assistance, meaning funding for democracy and governance

represents only 24% of the \$729.3 million total request for Iraq. This share of overall assistance for democracy and governance programs is drastically decreased from 66% in the FY10 request . . . with programming for Civil Society (cut from \$85.5 million down to \$32.5 million) and Rule of Law and Human Rights (cut from \$73.5 million down to merely \$22.5 million) reduced most sharply.<sup>25</sup>

Because budget requests are an accurate reflection of political priorities, it is clear that American commitment to the promotion of

democracy in Iraq—both through direct bilateral programs and the nongovernmental organization (NGO) sphere—is open to question.

### LIMITATIONS OF THE NEW APPROACH

The Obama administration's evolving policy toward Iraq has won the general approval of the American public and Congress, both of which appear eager to put the Iraq war behind them, and has managed to steer a reasonable course between the Bush policy and the U.S. antiwar front that voted for Obama in part because its adherents believed he would act more quickly to withdraw all U.S. troops from the country. Yet, in an effort to navigate this tricky course, Obama narrowed the options available to the United States. By focusing on troop withdrawal and attempting to redefine the future of the U.S.-Iraq relationship, Obama has failed to acknowledge the uniqueness of Iraq's situation and thus left important contingencies unaddressed.

For example, the United States has yet to raise in a serious way the nature of the U.S.-Iraq military relationship after 2011, although many in Washington and Baghdad (including a number of those who negotiated the U.S.-Iraq security agreements in 2008) agree that the presence of American troops after December 31 of that year will be necessary and desirable. The United States also adopted a hands-off policy toward the Iraqi government formation process after the March 2010 elections; a more significant mediating role would have helped in expediting this process and increasing American leverage with the new Iraqi government. The United States has also done little to confront growing Iranian influence in the country. And whereas Washington has promised intensified diplomacy with the region to reintegrate Iraq, the scale of the diplomatic effort to date has been limited, especially when compared with the Bush administration's successful campaign to found the International Compact with Iraq.

The United States' reluctance to promote the democracy agenda in Iraq has also imposed limits on the extent of American influence. Obama's 2009 speeches in Ankara and Cairo laid out a bold agenda for engagement and rehabilitation of U.S. relations with the Muslim world. Yet in these speeches, he said little about the importance of political reform as an important aspect of U.S. policy toward the Arab and Muslim worlds. In Iraq, as we have seen, this has taken the form of a reduced emphasis on democracy as well as sharp cuts in budgetary support for the issue. U.S. efforts to address this by working through civil society have likewise been troubled; many Iraqis have criticized the United States of alleged favoritism and poor choices of



NGO partners and the grantees themselves of corrupt practices. This reflects in part jealousies among the burgeoning NGO community but also the limitations of the United States and its ability to penetrate Iraqi society more broadly and build wider and deeper partnerships. This has, in turn, affected the image of the United States as a solid partner for the NGO community.<sup>26</sup>

All this has been a warning sign to many Iraqi democrats, who still need U.S. support to push back against growing authoritarianism in the prime minister's office, political schemes to undercut the will of the electorate, and other abuses of power that can easily undercut Iraq's nascent democracy. Washington's failure to take bolder action on both the democracy agenda and the many diplomatic, political, and security issues that remain to be addressed has opened up political gaps that could inhibit the growth of democracy, leave the United States without a coherent plan for the future of the relationship, and push Iraq into Iran's sphere of influence.

## CONCLUSIONS

The U.S. invasion of Iraq has reordered Middle East politics in a profound way and disturbed the traditional balance of power. No more—at least for now—can Iraq be expected to play its traditional role as bulwark against Iran and a strongman of Arab politics. Traditional U.S. allies such as Saudi Arabia were profoundly distressed by the war and occupation, which they believed left them exposed to an onslaught of Kurdish separatism and Shia ascendancy that threatened to destabilize other Persian Gulf states and perhaps the region itself. Indeed, as King Abdullah II of Jordan noted in 2004, the Sunni states of the region felt endangered by an emerging “Shia crescent” from Tehran to Beirut.<sup>27</sup>

From the perspective of the Bush administration and its allies, smashing the traditional political order was the entire point. Although they admired stability and the security it brought, they also believed strongly that political change and movement toward democracy were the surest ways to bring this about. In their view, the Iraq adventure would inspire political reformers throughout the region to make this come to pass. That it has not so far is attributable both to the mistakes of the United States during seven years of its military and political presence in Iraq and to the nature of Iraq's politics. But few witnessing the evolution of Iraqi politics would argue that the possibility has been foreclosed.

George Bush initiated the fight in Iraq, but Barack Obama and perhaps his successors will have to finish it. America will require the full arsenal of its tools to accomplish this goal and overcome the limitations of many years of sometimes-misguided Iraq policy. These will include military presence, diplomatic activism, and, above all, persistence.

The shared interests between the two countries across a wide array of issues might make for a strong relationship, if both countries choose to pursue it. As one observer noted,

Our shared interests in energy security and water scarcity issues will build ties between experts. American civil society will be engaged in promoting educational, cultural and scientific exchanges that will bring direct benefit to Iraq's reconstruction and development, and will expose more Americans to Iraqi talent. . . . These sectoral and institutional ties will build an underpinning for a more strategic relationship, should the political alignments in Baghdad and Washington favor it. Iraq's reintegration into the Middle East region and its potential as a middle power in international politics will be strengthened by a successful partnership with the United States, along side [*sic*] the evolution of its military and political institutions. Iraq's role as a bridge to non-Arab regional powers Iran and Turkey, its role in global energy security, and its return to a leadership role in Arab world politics, will also make the case in Washington that an active, cooperative relationship advances U.S. interests and security needs. But such a relationship will require nurturing.<sup>28</sup>

If it is to take full advantage of these potentialities, the United States must develop a long-range vision of a future relationship that will fully integrate such "sectoral and institutional ties," as well as the political, security, and intelligence dimensions that could transform Iraq and its relationship with the United States into a strong foundation for a new regional political-military order. Iraq will certainly have to do its part by sorting out its own politics and reinventing its role in the region. This will require, in part, constructive policies by Iraq's neighbors and assistance from others in the international community, notably the UN, the European Union (EU), Russia, and China. But it will also require an imaginative U.S. policy that looks beyond the present constraints of U.S. domestic politics and policy choices and is backed by the strategic vision to bring such a relationship to fruition.

Given the changes sweeping the region around Iraq, a renewed emphasis on the importance of Iraqi democracy—and the necessity of

holding Iraq's leaders to account publicly and privately—will necessarily be a key part of an effective U.S. approach. The primary challenge for the Obama administration now is to acknowledge, and make the public case for, continued U.S. engagement with Iraq and to marshal the political will and resources to undergird it.

## NOTES

1. President Barack Obama, Remarks at Disabled Veterans of America Conference, Atlanta, GA, August 2, 2010, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-disabled-veterans-america-conference-atlanta-georgia>. (Accessed on August 5, 2010).
2. UNSCOM was succeeded in 1999 by UNMOVIC, the United Nations Monitoring Verification and Inspections Commission.
3. The White House, "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America," March 2006, p. 18. This document also provides a succinct outline of the reasoning (pp. 23–24) that led the United States to wage war on Iraq following the conclusion that the Iraqi government was concealing WMD programs.
4. National Security Council, "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq," November 2005, pp. 7–8.
5. These are (a) Defeat the Terrorists and Neutralize the Insurgency, (b) Transition Iraq to Security Self-Reliance, (c) Help Iraq Forge a National Compact for Democratic Government, (d) Help Iraq Build Government Capacity and Provide Essential Services, (e) Help Iraq Strengthen Its Economy, (f) Help Iraq Strengthen the Rule of Law and Promote Civil Rights, (g) Increase International Support for Iraq, and (h) Strengthen Public Understanding of Coalition Efforts and Public Isolation of Insurgents. See National Security Council, "National Strategy," 28–35.
6. George W. Bush, Remarks at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Washington, DC, November 6, 2003, <http://www.ned.org/george-w-bush/remarks-by-president-george-w-bush-at-the-20th-anniversary>. (Accessed on June 20, 2010).
7. A number of serious planning flaws for administering Iraq after the war flowed from these conceptual mistakes and contributed to the many of the problems that followed. For example, the American-led occupation, the CPA, had few Iraq experts on hand and partly as a consequence made a number of serious errors. These notably included the decision to disband the Iraqi military, thus fueling the Sunni insurgency, the leading cause of instability in Iraq in the first three years of the American presence. And early overreliance on returned Iraqi exiles to govern post-Saddam Iraq helped slow the emergence of indigenous Iraqi political elites and retarded the growth of a vibrant political process. The U.S. military was likewise unprepared for the scale of the problems it would face in postwar

Iraq. The Pentagon failed to anticipate and plan for the collapse of the bureaucracy and the looting and destruction of government ministries and institutions, which left Iraq without an effective administration. And ambitious plans for an early transition to Iraqi security control were frustrated as the magnitude of reforming the Iraqi Security Forces became clear. The ISF remained under strength, undertrained, and relatively poorly equipped and led for the first several years of the occupation.

8. The formal White House term for the strategy was “The New Way Forward in Iraq.”
9. See FM 3–24, Headquarters “Counterinsurgency,” Department of the Army, December 2006. General David Petraeus, the new commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, was its principal author.
10. These are “Agreement between (the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities during Their Temporary Presence in Iraq” and “Strategic Framework Agreement for a Relationship of Friendship and Cooperation between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq,” both November 2008.
11. In assessing the potential effects of the Iraq intervention on U.S. foreign policy interests prior to the war, the Bush administration made some costly errors. For example, the Bush administration surmised that Iraq’s neighbors would accept, if not welcome, a new political order in the country and that international support for Iraq could be mobilized once the combat phase wound down. In consequence, the administration (acting on the doctrine of preemption) chose not to undertake the painstaking efforts to build a diplomatic consensus in the UN and among key allies prior to military action that President George H. W. Bush and his secretary of state, James Baker, did in 1990. Nor did it assemble the same type of broad-based military coalition, which in the first Gulf War included substantial contributions not only from European allies but nine Arab countries as well. The resulting animosity of the Europeans to the Iraq war and Arab rejection of a Shia-majority regime were to complicate American efforts in Iraq as well as its diplomatic relations with both Europe and its Arab allies. These developments provided opportunities for traditional U.S. foes. Iran, once fearful of encirclement by American troops (in Iraq, the southern Persian Gulf, and Afghanistan became emboldened enough to move from the relatively passive posture with which it had initially greeted the invasion of Iraq to a more aggressive approach. In addition to using all its political, clandestine, cultural, religious, and economic tools to extend its influence in Iraq, Tehran turned its hand to undermining the United States militarily by arming, training, and financing radical Shia militia and encouraging them to attack coalition forces. Iran’s ally Syria—in 1990–1991 a member of the coalition that ejected Iraq from Kuwait—this time enabled foreign fighters, many affiliated with AQI, to pass through Syria into Iraq.

- Damascus also served as the main base in exile for the Iraqi Ba'ath party, which used meeting places and safe houses in the country to plan attacks and actively encourage the Sunni insurgency.
12. Frederic Wehrey, Dalia Dassa Kaye, Jessica Watkins, Jeffrey Martini, and Robert A. Guffey, *The Iraq Effect: The Middle East after the Iraq War* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2010), 1ff.
  13. *Ibid.*, 47, 152ff.
  14. Fareed Zakaria, "Obama, Foreign Policy Realist," *Washington Post*, July 21, 2008, [http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/postglobal/fareed\\_zakaria/2008/07/obama\\_foreign\\_policy\\_realist.html](http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/postglobal/fareed_zakaria/2008/07/obama_foreign_policy_realist.html). (Accessed on June 27, 2010).
  15. Lawrence S. Eagleburger, Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., Edwin Meese III, Sandra Day O'Connor, Leon E. Panetta, William J. Perry, Charles S. Robb, and Alan K. Simpson *The Iraq Study Group Report* U.S. Institute of Peace, (Washington, DC) December 2006, p. 7.
  16. "The Iraq Study Group Report," James A. Baker III, Lee H. Hamilton et al, United States Institute of Peace, December 6, 2006, p.7
  17. Barack Obama, "Renewing American Leadership," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2007): 1ff.
  18. The White House, *National Security Strategy*, May 2010, p. 25.
  19. For a detailed discussion of this shift, see Charles W. Dunne, "Iraq's National Elections 2010: The Parties, the Issues, and the Challenges for American Policy" (Institute for the Theory and Practice of International Relations, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA), [http://irtheoryandpractice.wm.edu/publications/Iraq\\_Dunne\\_Elections.pdf](http://irtheoryandpractice.wm.edu/publications/Iraq_Dunne_Elections.pdf). (Accessed on July 15, 2010).
  20. Author discussion with member of Prime Ministerial advisory organization, Baghdad, May 2010. May 5, 2010.
  21. Author discussion with senior U.S. Embassy official, Baghdad, May 2010. [May 5, 2010. )
  22. See Charles W. Dunne and Ellen Laipson, "As the U.S. Plans Its Exit, Iraqis Find Reason to Worry," *The National*, Abu Dhabi, May 31, 2010, <http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100531/OPINION/705309932/1080/commentary?template=opinion>. (Accessed on July 21, 2010).
  23. President Barack Obama, "Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq," Remarks at Camp Lejeune, NC, February 27, 2009, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/remarks-of-president-barack-obama-responsibly-ending-the-war-in-iraq/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/remarks-of-president-barack-obama-responsibly-ending-the-war-in-iraq/). (Accessed on July 27, 2010).
  24. Stephen McInerney, "The Federal Budget and Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2011: Democracy, Governance, and Human Rights in the Middle East," Project on Middle East Democracy and the Heinrich Böll Stiftung, April 2010, p. 3.
  25. *Ibid.*, 28.
  26. Author meeting with Iraqi NGO representatives, educators, students, politicians, and journalists, Baghdad, May 2010. May 6, 2010.

27. In private, many of these same rulers expressed relief at the demise of Saddam and desire for the United States to stay long enough to stabilize Iraq.
28. Ellen Laipson, "The Future of U.S.-Iraq Relations," Stimson Center, Washington, DC, April 2010.



## SAUDI ARABIA: A CONTROVERSIAL PARTNERSHIP

*Thomas W. Lippman*

On his first trip to the Middle East as president of the United States, Barack Obama appeared before an academic audience at Cairo University to proclaim a new approach to relations with the entire Muslim world. To all Muslims, he sent a message of respect and goodwill, abandoning the “with us or against us” position adopted by his predecessor, George W. Bush.

Obama’s speech touched on many issues, but from the perspective of Saudi Arabia, one of the most important passages was this: “Let me be clear: no system of government can or should be imposed upon one nation by any other.” The president stressed his commitment to “governments that reflect the will of the people,” but he added,

Each nation gives life to this principle in its own way, grounded in the traditions of its own people. 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.<sup>1</sup>

With that, Obama put an end to a policy proclaimed by Bush that had conditioned U.S. support for any foreign regime or state upon its commitment to, and progress toward, a democratic government—a policy that Bush’s secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, had pronounced “nonnegotiable.”

Coupled with his announced intention to end the U.S. military’s role in Iraq, Obama’s fresh approach to relations with Muslim countries and peoples was broadly welcomed in Saudi Arabia, where Bush’s espousal of participatory government had not been well received.



Saudi Arabia is a monarchy that has been run by a single family since its creation as a unified country in 1932. All political power, and most economic power, is wielded by the king and princes of the House of Saud. But it would be unfair to characterize it as a dictatorship, if that word means that the ruler's word is absolute and that all citizens must unquestioningly do his bidding. The king has the final word, but he receives input from his brothers and other family members, the cabinet, a consultative assembly, and the religious leadership—and, through those channels, from the public. Debate and media coverage are vigorous on many topics.

In short, Saudi Arabia is not North Korea. The Saudi regime, which with some justification views itself as legitimate and is accepted as such by most Saudis, saw Bush's democracy-first policy as unfair and insulting, if not a threat to its reign. Moreover, many Saudis believe that in their part of the world, establishment of an American-style political system would be a prescription for chaos.

It was hard to find fault with a declaration from a president of the United States that he would look more favorably upon countries that embraced democratic ideals than upon those that did not, but Bush clearly misplayed his hand with regard to Saudi Arabia. For decades, the Washington-Riyadh alliance had served both countries well, despite their vast differences, because they set those differences aside to pursue their mutual strategic and economic interests: development of the oil industry, regional stability and containment of Soviet influence in the Middle East, and more recently the struggle against Islamic extremism.

Bush and his advisers chose not to know, or chose to ignore, the fact that throughout the decades of the alliance, the Saudis had always been extremely sensitive about their independence and their prerogatives. They accepted foreigners who provided the help they needed to develop their country but only on their terms; they never welcomed American input into their internal affairs.

## THE EVOLVING ALLIANCE

By the middle of Bush's first term, the unwritten terms of the alliance had evolved, and Saudi priorities had evolved with them. In the common struggle against terrorism, the Saudis reluctantly accepted American counsel on their banking system, their police practices, and their school curricula; but in global affairs, the terms of reference were not what they had been in the past, and the Saudis had new room to distance themselves from their American mentors. The cold war was over, Saudi Arabia's nationalized oil industry was fully

developed, and the Saudis were finding new economic opportunities in China and other countries. The Saudis had less reason to remain locked in the U.S. embrace; time and a changing world have multiplied their options in international affairs.

Throughout the Bush administration, the Saudis found a lot to dislike in Washington. Their distress was compounded by the fact that they had fond memories of Bush's father, President George H. W. Bush, and of James A. Baker III (close friend and secretary of state to the elder Bush), who had taken a tough line toward Israel. When the younger Bush, influenced by supporters in the Evangelical Christian movement, began his term as an unquestioning supporter of Israel, the Saudis were taken aback. Riyadh's ambassador in London, the renowned poet-statesman Ghazi Al-Gosaibi, even wrote in a newspaper column that "Little George" had earned a medal: "the prize for turning friends into enemies without effort."<sup>2</sup>

The entire bilateral relationship was jeopardized by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, because 15 of the 19 perpetrators were Saudi nationals. Americans were understandably furious, but the Saudis thought the angry U.S. response was unfair and counterproductive: it imposed collective guilt on Saudi Arabia despite years of close strategic and economic alliance, and it threatened important business ties.

The Saudis also opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq, which Riyadh rightly believed would open a door to expanded Iranian influence in a neighboring Arab country and to a Shia religious resurgence throughout the region. And they chafed at Bush's across-the-board support for Israel, especially during the Hizbullah war in Lebanon and the destructive Gaza campaign of 2008. Coming on top of all that, the Bush democracy policy—widely viewed in the Arab world as hypocritical after exposure of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal in Iraq and the Bush administration's refusal to accept the result of Palestinian elections in which Hamas triumphed—brought U.S.-Saudi relations to one of the lowest points in the history of the alliance.<sup>3</sup>

### A MEETING AT THE PRESIDENT'S RANCH

So great was Saudi Arabia's resentment, in fact, that Bush himself was obliged to back away from what he had proclaimed as a policy cornerstone. Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, then crown prince and now the king, visited the president at his Texas ranch in 2005. In the view of Robert Jordan (who became the U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia a month after 9/11), as the two leaders went into that meeting, the bilateral relationship had reached a point where "many wonder if this relationship is worth preserving."<sup>4</sup>

This is not to say that Bush and his team were entirely responsible for the deterioration in relations. There were issues on the Saudi side as well. It took the Saudi rulers almost two years to come to grips with their own responsibility for the rise of Al Qaeda terrorism, and in that time, their reluctance to cooperate with U.S. investigators outraged Washington. (This tension was dramatized in the Hollywood movie *The Kingdom*.)

Despite official statements from Abdullah and other high officials deploring the New York and Washington attacks and denouncing terrorism, as the American analyst Anthony Cordesman observed,

A considerable portion of the Saudi public remained in denial, and the government was often slow to take tangible action. Saudis either did not accept the fact that so many Saudis were involved in the 9/11 atrocities or they found conspiracy theories to put the causes and the blame outside Saudi Arabia.<sup>5</sup>

Despite all these tensions, Bush and Abdullah in reality had little choice but to continue working together as best they could because of strong mutual interests in combating Al Qaeda, maintaining stability in the oil market, and curbing the influence of Iran. At the Texas meeting—remembered now mostly for a news photograph that showed the two leaders holding hands, as Arab men do with friends—Bush climbed down far enough that Abdullah was placated, and a bilateral breakdown was averted. The president and his team reluctantly recognized that Saudi Arabia is a unique society and a valuable economic partner that it would be counterproductive to alienate.

The joint communiqué issued after the Texas meeting made clear that in the case of Saudi Arabia, Bush had been forced to back off from the democracy platform: “While the United States considers that nations will create institutions that reflect the history, culture, and traditions of their societies,” the document said,

it does not seek to impose its own style of government on the government and people of Saudi Arabia. The United States applauds the recently held elections in the Kingdom for representatives for municipal councils [in which women were banned from voting, let alone running] and looks for even wider participation in accordance with the Kingdom’s reform program.

In the language of diplomacy, that amounted to a promise by the United States to let the Saudis manage their internal affairs without interference, restoring the *status quo ante* Bush’s policy.

The communiqué said that the two leaders:

renewed our personal friendship and that between our nations. In our meeting we agreed that momentous changes in the world call on us to forge a new relationship between our two countries—a strengthened partnership that builds on our past partnership, meets today’s challenges, and embraces the opportunities our nations will face in the next sixty years.

The United States explicitly accepted the statements of the crown prince and other senior Saudis that they were committed to fighting terrorism and religious extremism and to promoting tolerance and moderation.<sup>6</sup>

With that, the two countries papered over their differences and agreed to work together through a “strategic dialogue.” Public anger at Saudi Arabia was still high in the United States, but in the meantime, the “Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States” (known as the 9/11 Commission Report) had “found no evidence that the Saudi government as an institution or senior Saudi officials individually funded” the Al Qaeda network.<sup>7</sup> That finding gave the Bush administration political cover to continue to treat Saudi Arabia as a valuable if troubled ally rather than as an enemy, which is the course the administration elected to follow.

## THE SAUDIS’ RESENTMENT LINGERS

Still, the dissonance in the relationship was not hard to discern. The Saudis seethed over the U.S. military presence in Iraq, which Abdullah described as an “illegitimate foreign occupation,” and it was hard to ignore the symbolism when Abdullah’s first overseas visit after he became king was to China rather than to the United States.<sup>8</sup>

Saudi Arabia’s anger over the implications of the democracy program was still in evidence even after Obama replaced Bush.

“You have to understand how to deal with us,” Commerce Minister Abdullah Alireza said at a Washington conference in April 2009, a few weeks before Obama’s Cairo speech.

You cannot impose exogenous values on any country without having a backlash developing that will create animosity and mistrust. In the last eight years that animosity and mistrust was very apparent, and it’s going to take a long time to be able to unwind the misperceptions that

we have gone through. The idea that you can impose democracy, that was synonymous with, let's have chaos so we can do what we want.<sup>9</sup>

Such blunt criticism from a prominent Saudi closely aligned with the regime was unusual. Alireza, a senior member of a long-established merchant family, was expressing a view often advanced by Saudis when they are pressed about citizen participation in government: we do have citizen participation, just in a different form. The “consent of the governed” (to use an American term) is not ascertained only through elections, they argue, and anyway, if our leaders were chosen in free elections, the United States would probably not like the outcome.

It was one thing for the United States to criticize aspects of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy—the Saudis were used to that—but another to promote ideas that could threaten the very legitimacy of the Saudi regime. As one relatively liberal businessman put it in a private conversation in Riyadh, “You say elections, I say Lebanon,” a reference to the violence and political chaos plaguing one of the few Arab countries with actual contested elections. His is a widespread view: that the current system—in which individual Saudis (or at least Saudi men) are mostly free to take whatever jobs they can get, live where they want, and travel freely in a politically stable environment—is preferable to the shaky or fraudulent electoral systems found in other Arab countries that produce violence, as in Algeria, or chaos, as in Lebanon. Other Saudis have argued that a transition toward popular government would unleash Islamist forces that would be antipathetic to the United States and would take the kingdom backward.

Those may be self-serving rationalizations, but the sentiments are widely held among the kingdom's elite.<sup>10</sup>

After the Texas meeting, Bush and Abdullah endeavored with considerable success to put aside their differences over democracy and maintain a working relationship. Indeed, by the end of Bush's term in office, the two countries had reached important new agreements on security, arms sales, nuclear power, visas, and oil policy.<sup>11</sup> American officials placated the Saudis with public praise for their efforts in combating Al Qaeda, and the Bush administration sponsored Saudi Arabia's admission to the Egmont Group, an international body comprising the financial crime organizations of countries acknowledged to be making sincere efforts to eliminate money laundering and the financing of terrorism. But as Alireza's remarks showed, resentment still simmered in Riyadh, and the Saudis made little secret of their

relief when Bush's term ended. They heard with undisguised relief Obama's pledge to end the U.S. military presence in Iraq.

"The U.S. invasion of Iraq," as David B. Ottaway wrote,

had effectively transformed America's historic role as a guarantor of the kingdom's security into the exact opposite. The occupation was becoming a main source of Saudi insecurity by turning Iraq into an incubator of *jihadis* for Al Qaeda as much interested in overthrowing the House of Saud as in driving out the infidel American invaders. At the same time, Bush's call for regime change in Iran, backed up by a seventy-five-million-dollar democracy promotion program there, only served to stimulate Iranian efforts to obtain a nuclear weapon, which presented another challenge to the Saudis.<sup>12</sup>

As Obama took office, Charles W. Freeman Jr., another former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia, summarized what he saw as a deplorable breakdown that had occurred in the Bush years in U.S. relations with formerly staunch friends in "the Gulf and Red Sea regions." According to Freeman,

Egypt and other countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council have to a great extent become bystanders as a strange combination of American diplomatic default and military activism has dismantled the regional order that once protected them. Iraq no longer balances Iran. The United States no longer contains Israel, which has never behaved more belligerently. Iran has acquired unprecedented prestige and influence among Arabs and Muslims. The next stage of nuclear proliferation is upon the region. For the first time ever, Shiism dominates the politics of Arab states traditionally ruled by Sunnis. Islamist terrorism menaces Egyptian and Gulf Arab domestic tranquility as well as that of the West... The Gulf Arabs have the financial resources but neither the institutions nor the will to mount the unified effort needed to cope with these challenges.<sup>13</sup>

Freeman may have overstated the case on some points—especially terrorism, which Saudi Arabia had virtually suppressed by 2008 after a bloody struggle earlier in the decade—but overall, many in the Saudi leadership would have agreed with him. His list of concerns accurately summarized theirs.

Obama came into the presidency vowing to set a new tone in international relations, including the way in which the United States thinks about Islam and Muslims. Specifically rejecting the notion that the United States was hostile to Islam, he vowed to reach out to

Iran, withdraw U.S. forces from Iraq, and close the Guantanamo Bay detention center. The speech he delivered in Cairo in June 2009—of which he gave King Abdullah a preview during a stop in Riyadh on his way to Egypt—was intended to tell all Muslims that the United States respects their faith, their traditions, and their aspirations while remaining true to its own ideals.

To the Saudis, those formulations in Obama's Cairo speech were familiar and unthreatening. They have lived for many years with annual reports issued by the State Department that have strongly criticized their record on human rights and religious freedom. They have long since realized that those reports, though perhaps unpleasant, will not be allowed to disrupt critical bilateral cooperation on security, energy, and economic issues.

### A "HANDS-OFF" U.S. POLICY

It has been U.S. policy at least since 1951 to give the Saudis a pass on human rights issues in the interest of maintaining strong ties on other matters perceived as more important. In that year, the State Department sent a long, secret memo to all U.S. diplomatic posts in the Middle East that made this policy explicit. "In all our efforts to carry out our policies in Saudi Arabia," it said,

we should take care to serve as guide or partner and avoid giving the impression of wishing to dominate the country. Saudi Arabia has a long way to go to meet the social standards and responsibilities of other nations, but it is trying very hard to improve itself and it has done well, considering that its sustained efforts have been only a post-war development. It has also had [a] serious internal obstacle in the fanatical religious opposition to change and the growth of Western influences. It behooves us, therefore, to applaud what Saudi Arabia has done and is doing, and not criticize it for what it has not yet been able to do.<sup>14</sup>

With minor variations, that hands-off policy on human rights and personal-status issues in the kingdom remained in place for four decades, which explains the Saudis' distress when Bush appeared to jettison it unilaterally. What shocked them about Bush's democracy-promotion policy was that he appeared to be serious about it.

Now they find it reassuring that Obama has restored the balance embraced by every president other than Bush since the days of Harry Truman. By October 2009, Adel Al-Jubeir, the kingdom's ambassador to the United States, could say with apparent sincerity, "When we

look at the history of our relationship we see that with every passing decade the relationship grows broader, and deeper, and stronger, and it becomes more multi-faceted.” Citing the economic ties between the two countries, their common interest in fighting terrorism and piracy, their energy partnerships, and their anxieties about Iran, he said that “the interests of our two countries to date, at this moment, are as aligned as they never have been before.”<sup>15</sup>

Obama’s more tolerant and respectful posture toward the Saudis has been reflected in many public statements by senior officials of his administration. It showed clearly in a speech delivered in November 2009 by William Burns, who was the undersecretary of state for political affairs in the final years of Bush’s presidency and retained that post under Obama.

“I’ve learned that a little humility goes a long way in the exercise of American power and purpose in the Middle East,” he said. “There is no substitute for determined American leadership in the Middle East. . . . And I’ve learned that we must be clear not only about what we stand against, but also what we stand for.” The challenge, he said, is “translating mutual respect into an approach that doesn’t patronize or pretend to hold a monopoly on wisdom.”<sup>16</sup>

The contrast was similarly visible when Obama’s secretary of state, Hillary Rodham Clinton, went to Saudi Arabia. A few years earlier, when Karen Hughes (Bush’s longtime confidante and undersecretary of state for public diplomacy) met with a group of women in Saudi Arabia, she talked down to them, and they were insulted by remarks that they heard as assuming they were unhappy and oppressed.<sup>17</sup> When Hillary Clinton was asked about this subject, her response reflected a more nuanced and sensitive understanding:

I am very anxious to hear from women themselves [she said]. I don’t want to second-guess or in any way substitute my observation for their experience, because the experts on women in the Kingdom are the women themselves. But I am very excited by many of the positive developments that I have read about and have been told about over the last several years under his Majesty’s leadership.<sup>18</sup>

### IMPROVED ATMOSPHERICS, POLICY DIFFERENCES

For all this clear improvement in the atmospherics of the relationship, however, by the spring of 2010, it was equally clear that substantial



differences in policy had emerged between Washington and Riyadh. The two countries had marked out divergent and not necessarily reconcilable positions on several critical issues, including the following.

### **The Israeli-Palestinian Dispute and the Creation of Jewish Settlements in the West Bank**

The differences between the United States and Saudi Arabia surfaced during Obama's Riyadh stopover, when King Abdullah bluntly rebuffed the president's request for conciliatory gestures toward Israel, such as overflight rights, that might encourage a resumption of peace negotiations. The Saudi position is that the comprehensive peace plan proposed by King Abdullah and endorsed by the Arab League remains the only acceptable basis for peace and that the Arabs, having offered it, are not obliged to do more.

Saudi leaders normally prefer discretion to bluster and quiet communication to open oratory, but in this case, the Saudi foreign minister—Prince Saud Al-Faisal—went so far as to proclaim the king's rejection of Obama's request publicly in the United States. "Incrementalism and a step-by-step approach has not and we believe will not lead to peace," he said.

Temporary security and confidence-building measures will also not bring peace. What is required is a comprehensive approach that defines the final outcome at the outset and launches into negotiations over final status issues—borders, Jerusalem, water, refugees and security. The whole world knows what a settlement should look like—withdrawal from all the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, a just settlement for the refugees, and an equitable settlement of issues such as water and security.

In other words, this is the Abdullah plan. In unusually blunt language, Saud said that "the question is not what the Arab world will offer. . . . The question really is, what will Israel give in exchange for this comprehensive offer?"<sup>19</sup> He was just as adamant in an address to the UN General Assembly two months later:

The desired peace will never be achieved by attempting to impose normalization of relations on the Arabs before the completion of withdrawal and the establishment of peace, as though we are expected to reward the aggressor for his aggression in a reverse logic that totally lacks any form of serious credibility.<sup>20</sup>

Obama's early mistake in calling for a total freeze on Israeli settlement expansion aggravated this issue. The Israeli government led by Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu predictably refused, and Obama appeared to back down. The Saudis saw this sequence as a demonstration that when it came to Israel, Obama would be no different from his predecessor: He might say promising things, but nothing would happen, just as nothing happened after Bush stated his commitment to a "two-state solution" that included an independent Palestine.

In addition to a halt to Israeli settlements, the Saudis and other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) "want to see an end to the siege of Gaza," according to John Duke Anthony (president of the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations), who attended a GCC summit meeting in December 2009. "Nothing is being rebuilt. The place is like an open-air prison" because the Israelis have sealed it off to punish Hamas.<sup>21</sup> The Saudis have little use for Hamas, but they see the plight of Gazans as the open-ended suffering of Palestinian people, which Obama and his team have done little to assuage; indeed, by the accounts of some relief workers, the Obama administration has impeded the delivery of aid to Gaza because it has retained Bush's policy of refusing to deal with Hamas.

### Iraq

The Saudis, having opposed the U.S. invasion, distanced themselves from the results of it. In their view, the Shia-dominated government of Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki has been entirely too close to Iran, Saudi Arabia's most threatening rival. To Washington's chagrin, Riyadh refused even to open an embassy in Baghdad and has participated only minimally in Iraq's reconstruction and economic development.<sup>22</sup> The U.S. view—that Saudi Arabia should be much more active in Iraq, in its own interest if not in Washington's—was reflected in the comments of General David Petraeus, commander of the U.S. Central Command, at a regional security conference in December 2009: "I would remind my Arab brothers that if there is concern about certain influences in Iraq, then it would be wise to increase the Arab influence in that country."<sup>23</sup>

Shortly before Iraq's national elections in March 2010, the Saudis invited their preferred Iraqi leader, the secularist former prime minister Ayad Allawi, to a meeting with King Abdullah that was widely reported in the regional news media. Allawi's coalition subsequently won a small plurality of seats in parliament; if he succeeds in forming

a government, Saudi Arabia is likely to be more closely and visibly supportive as the U.S. military drawdown continues. Indeed, within a month of the Iraqi elections, news reports from the region told of a stream of Iraqi Sunni politicians trekking to Riyadh, just as prominent Shia had previously been regular visitors to Tehran.<sup>24</sup>

### Energy Policy

The issue here is not the price of oil; the Saudis were embarrassed when they were unable to control the price surge that roiled the global oil markets in 2008 because they want the price of oil to remain within reach of consumers. Rather, it is about Saudi concern that the United States is pressing too hard too fast for a transition to alternate fuels at the expense of hydrocarbons, inflating the possibilities of technological breakthroughs and discouraging investment in oil. The clearest manifestation of this anxiety was an article published in the fall of 2009 by Prince Turki Al-Faisal, nephew of the king and former ambassador to the United States, in which he dismissed Obama's call for energy independence as "demagoguery." Saudi Arabia has long been committed to oil price stability and security of supply, he wrote, calling on "U.S. politicians [to] muster the courage to scrap the fable of energy independence once and for all."<sup>25</sup> Similarly, senior executives of Saudi Aramco, the state oil company, have been warning that premature commitments to new energy sources will discourage investors from long-term commitments to oil exploration and production even as global oil demand holds steady or increases.<sup>26</sup>

According to Dr. John Sfakianakis, chief economist of Saudi Fransi bank in Riyadh, "Saudi Arabia's position on alternative or 'supplemental' energies (solar, wind and hydrothermal) is clear: developing alternatives is important but not to the detriment or crowding-out of the oil sector."<sup>27</sup> The Obama administration apparently heard the message from the Saudis on this subject because in the administration's second year, its energy policy was articulated in terms much more in harmony with the Saudi position. When Deputy Energy Secretary Daniel Poneman told a Washington audience that "for the sake of future security and prosperity in the U.S. and the Middle East, we must diversify our energy mix," he added,

We recognize the continuing importance of the oil and gas resources of the Middle East to the U.S. and the world. . . . Even if significant constraints are imposed on the use of carbon, the International Energy Agency has found that global demand for oil and gas will continue to

grow over the coming decades. So the United States will continue to seek to assure safe and reliable access to those resources, and to support our companies' ability to do business in the Middle East by promoting open, transparent and stable rules of the road.<sup>28</sup>

This is not an abstract or theoretical discussion for the Saudis; oil accounts for about 89 percent of state revenue, and they want their customers to keep buying, not abandon oil in favor of other energy sources. Obama's announced intention to permit offshore oil exploration in U.S. waters previously closed to drilling may assuage Saudi anxieties on this point.

### **Inter-Arab Politics**

In Obama's first year, the Saudis demonstrated their independence from, and differences with, Washington on multiple fronts in addition to Iraq. Saudi Arabia intervened directly in Yemen's civil war, continued its efforts to reconcile the Palestinian factions Hamas and Fatah, and forged a rapprochement with Syria. In September 2009, King Abdullah reached out to the Syrian president Bashar Assad, inviting him to the opening ceremony of his pet project—the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology—and then, the following month, traveling to Damascus for a public reconciliation that appeared to paper over their differences about Lebanon. The Obama administration has a long list of grievances with Syria, but it did not necessarily oppose a Saudi-Syrian rapprochement; indeed, Obama also tried to improve relations by naming an ambassador to Damascus after a hiatus of five years. Assad's response to both approaches was a vehement public affirmation of his alliance with Iran's truculent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, so there is room for Riyadh and Washington to come to an understanding about policy toward Syria.

### **UNCERTAINTIES HINDER CONSENSUS**

What happens to the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia during the remainder of Obama's presidency is, to a great extent, dependent on questions to which in the spring of 2010 there was no way to know the answers: Will Ayad Allawi or any other leader be able to stabilize Iraq and develop a working partnership with the Saudis? What will the United States, the UN, and Israel decide to do about the Iranian nuclear program, if anything? Will the public spat between the Obama administration and the Israeli

government of Binyamin Netanyahu lead to substantive changes and, if so, in which direction? If the Palestinians unilaterally declare an independent state, will Saudi Arabia recognize it? How long will Abdullah be king?

Given the commonality of their security interests and the ever-expanding scope of their economic ties, it might seem that the United States and Saudi Arabia would be natural partners in the quest for regional peace and stability and in the confrontation with Iran. But by mid-2010, it was apparent that the development of strategic consensus between the two countries was hampered by weaknesses in the policymaking apparatus on both sides. In Riyadh, the king and his two chief deputies—his half-brothers Prince Sultan and Prince Nayef—are men of advanced years who have never demonstrated much capacity for, or interest in, strategic security planning. The former ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, is nominally chairman of the kingdom's National Security Council, but he appears to have been sidelined by illness and by the vagaries of royal family politics. The current ambassador, Adel Al-Jubeir, is well liked personally in Washington but has little policy influence in the United States and spends much of his time at home in Saudi Arabia, where he is a trusted confidant of the king. And because the Saudi regime has always excluded non-royal military officers from political influence, there is no counterpart in Riyadh to the strategic role General Petraeus plays in the United States.

On the U.S. side, it is difficult to identify any significant policy maker, other than Petraeus, who is actively seeking to develop a Gulf-wide security framework that would secure Saudi Arabia and its Arab neighbors against the Iranian threat. The policy heavyweights who might have taken on this task, such as Richard Holbrooke and George Mitchell, have been compartmentalized on other issues. The assistant secretary of state for Near East affairs, Jeffrey Felten, is a respected career diplomat but not close to the White House. Defense Secretary Robert Gates has focused mostly on withdrawal from Iraq and the war in Afghanistan. Obama's ambassador in Riyadh, James Smith, took up his post only in the late summer of 2009 and is still feeling his way, concentrating to a great extent on commercial matters. And no member of the White House National Security Council staff appears to be sufficiently influential to take on this policymaking role; there is no counterpart to the staff influence that Elliot Abrams had in Bush's White House. Congress, consumed by partisan rancor, has largely sidelined itself. Indeed, when the *New York Times* reported in April 2010 that Secretary Gates had sent a secret memorandum to the

White House saying that the Obama administration lacked a coherent strategy for dealing with Iran, he issued a statement saying that the purpose of the memo was to present “a number of questions and proposals intended to contribute to an orderly and timely decision making process.” In other words, the issue was up in the air.<sup>29</sup>

## ENTER CHINA?

These uncertainties, the potential for negative outcomes on the security issues, and the fast-growing trade relationship between Saudi Arabia and China have even led some analysts to see an eventual replacement of the United States by China as Saudi Arabia’s principal ally and guarantor of security.

One recent study concluded,

For now, Saudi Arabia will keep a foot in both the American and Chinese camps, judging that its own long-term interests are well served by maintaining the comparative advantages offered by both nations. That said, the pendulum is clearly shifting toward the Chinese camp. In time, as the Kingdom’s economic ties grow firmer with China, their military relationship will expand. As China’s military power comes to match its political and economic power globally, it will become Saudi Arabia’s strongest military ally.<sup>30</sup>

That outcome, which would represent a radical transformation of a worldview that has been bred into Saudis for generations, is unlikely. As the authors of that study and others have noted, China does not have and evidently does not aspire to have the force-projection capabilities—the air and naval power—that would enable it to supplant the United States as security guarantor in the Gulf.

More probable is a continuation of an evolution in the U.S.-Saudi relationship that began years before Obama was elected and is not the result of specific policies in any U.S. administration. A generation ago, Saudi Arabia was dependent on the United States and on Americans to produce and ship its oil, train its civil servants, manage its hospitals, train its military officers, develop its agriculture, and operate its national airline. American companies and American engineers built the country’s ports, airports, military bases, and power plants. As Saudi Arabia has matured and its people have become educated, that relationship of dependence has diminished, as it should have. Saudi Arabia is, in effect, a grown-up country now, capable of taking its place in the fraternity of modern

nations. Saudi Arabia is a member of the World Trade Organization and of the G-20 group of developed economies. The evaporation of the threat of international communism diminished the United States' centrality to Saudi policy and made possible new ties to countries that had previously been off-limits, including China. It was only natural that the people and organizations of Saudi Arabia would, as they developed, expand their economic and educational relationships.

This restructuring of Saudi interests has been most dramatic in the oil sector. Whereas in the past Saudi Arabia had an exclusive relationship with the United States, it now has a worldwide network of marketing and refining interests and has shifted its sales of crude to new markets in Asia, especially China, where it has financed the construction of refineries capable of processing the high-sulfur crude that American refiners spurn.

"The advantage for Saudi Arabia [in such arrangements] is a market for its sour crude oil, access to China's refinery and petrochemical industry, and a reduced reliance on the United States," as one thoughtful study put it. "China gains long-term contracts for crude oil, greater economic interdependence, greater security of supply, and a flow of investment dollars."<sup>31</sup>

President Bush irritated the Saudis by urging them publicly to increase their oil production capacity to hold prices down, even after they had invested billions in doing just that. Obama may have irked the Saudis with his call for U.S. energy independence, but he has been content to let them chart their own course on oil and energy policy. Not only has the United States not opposed the expansion of Saudi Arabia's oil ties to China; it has welcomed them as an incentive for China to support stability in the region.

A joke that made the rounds in Washington not long ago said, "Saudi Arabia is taking a second wife," namely China. "That doesn't mean it doesn't still love the first wife," the United States.

It is that "first wife," not the "second wife," that remains intimately and inextricably involved in Saudi Arabia's security, which at the end of the day is what matters most to the House of Saud.

The United States is training security forces, patrolling the Gulf by sea and air, and providing weapons and technology all along the Arab side of the Gulf. According to General Petraeus,

Today there are over 230,000 U.S. soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen and tens of thousands of Defense Department civilians deployed in the Central Command area of responsibility and

working, together with our diplomatic counterparts, with our partners and allies in the region.<sup>32</sup>

U.S. Navy cruisers equipped with Aegis missiles are on duty in the Gulf at all times. General Petraeus has spoken publicly of U.S. efforts to build up missile defense systems in friendly Gulf countries. In Bush's second term, the White House proposed, and Congress approved, weapons sales to Saudi Arabia that could total \$16.7 billion if fully executed; this process continued uninterrupted after Obama replaced Bush, with new sales that could total \$2 billion.<sup>33</sup> In August 2009, Science Applications International Corporation announced it had received a contract to develop a war college for the Saudi armed forces.

This role as protector, supplier, and giant presence as a guarantor of security is one that China is not equipped to play even if it were so inclined and if the Gulf Arab states wished it. These transactions will continue, as they have for six decades, because neither side has any incentive to disrupt them.

However, acquisition is not synonymous with strategy. The challenge for the Obama administration is to forge a common policy with Saudi Arabia on Iraq and especially on Iran. As usual with the Saudis, it is easier to determine what they do not want than what they do want. They do not want a Shia-dominated Iraq in league with Iran, the development of a nuclear arsenal by the Iranians, or military strikes against Iran by the United States or Israel.

## THE IRAN NUCLEAR ISSUE

The Iranian nuclear issue is now the most pressing item on the bilateral agenda between Washington and Riyadh. For nearly a decade, the U.S. position has been that Iran must not be allowed to acquire or develop nuclear weapons; such an outcome, the Americans said, would be "unacceptable," but neither Bush nor Obama developed an effective strategy for preventing it.

Secretary Clinton broke a taboo when in July 2009 she suggested—apparently spontaneously—that a nuclear-armed Iran would be less secure, rather than more, because the United States and other allies might place Iran's neighbors under a "defense umbrella." She was accused by critics in Washington and Jerusalem of having, in effect, acquiesced to the inevitability of an Iranian weapon. Today she is no longer alone. Increasingly, there is talk in the U.S. foreign policy establishment of the need for the Obama administration to reach an



understanding with Saudi Arabia about what to do when—no longer if—Iran acquires nuclear weapons. When a preeminent journal such as *Foreign Affairs* features an article titled “After Iran Gets the Bomb,” as it did in the spring of 2010, it can no longer be branded “appeasement” to have conversations about such topics as how to prevent a regional nuclear arms race once Iran is known to have weaponized. Efforts to dissuade Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons should continue; it does not undermine them to discuss with allies what to do if Iran ignores the world’s threats and entreaties.

According to Gregory Schulte, who was Bush’s ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency, “we must base our plans and diplomacy on the assumption that Iran will” obtain or manufacture such weapons. Only a shared strategy forged in partnership with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iraq, he said, can head off a nuclear arms race because “no country that aspires to regional leadership would want to be the last” to acquire nuclear capability.<sup>34</sup>

At Obama’s nuclear security summit conference in April 2010, Saudi Arabia was represented by its director of intelligence, Prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz, who restated the kingdom’s long-standing policy. The entire Middle East, he said, should be a zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

Real peace . . . cannot be based on the possession of, or a threat to use, nuclear weapons or the imposition of a policy of fait accompli and hegemony, which would constitute a source of concern and pose a threat not only to the people of the region but to international peace and security as a whole. . . . Engagement by any state of the region in a nuclear arms race would close any window of opportunity for the establishment of regional peace and security.

Muqrin said that Iran is entitled to develop nuclear power for civilian use so long as it does so in compliance with its international treaty obligations.

In those formulations, Saudi policy conforms comfortably to that of the Obama administration. Muqrin also said, however, that “Israel’s possession of nuclear weapons constitutes a fundamental obstacle to the achievement of security and stability in the Middle Eastern region.”<sup>35</sup>

Neither Obama nor any of his predecessors has shown any inclination to challenge Israel on this subject, as the Saudis well know.

Whether Saudi Arabia would seek nuclear weapons of its own in the face of the Iranian threat is a complex subject that is beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>36</sup> Given Obama’s commitment to reducing the

deployment of nuclear weapons worldwide, such an outcome would clearly meet with disapproval in Washington. But it is not apparent that the United States and Saudi Arabia have achieved, or are even close to achieving, a joint strategy for containing Iran, heading off a nuclear arms race, or ensuring the security of the kingdom and its Arab neighbors against a nuclear-armed Iran. The Defense Department's Quadrennial Defense Review, issued in February 2010, talks broadly of strengthening U.S. security partnerships and enhancing the capabilities of allies, but it says very little about Iran specifically. Defense Secretary Gates, who held the same position in the final years of the Bush administration, told Saudi leaders in March 2010 that the United States was "trying to stitch together the architecture across the region" to contain Iran, but progress has been slow.<sup>37</sup>

It may be, as General Petraeus has suggested, that rivalries among the Gulf region's leaders, and within Gulf countries, inhibit the development of a comprehensive multilateral strategy. The U.S. fallback, as Petraeus put it, is "multi-bilateralism, the process by which CENTCOM [U.S. Central Command] has sought to integrate bilateral activities to achieve multilateral effects." According to the CENTCOM commander, "We see this in particular in certain key areas—especially in shared early warning, air and missile defense, and achievement of a common operational picture."<sup>38</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Obama administration's vision for the future of the alliance may become clearer with the publication of its National Security Strategy. Whatever that document projects, it is unlikely to propose a formal defense relationship with Saudi Arabia because of the near certainty that the U.S. Senate would refuse to ratify a treaty commitment to such a controversial partner. More likely it is a continuation of an ad hoc relationship with which both countries have grown comfortable, regardless of the specific issues before them. The United States will remain a major trading partner and the principal security guarantor of a country that remains vulnerable, surrounded by troublesome neighbors. Neither side has any incentive to seek any other outcome.

## NOTES

1. President Barack Obama, Speech at Cairo University, June 4, 2009, [www.whitehouse.gov/blog/NewBeginning/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/NewBeginning/). ( Accessed on November 1, 2010).

2. Ghazi Al-Gosaibi, as quoted in Robert Lacey, *Inside the Kingdom* (New York: Viking, 2009), 218.
3. For an extended treatment of these tensions, see David Ottaway, *The King's Messenger* (New York: Walker & Company, 2008), chapters 14 and 15.
4. Robert Jordan, "U.S.- Saudi Milestone," *Washington Times*, April 29, 2005.
5. Anthony H. Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia: National Security in a Troubled Region* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 2009), 49.
6. Joint Statement by Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz and President George W. Bush, [www.saudiembassy.net/archive/2005/statements/page20.aspx](http://www.saudiembassy.net/archive/2005/statements/page20.aspx) public statement April 25, 2005). (Accessed on November 1, 2010).
7. *Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 171.
8. Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, Address to Arab League Summit, Riyadh, March 28, 2007.
9. Abdullah Alireza, remarks at a conference sponsored by New America Foundation, Washington, DC, April 27, 2009.
10. The author has had many conversations on this subject in Saudi Arabia, beginning in the 1970s.
11. For details of these agreements, see Christopher M. Blanchard, "Saudi Arabia: Background and U.S. Relations," *Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service*, December 16, 2009.
12. Ottaway, *King's Messenger*, 242.
13. Charles W. Freeman Jr., "U.S.-Arab Relations: Forks in the Way Forward," *Middle East Policy* 16, no. 4 (2009): 74.
14. U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, vol. 5, The Near East and Africa* (Washington, DC: U.S. Govt. Printing Office, 1982), 1027ff.
15. Adel Al-Jubeir, remarks at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations policy conference, Washington, DC, October 15, 2009.
16. William Burns, remarks at the Middle East Institute annual conference, Washington, DC, November 19, 2009.
17. *New York Times*, September 28, 2005.
18. Hillary Clinton, comments at news conference in Riyadh, February 15, 2010.
19. Prince Saud Al-Faisal, comments at State Department briefing, July 3, 2009.
20. Prince Saud Al-Faisal, as quoted in Christopher M. Blanchard, "Saudi Arabia: Background and U.S. Relations," *Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service*, Washington, DC, June 14, 2010, p. 1.
21. John Duke Anthony, comments at media briefing, Washington, DC, December 22, 2009.

22. For a summary of the issues on this subject, see Blanchard, "Saudi Arabia," June 14, 2010, 30–33.
23. General David Petraeus, remarks at International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) Manama Dialogue, Bahrain, December 13, 2009.
24. See the National Public Radio account at [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126019749](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126019749). (Accessed 1 November 2010).
25. Prince Turki Al-Faisal, "Don't Be Crude: Why Barack Obama's Energy-Dependence Talk Is Just Demagoguery," *Foreign Policy*, September–October (2009), [www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/17/dont\\_be\\_crude](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/17/dont_be_crude). (Accessed 1 November 2010).
26. The author interviewed several officials of the state oil company and the Ministry of Petroleum in Riyadh and Dhahran in October 2009.
27. Dr. Sfakianakis was formerly affiliated with Saudi British Bank, or SABB, where he circulated this "SABB Note" on June 3, 2009 ([www.sabb.com](http://www.sabb.com)).
28. Daniel Poneman, remarks at Washington Institute for Near East Policy, March 17, 2010.
29. Thom Shanker and David E. Sanger, "Gates Pushes Back on Report of Memo about Iran Policy," *New York Times*, April 18, 2010, [www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=13463](http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=13463). (Accessed 1 November 2010).
30. Daniel Wagner and Theodore Karasik, "The Maturing Saudi-Chinese Alliance," Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis (Dubai), April 6, 2010.
31. Mahmoud Ghafouri, "China's Policy in the Persian Gulf," *Middle East Policy* 16, no. 2 (2009): 88.
32. Petraeus, remarks at IISS Manama Dialogue.
33. Blanchard, "Saudi Arabia," December 16, 2009, 17.
34. Gregory Schulte, remarks at Washington Institute for Near East Policy, April 7, 2010.
35. Muqrin bin Abdulaziz. The text of this statement was distributed to the media and to independent analysts by the Washington public relations firm that represents the Saudi embassy.
36. For a full discussion of this subject, see Thomas W. Lippman, "Saudi Arabia: The Calculations of Uncertainty," in Kurt M. Campbell et al., eds., *The Nuclear Tipping Point*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 111ff; and Tariq Khaitous, "Arab Reactions to a Nuclear-Armed Iran," *Policy Focus, Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 94 (June 2009). This is a report, produced by the Washington Institute. Available on [http://www.voltairenet.org/IMG/pdf/Arab\\_Reactions\\_to\\_a\\_Nuclear-Armed\\_Iran.pdf](http://www.voltairenet.org/IMG/pdf/Arab_Reactions_to_a_Nuclear-Armed_Iran.pdf).
37. Elisabeth Bumiller, "U.S. Defense Chief Visits Saudi Arabia to Bolster Effort Against Iran," *New York Times*, March 11, 2010.
38. Petraeus, remarks at IISS Manama Dialogue.



## GCC STATES UNDER THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

*Christian Koch*

The election of Barack Obama as president of the United States in November 2008 was, in general, greeted positively by the countries that make up the Gulf Cooperation Council (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE), particularly because it brought to a close the tumultuous and—from a regional security point of view—quite disastrous years of the previous George W. Bush administration. Those eight years had left the regional security environment in tatters, with two unfinished wars and the reputation of the United States as an ally that had reached historic lows.

President Obama's inauguration brought with it many associated hopes and expectations among both the GCC leaderships and their publics regarding a new approach by the United States toward many of the Gulf's security dilemmas. Those hopes had, however, faded by the middle of 2010. The present view from the Arab Gulf is that although the rhetoric from Washington might have improved, and this is certainly to be welcomed, the policies themselves have not changed.

From the GCC perspective, the right words and mutual respect are important, but in the end, it is actions that count. On exactly that front and on virtually all of the issues of regional concern—from convincing Israel to reengage in the peace process, to preventing Iran from moving toward a nuclear capability, to leaving behind a stable Iraq ahead of the 2011 withdrawal deadline, to ensuring mission success in Afghanistan—the Obama administration is perceived as having fallen well short of its stated objectives. More importantly, the United States has failed to add proper substance to its statements.

The bottom line is that no significant headway has been made toward resolving any of the outstanding problem areas.

The result is twofold. First, the degree of disappointment and sense of ambivalence about U.S. policies among the GCC states has added to the uncertainty regarding whether the new U.S. president can follow through and deliver on his intentions. Second, and of more far-reaching consequence, is that though there can be no doubt that the United States will remain the most important external actor in the Gulf region for some time to come (including the fact that the GCC states will continue to remain reliant on American protection and security assurances), the disillusionment with U.S. policy will also further contribute to the existing trend among the GCC states to internationalize their foreign relations and to seek additional partnerships that can serve as complements to the United States. The days of American hegemony in the Gulf are thus coming to an end.

### U.S.-GCC RELATIONS IN CONTEXT

From a Gulf regional perspective, the campaign and the subsequent election of Barack Obama as president of the United States were followed with great interest. With the United States involved in numerous conflict situations that impact the Gulf—from the unfinished military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, to the dispute with Iran over that country's nuclear program, to the ongoing war on terrorism and its wider implications—any outcome of a presidential election in the United States was bound to have some implications.

At the same time, Barack Obama's election was not necessarily greeted in the Middle East with the same degree of enthusiasm and hope that he had inspired throughout other parts of the world. There were several aspects to consider here. Certainly, the shift in American politics was seen as necessary and inevitable by bringing to a close the chapter of U.S. unilateralism and neoconservatism that had marked the previous George W. Bush administration. Indeed, there was a palpable sense of relief that, in his final years, President Bush did not further inflame regional tensions by, for example, pushing for a conflict with Iran over that country's nuclear program and thus catapulting the region into an even-deeper quagmire. Even without that additional potential conflict, the Gulf had experienced one crisis situation after another, including the ever-expanding "war on terror," the classification of both Iran and Iraq in the axis of evil, and the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the consequences of which were still deeply felt throughout the entire Middle East even at the time

President Bush left office. Moreover and equally consequential, by the time he left office, America's standing in the Middle East was at its lowest point ever.

The perception in the Gulf about the change of administration in Washington thus showed a mixture of relief as well as anticipation about what future U.S. policy in the region might look like and whether the new president would be able to begin fixing many of the problems that President Bush left behind.<sup>1</sup> No matter how big the relief was about the end of the Bush presidency, the new Obama administration presented something of a mystery and an unknown quantity. There existed, for example, a level of unsure anticipation that the new president would rush in trying to fulfill some of his campaign pledges, including to quickly withdraw U.S. military forces from Iraq. Although the war was certainly unpopular in the Gulf, there was, nevertheless, a general consensus in the region that Iraq was not politically stable enough to be able to stand on its own feet at the outset of 2009. Insistence that troops be withdrawn was seen, therefore, as heightening the danger either that Iraq would fall back into the sectarian cycle of violence that had characterized the country in 2005 and 2006 or that the door would be opened for Iran to further extend its influence inside the country. Neither scenario was seen as a desirable choice by the Arab Gulf states.

There were also questions about the overall level of rhetoric that the new president had provided during the campaign and whether his presidency would grasp the hard security challenges with which the region itself continued to grapple. There were no doubts in the region that Obama was inheriting an unenviable legacy from his predecessor. There was also the aspect that, traditionally, the GCC states have not always had solid relations with a new Democratic administration in Washington and that Republican administrations tended to be favored. Despite the many blunders of the Bush era, the George W. Bush administration had become a certain known quantity that Gulf leaders could work with despite its many shortcomings. The situation thus represented an uphill battle for the new president to contend with—to show that a different style of American politics was possible and at the same time that the U.S. could succeed in the hard politics of the Middle East.

Adding to the uncertainty surrounding the new administration was another factor that had to be considered. Although there was a consensus on both sides that President Obama's election would not change the fundamentals of the GCC-U.S. relationship, it still occurred at a time when there was also a reevaluation going on by



the Arab Gulf States about the overall direction of bilateral ties. In this context, the notion had gained ground that the exclusive reliance on the United States as the primary protective actor had not proven to be a sufficient solution to breaking the Gulf security impasse. The inability to move the region out of its perennial cycle of violence did not start with the George W. Bush administration, although the policies the Bush team pursued certainly served to exacerbate many of the underlying shortcomings.<sup>2</sup>

Following the British decision in 1968 to withdraw from its territories “East of Suez” as of 1971, the United States moved in to fill the power vacuum; its role steadily increased from this point onward. From what was initially an over-the-horizon presence that largely depended on regional powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia in the 1970s, the U.S. involvement in regional affairs began to continuously expand to the point that one could argue that the United States had become the regional hegemon with its decision to invade and occupy Iraq in 2003. By the beginning of 2010, there were still more than 150,000 American troops stationed in the Gulf region, with a significant number of forces in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar. From a strategic perspective, the United States was as firmly entrenched in Gulf affairs as ever.

Yet the growing dependence on the United States has proven not to be the answer for achieving lasting security in the Gulf. Instead of the notion that the problems the United States would encounter would remain manageable, the opposite was becoming the case.<sup>3</sup> Not one of the many approaches the United States has taken on regional security—from the twin pillar policy of the 1970s that caused it to rely on Saudi Arabia and Iran; to the balance-of-power approach in the 1980s that strengthened Iraq vis-à-vis a revolutionary Iran; to dual containment in the 1990s, which was intended to isolate both Iran and Iraq at the same time; to finally outright intervention and invasion by the United States of Iraq in 2003—has managed to give the region even the semblance of a better security environment. Each policy simply supplied the seeds for the next crisis.

All of this left the GCC states in a difficult quandary. Given the unsettled and unstable regional environment, the reliance on a strong and effective military power such as the United States was seen by the GCC states as an essential element to safeguard their own security and national existence.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, U.S. policies in the region as well as in the broader Middle East proved highly problematic as they did not necessarily correspond to the stated interests of the GCC states and have at times even stood in contradiction to those interests.

There has also always been this notion of the United States as a status quo power wishing to change the status quo.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the evolution of the United States from a distant military force to one assuming the role of ensuring regional security and acting as a regional hegemon did not resolve the Gulf's security dilemmas, and it did not find exclusive acceptance at either the popular or the governmental level.

The ultimate result was that Arab Gulf governments during the course of the George W. Bush presidency began to lose confidence in the U.S. strategic approach and began to ask concrete questions about the inherent costs and benefits associated with such continued close ties. In his statement at the General Debate of the 62nd Session of the UN General Assembly in New York on September 25, 2007, the Qatari amir Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani stated, "The major conflicts in the world have become too big for one single power to handle them on its own."<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the Saudi foreign minister Saud Al-Faisal in a speech to the first Gulf Dialogue Conference held in Manama, Bahrain, in December 2004 stated that although "there is an urgent need for a collective effort aimed at developing a new and more solid framework for Gulf security . . . the international guarantees [necessary to provide for such a system] cannot be provided unilaterally even by the only superpower in the world." He, therefore, suggested the broader involvement of the international community through the UN Security Council.<sup>7</sup>

The result was that the GCC states themselves saw the need to assume a level of ownership in regional security issues, as evidenced by the King Abdullah Peace Initiative for settling the Arab-Israeli conflict, Qatar's constructive role in calming tensions in Lebanon, and overall GCC contributions to the stabilization efforts in Afghanistan. Gulf diplomacy, previously unheard of, became part of the regional strategic picture. This was something that the Obama presidency would thus also inherit. The underlying dilemma within the existing complexities of regional and international politics remaining in this shift of regional power is that the United States has appeared unwilling to come to terms with the GCC states that are defining their own interests outside of the context of the need for U.S. military protection. In the past, Gulf monarchies may have willingly, albeit grudgingly, gone along with much of U.S. policy, given the direct and more serious challenges posed by threats such as the Iranian revolution and the regime of Saddam Hussein and the fact that on their own, the GCC states did not possess the capabilities needed to protect themselves. However, in the wake of the Iraq policy disaster, U.S. policies began to be seen more as a part of the problem of regional instability

than as a part of the solution. The formula of past U.S.-GCC relations of security and protection for stable oil supplies, although still relevant, was no longer as predominant and all-determining as before. This stood in contrast to much of the literature on the bilateral relationship, which has maintained this formula as the primary motivation for keeping the relationship going. But instead, the GCC states have begun to define their own national priorities and interests.

By the time the Obama administration came to power, it was thus clear in the Gulf region that not only had the United States lost political influence but that overall American credibility was at stake. This lack of confidence did not mean that the usefulness of the relationship was fundamentally questioned, but GCC leaders were increasingly ready to think about and contemplate alternatives.

### THE GCC AND THE OBAMA PRESIDENCY

Within the overall context of the shifting GCC-U.S. relationship, President Obama nevertheless entered office amid high hopes that he would be able to repair much of what had gone wrong in previous years. The president made it a point to stop in Saudi Arabia on his first visit to the region to seek the advice of King Abdullah and to hear the views from the kingdom.<sup>8</sup> This was certainly well received. Eager to shed the negative image of the United States in the Muslim world, President Obama assumed a much more conciliatory tone than his predecessors, something that went down well with the Saudis especially in their role as the guardians and servants of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Given that King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia had initiated the dialogue between religions and cultures, the new tone and approach coming out of Washington fell on receptive ears in Riyadh.

At the same time, what had become clear by the time of the Cairo speech in June 2009, to which President Obama proceeded after stopping in the kingdom, was that the president's good intentions were having little impact on events on the ground.<sup>9</sup> This would eventually result in a fading of the general enthusiasm and in rising criticism that the inability to follow up on the nice words the new president articulated proved that his overall policy was hollow. This certainly was the feeling in the summer of 2010, when no measurable progress had been achieved on any of the major issues of the day. A closer look at the key problem areas of Iran and the Arab-Israeli conflict illustrates this further. Meanwhile, Iraq continues to face political uncertainty, while there appear to be no good policy choices when it comes to

Afghanistan. In fact, when President Obama was announced as the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize at the same time that he announced his intention for a troop surge for Afghanistan, this was seen as a contradiction in terms.<sup>10</sup> His gifts as an orator were unquestioned, but his qualities as a statesman were still not proven.

### THE DILEMMA OVER IRAN

For people and leaders in the Gulf, the main security challenge facing this strategic region was the question of Iran and its nuclear file. As a result, how President Obama would handle Iran and the difficult case of the nuclear file would be a key determinant in judging the effectiveness of his presidency. Positively, the scenario of a fourth Gulf war that could plunge the region into another period of uncertainty immediately diminished with the Obama presidency. Throughout the final years of the Bush administration, there had existed a high degree of unease when President Bush continually emphasized that the military option was on the table as far as Iran was concerned. Many even believed this was not mere rhetoric but that before he left office, President Bush would find a way to start a campaign against Iran. Unilateralism and warmongering had never found much support in the region; neither was war considered the only option.

The year 2009 thus became the first year since 2001 that the region saw a lessening of tensions and a step back from the heated confrontation between Iran and America. When President Obama spoke of “unclenching fists” and his readiness to hold talks with Iran on issues of concern, this was generally greeted with support from the GCC leaders. In fact, many leading officials in the GCC states had argued for years that not talking to Iran had always been a mistake by Washington.<sup>11</sup> In the same sense, the president’s Nowruz (Persian New Year) message to the Iranian people in March 2009 was seen as part of a more differentiated strategy that sought multiple points of contacts rather than simply trying to pressure Iran through sanctions or possible military action.<sup>12</sup> Given such an approach, there was a palpable sense that a chance existed to bring Iran to its senses and engage Tehran diplomatically, although it was equally clear that the climate of confrontation was not going to disappear immediately.

The GCC-Iran relationship is, however, a complicated matter, and as such, there were also continuing concerns regarding the open diplomacy that Washington was undertaking. One of the main worries was that Washington would begin its dialogue process with Tehran based purely on its own national priorities and with little regard for the

concerns and interests of the GCC states. One regional analyst noted that “if the aim of the new policy is to turn Iran into a stable force in the region, everyone is in favor, provided it takes GCC’s concerns and does not compromise our national interests.”<sup>13</sup> The perceived notion in the GCC of being ultimately sold out would force the administration to provide assurances that this would not be the case. The U.S. secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman, underscored that the United States was

doing nothing with Iran at the expense of our allies in the Gulf and other regional governments. We also want to make sure that they understand what we are doing—as we engage with Iran and discuss various issues related to its nuclear program.<sup>14</sup>

This was reinforced by U.S. deputy secretary of state James Steinberg, who indicated in congressional testimony that the United States was indeed working closely with Gulf regional allies to develop cooperation in response to the challenges that Iran was posing for the region.<sup>15</sup>

Combined with the concern about their national interests being relegated to a lower status, the GCC states also worried that the new president would be too naive when dealing with Iran and would in fact be too ready to grant concessions. Given their own long-standing relations with Iran as a neighbor, the GCC states have understood that Iran is a difficult country to deal with. Iranians are viewed as hard negotiators with a great deal of persistence. Moreover, following the disputed Iranian presidential election in June 2009, the sense was that Iran was going to be even more of a challenge as a result of the legitimacy crisis inside the Islamic Republic. Although internal tensions offered potential opportunities, the situation was also full of dangers.

To further complicate matters, the GCC states had little faith in the application of sanctions and the likelihood that those sanctions would cause Iran to abandon its confrontational stance. Overall, the GCC states have been against sanctions in principle, seeing them as detrimental to innocent populations and also to the economies of neighboring countries. However, the GCC states have unequivocally made clear that they would support and effectively implement the UN sanctions on Iran. Abdulrahim Al Awadi, an official at the UAE’s central bank, for example, stated that the UAE “will implement any UN resolutions without reservations on any countries, including Iran.” At the same time, the GCC states did not make the

same commitment in implementing additional U.S.- or EU-leveraged sanction policies and have adopted a relatively quiet attitude on this front.

A final area of deep concern was that the United States would eventually withdraw from its insistence that Iran be prevented from becoming a nuclear power and would instead prepare the ground for living with a nuclear Iran.<sup>16</sup> In July 2009, U.S. secretary of state Hillary Clinton raised many eyebrows in the Gulf when she referred to the United States extending a defense umbrella over the GCC states as a possible response to an Iranian nuclear program. Specifically, she stated,

We want Iran to calculate what I think is a fair assessment, that if the United States extends a defense umbrella over the region, if we do even more to support the military capacity of those in the Gulf, it's unlikely that Iran will be any stronger or safer, because they won't be able to intimidate and dominate, as they apparently believe they can once they have a nuclear weapon.<sup>17</sup>

For many in the region, her statement was seen as evidence that the United States had in fact begun to accept the inevitability of an Iranian nuclear program, possibly based on the acknowledgment that the United States would not be able to stop Tehran in its nuclear pursuit. Secretary Clinton's statement was seen as focusing more on how to protect the Arab Gulf allies rather than how to prevent Iranian nuclear ambitions. One analyst argued that "it indicates that the U.S. is now washing its hands of any possibility of preventing Iran from emerging as a nuclear power" and that this would, in fact, "undermine the whole stability and balance of power in the region."<sup>18</sup>

All of the previously mentioned concerns have not been allayed; in fact, they have deepened as the Obama administration reached the conclusion that military strikes on Iran would be counterproductive, destabilize the region, and have "unintended consequences."<sup>19</sup> Such concerns were heightened in a memo issued by the U.S. defense secretary Robert Gates, where the emphasis was on "how to contain Tehran if it became a nuclear power," and by statements from former U.S. ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Greg Schulte, who has referred to the fact that it "may be too late to avoid a nuclear Iran."<sup>20</sup> What instead emerged have been suggestions of a "Cold Peace."

For the GCC states, this is not an acceptable policy direction by Washington. On the nuclear front, the clear attitude is that unless

Iran is prevented from obtaining a nuclear capability, the rest of the GCC states will be forced to seek such a capability on their own. The alternative of living in the shadow of a nuclear Iran that is determined to underline its hegemonic aspirations throughout the region is simply not a tolerable choice. Neither is the possibility of solely relying on U.S. protection in case Iran presses its ambitions more forcefully. The GCC's worries are not tied to Iran's nuclear program alone. Equally relevant is the rising concern that Iran had grown to represent a serious ideological challenge under the Ahmadinejad presidency, ready to challenge Sunni policies throughout the Middle East. In particular, this seemed relevant in relation to Iran's policies in Iraq, where the toppling of Saddam Hussein had allowed Tehran to take advantage of the chaotic circumstances to establish a deep and long-term presence to try and influence internal Iraqi politics. Iran is thus not only a challenge militarily or from the perspective of possibly gaining a nuclear capability; it presents a much broader challenge that includes an ideological and a social dimension.

All of this leaves the GCC states no better off than over two years ago when President Obama came to office. With the U.S. administration confounded by the extreme degrees of Iranian intransigence, the military option against an Iranian nuclear program appears once again to be moving into the foreground, even if that means it is initiated by Israel. All other options have not produced substantive results. Given that such a step would most certainly eliminate doubts that the Obama presidency represents a different style of U.S. leadership, questions persist in the GCC on whether the current administration in Washington would ever seriously contemplate such a move. Senior members of the Obama team have also voiced their skepticism about the utility of a military attack with chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, stating that the "unintended consequences" of a hit on Iran's nuclear facilities could easily outweigh the benefits of a further delay in discussions.<sup>21</sup> What this ultimately points to is the creeping acceptance of Iran's program given the lack of other good alternatives. For the GCC states, such an eventuality is highly worrisome.

## NO MOVEMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

The second key area in which President Obama's policy direction is analyzed in the GCC states is his position on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Among all GCC leaders and opinion makers, the issue of the

Arab-Israeli conflict is consistently identified as the key to solving all other problems in the region. At the outset, President Obama's stance on the Palestinian question—particularly his adamant stand against the radical Israeli policies of grabbing the Palestinian lands of Jerusalem and the continuation of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories—earned him much praise throughout the Arab and Muslim world. The appointment of George Mitchell as special envoy to the peace process was also greeted positively given that here was an Arab-American with a solid reputation for resolving seemingly intractable problems.

That a change in attitude on the Arab-Israeli conflict was required was something that was repeatedly conveyed to the new administration by the GCC states at the outset of the Obama term. Prince Turki Al-Faisal, the former Saudi ambassador to the United States, underlined that a failure to alter the policies would have a negative impact on the relations between the GCC states and the United States.<sup>22</sup> The kingdom had over the years grown increasingly frustrated with the unwillingness of the United States to get too closely involved in the peace process between Israel and its Arab neighbors. For example, following a press conference with President Bush in the summer of 2001 about the Israeli-Palestinian peace process (which he viewed as completely one-sided), then Saudi crown prince Abdullah instructed the Saudi ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, to tell the U.S. administration that Saudi Arabia would from now on go its own way and would no longer try to consider American strategic interests in the region. The ambassador was instructed to cut off any further discussion between the two countries, according to a report in the *Washington Post*.<sup>23</sup> Such frank talk would continue with the Obama administration.

The initial momentum coming out of Washington would soon run into problems, and from a GCC perspective, it was Israeli intransigence once again that would confront the new administration. The question was whether President Obama would be ready to challenge the United States' staunch ally in order to achieve progress. Similar to the case of the Iranian nuclear issue, the region would, however, find itself once again disappointed that Washington would be seen as unready to tackle the tough issues; rather, it appeared to succumb to the hard-line stance of the Israelis by watering down many of its own initial rhetoric and ideas. The decision by Israel's Netanyahu government to announce additional settlement construction during the visit of U.S. vice president Joe Biden in March 2010 was the highlight of a year that had seen the United States being thwarted again and again



by Israel in its attempt to reintroduce momentum into the stalled peace process. That Washington would back off each time Israel voiced its concerns or opposition did not inspire much confidence in the GCC states that a new approach was seriously being fashioned.

In that context, the new administration's requests for overtures by the GCC states toward Israel as a way to inspire confidence building were rejected out of hand. The GCC states, and Saudi Arabia in particular, had already been left disappointed by the rather lukewarm support that the King Abdullah Peace Initiative on resolving the Arab-Israeli issue had received when it was first launched in 2002. There was a feeling that the initiative was never really taken seriously by Washington and therefore had not been pushed sufficiently with the Israelis. Rather than making it the centerpiece of a new diplomatic push, Secretary Clinton would refer to the peace plan merely as an "important element" in the overall complexity of restarting Arab-Israeli negotiations. Moreover, Saudi Arabia was unhappy because the kingdom had pushed the plan throughout the Middle East and had gotten the Arab League to adopt it as a genuine offering to the Israelis. In the end, there would be very little to show for this effort.

The result was that when President Obama visited Riyadh in June 2009 to seek some additional positive overtures from Saudi Arabia and the GCC, King Abdullah told him that it was "completely unrealistic" to expect concessions from Riyadh until the Arab Peace Plan was accepted and while settlement activity continued.<sup>24</sup> At the end of July 2009, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, Prince Saud, would make the Saudi position very clear: "Temporary security and confidence-building measures will not bring peace. What is required is a comprehensive approach that defines the final outcome at the outset and launches into negotiations over final status issues."<sup>25</sup>

From a Saudi perspective, the interim steps that had defined the process during the Clinton and Bush years had produced no results, and therefore, this mistake was not to be repeated.

Other issues throughout the first 18 months of the Obama presidency would also suggest that very little concerted and concrete action could be expected. Two examples underlined the perception in the Gulf that Middle East policy direction in Washington was firmly in the hands of the Israeli lobby and the supporters of Israel. In September 2009, Justice Richard Goldstone presented the UN fact-finding report on Israel's December 2008 military assault on the Gaza Strip to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. He urged the council and the international community as a whole to put an end to impunity for violations of international law in Israel and

the Occupied Palestinian Territory, but the report initially received only lukewarm support in Washington. In fact, whereas the international community generally agreed with the report's conclusion, the U.S. tentativeness turned to outright opposition. The 2009 Human Rights Report of the U.S. Department of State "widely criticized" the report for "methodological failings, legal and factual errors, falsehoods, and for devoting insufficient attention to the asymmetrical nature of the conflict."<sup>26</sup> This was followed by a vote in the U.S. House of Representatives that rejected the report as "irredeemably biased" and called on President Obama to maintain his opposition to the findings.<sup>27</sup> As far as the GCC states were concerned, this was another missed opportunity for the new administration to show a more nuanced approach to the issue of Gaza, especially considering that the Israeli action had provoked severe outrage throughout the Middle East and the Gulf.

The second issue was the failure of President Obama to clearly criticize the Israeli attack on a flotilla of aid ships trying to break through the blockade of the Gaza Strip in May 2010, which resulted in several deaths. Again, although Israel was widely condemned by the international community, including by a strong statement from the EU, the response from Washington was highly muted, simply regretting the loss of life in the incident and calling on Israel to thoroughly investigate it.<sup>28</sup> This was seen in the Arab Gulf capitals as nothing more than an attempt to buy time and allow for the furor over the crisis to abate. Given also that this happened a year and a half into the Obama presidency confirmed the notion that virtually nothing had changed in Washington.

The bottom line for the Arab Gulf was that the United States has not changed its policies on the Arab-Israeli conflict over the past four decades, and there was no confidence that the United States would ever exert sufficient pressure on Israel to come to an agreement, despite the fact that the outlines of an eventual accord are known to everyone and have been around for some time. Although the land-for-peace plan had been formally accepted by the Arab world at one stage, now it was Washington, in addition to Israel, that was rejecting it. From a Gulf perspective, every U.S. administration in the past four decades had, for whatever reason, always extended Israel the benefit of the doubt, with the result that the Arabs were classified as the bad guys and Israel as the one seeking peace. And with the United States still adopting a cold war mentality, in which there exist only absolute winners and losers, Washington had succumbed to the Israeli logic.

## OUTLOOK

There are, of course, a host of other issues that impact on the substance and direction of the overall GCC-U.S. relationship. In terms of Iraq, there appeared to be more positive news forthcoming, and the sense was that efforts to promote greater stability in the country appeared to be finally paying off. For the Obama administration that inherited the Iraq legacy, there was little doubt that Iraq was better off in 2009 than it was in 2008 and better off again in 2010 than it was in 2009. Yet the inconclusive elections of March 2010, the resulting political standoff, and the renewed outbreak of sectarian violence served as a poignant reminder that Iraqi stability was far from assured. In this context, Obama's strategy for "responsibly ending the war" with its goal of withdrawal of all combat troops by August 2010 and the rest of its troops by the end of 2011 was something that appeared precipitous as far as the Arab Gulf was concerned. Although no one in the GCC had agreed with the initial decision to invade Iraq, there was equally no one who wanted to see the United States leave an unfinished job in Iraq. A worst-case scenario would be a renewed cycle of violence inside Iraq that would spread into the rest of the region as well as keep the door open for Iran to continue with its meddling in domestic Iraqi affairs.

A final issue that has not received much attention has been the concerns from the Arab Gulf side concerning oil policy. Given that oil represents the lifeline of the Arab Gulf economies, the emphasis that President Obama placed on ending the U.S. addiction to oil caused consternation in the capitals of the Gulf. The former Saudi ambassador to the United States Prince Turki bin Faisal would pen a stinging rebuke by stating that the use of the "energy independence" motto was

political posturing at its worst—a concept that is unrealistic, misguided, and ultimately harmful to energy-producing and -consuming countries alike. And it is often deployed as little more than code for arguing that the United States has a dangerous reliance on my country of Saudi Arabia, which gets blamed for everything from global terrorism to high gasoline prices.<sup>29</sup>

Considering Saudi Arabia's commitment to provide the world with stable oil supplies and its strong record on the issue, the GCC states as a whole consider the stereotypical image of the Arab Gulf as rich authoritarian oil sheikhdoms that support international terrorism completely misguided and, indeed, dangerous. That the Obama

administration was engaging in the same sort of denunciation seemed to them to be another example of the same old politics of previous eras.

All of the objections to the policies of the Obama administration have to be understood in the framework of two developments that have found their resonance among the GCC states. First, there is the realization that the world is ever-changing and that there is an urgent need to adapt to those shifting circumstances. For example, the global financial crisis also severely hit the oil-rich Gulf region, and it became quickly apparent that no one was immune from its consequences. From a Gulf perspective, countries such as the United States and Saudi Arabia should look at one another as partners and show a readiness to play a role in tackling the fallout from the international economic downturn. Security-dominated discussions had preoccupied the Bush administration; the emphasis for Obama should be placed on a whole set of different issues as well. By opening up the economic domain as a new source of contact, Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states found their stature had grown, and they were increasingly seen not only as suppliers of energy to the industrial world but also as a source of much-needed capital to the rest of the world.

The second aspect is the prevailing sense in the region that the United States is indeed a declining power or that, at a minimum, it has failed to adapt to the changing global realities. The result is that its influence has begun to relatively diminish. The Bush administration and its policies did their part to substantiate such a feeling. Under George W. Bush, the United States was the country that brought chaos instead of stability. And after 18 months of the Obama administration, there is little sense that the United States is about to return to its old glory or that Washington will find its footing once again in the Middle East.

For the GCC states, President Obama's approach is seen as too accommodating, trying to balance too many issues at one time, and as too persistently attempting to find the middle ground. There is no doubt among the people in the GCC countries that the U.S. president has good intentions or, as he stated in his Cairo address, that "change cannot happen overnight." But given the harsh realities of the Middle East, there is a belief that more forceful and determined decisions are required rather than just wishful thinking. As one commentator on regional affairs succinctly pointed out, "In trying to accommodate and please everyone, he could end up not being able to project power and authority."<sup>30</sup> The new president has also failed to build a more broad-based relationship with the GCC states by, for example,

utilizing their moderate positions in the Middle East as a diplomatic tool to further common interests. The rhetoric about energy dependence mentioned earlier has also resulted in a failed opportunity to structure more multidimensional economic ties. From Washington's point of view, the main utility of U.S.-GCC relations seems to lie in furthering defense ties that allow the United States to carry out its military missions abroad but without much consideration for the long-term security of the Gulf or the interests and priorities of its GCC partners. President Obama has constructed his Middle East and Gulf policy on those same parameters, which in retrospect represents another opportunity lost.

## NOTES

1. On the overall relations between the GCC countries and the United States, the literature remains somewhat scant, given that most of what has been written has been in the context of U.S.–Middle East Relations. This might be partly due to the fact that the notion of the Gulf as a subregion of the Middle East with its own distinct interests and peculiarities has not gained much traction so far in Western academic circles. In addition, the general assessment about U.S.-GCC relations has been that it has been based on the formula of protection for the stable supply of energy. This particularly applies to work written on Saudi Arabia and U.S. relations. See, for example, works by F. Gregory Gause III, including *Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1994), especially pp. 175–199, and *Relations between the Gulf Cooperation Council States and the United States* (Dubai: Gulf Research Center, 2004), in which he states that “the key American interest in the region is oil” and, as such, “Saudi Arabia has always preoccupied the central role in American perceptions of the Arab Gulf states.” See also, Rachel Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil: America's Uneasy Relationship with Saudi Arabia* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2005). An excellent volume on all the aspects of U.S. relations is Robert E. Looney, *Handbook of U.S.–Middle East Relations: Formative Factors and Regional Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2009).
2. A work by Steven Wright, *The United States and Persian Gulf Security: The Foundations of the War on Terror* (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 2007), provides an analysis of the impact of the fundamental revision of the new U.S. strategic design on the security of the Gulf. He comes to the conclusion that the “failure of each other's concern is actually fostering a ‘fog of war’ that will eventually lead them to a military confrontation that will have vast geopolitical costs.” (208).

3. See, for example, the seminal work by Michael A. Palmer, *Guardians of the Gulf: A History of America's Expanding Role in the Persian Gulf, 1833–1992* (New York: Free Press, 1992), in which the author tells his readers that the future will hold “more than what Americans have witnessed and dealt with successfully over the past few decades. There will be problems and crises aplenty, but they should be manageable” (249). See also Joseph Wright Twinam, “America and the Gulf Arabs,” *American-Arab Affairs* 26 (Fall 1988): 107.
4. On the general notion of the role of outside powers, see Shahram Chubin, *The Role of Outside Powers, vol. 4 of Security in the Persian Gulf* (London: Gower for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1982).
5. See, in particular, Lawrence Freedman, *A Choice of Enemies: America Confronts the Middle East* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008).
6. Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, statement at the General Debate of the 62nd Session of the UN General Assembly, September 25, 2007, [www.un.org/webcast/ga/62/2007/pdfs/qatar-eng.pdf](http://www.un.org/webcast/ga/62/2007/pdfs/qatar-eng.pdf). (Accessed on May 10, 2010).
7. HRH Prince Saud Al-Faisal, Minister of Foreign Affairs, “Towards a New Framework for Regional Security,” Saudi Arabia, The Gulf Dialogue, Manama, December 5, 2004, [www.mofa.gov.sa/media/35123\\_E05-12-04.pdf](http://www.mofa.gov.sa/media/35123_E05-12-04.pdf). (Accessed on May 11, 2010).
8. “Obama Meets Saudi King; Bin Ladin Issues Message,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, June 3, 2009.
9. For a copy of the Cairo speech, see [www.whitehouse.gov/blog/newbeginning/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/newbeginning/). (Accessed on May 11, 2010).
10. Nicholas Blanford, “Obama Nobel Peace Prize: What Arabs Think,” *Christian Science Monitor*, December 11, 2009.
11. For example, the former Saudi ambassador to the United States and Great Britain, Prince Turki bin Faisal, had pushed this point on many occasions.
12. For a copy of the message, see [www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/VIDEOTAPED-REMARKS-BY-THE-PRESIDENT-IN-CELEBRATION-OF-NOWRUZ/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/VIDEOTAPED-REMARKS-BY-THE-PRESIDENT-IN-CELEBRATION-OF-NOWRUZ/). (Accessed on May 13, 2010).
13. Personal correspondence with Saudi academic, email message to author, May 5, 2010.
14. Arnand Sagar, “US Will Not Ditch Arab Allies for Iran,” *Khaleej Times* (Dubai), October 9, 2009.
15. “US to Work with Regional Partners, Gulf States on Challenges from Iran,” Kuwait News Agency, October 7, 2009.
16. Gordon Robison, “Has US Accepted a Nuclear Iran?,” *Gulf News* (Dubai), July 29, 2009.
17. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Town interview Hosted by Suttichai Yoon and Veenarat Laohapakukul of *World Beat*, [www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/july/126335.htm](http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/july/126335.htm). (Accessed on May 15, 2010).

18. Dr. Mustafa Alani of the Gulf Research Center, as quoted in Michael Theodoulou, "US plans to halt Iran by 'defence umbrella'," *The National* (Abu Dhabi), July 24, 2009.
19. "Israel weighs merits of solo attack on Iran," *Wall Street Journal*, April 21, 2010.
20. Greg Schulte, remarks delivered at a forum of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, April 6, 2010, [www.winep.org](http://www.winep.org). (Accessed on April 7, 2010).
21. Noah Shachtman, "Joint Chiefs Chair: No, No, No. Don't Attack Iran," *Huffington Post*, April 18, 2010, [www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/04/18/mike-mullen-iran-attack-t\\_n\\_542210.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/04/18/mike-mullen-iran-attack-t_n_542210.html). (Accessed on April 19, 2010).
22. "Saudi warns US over Middle East," *BBC News*, January 25, 2009.
23. Robert G. Kaiser and David Ottaway, "Saudi Leader's Anger Revealed Shaky Ties," *Washington Post*, August 24, 2001.
24. "Obama in Saudi Arabia for key Mideast visit," *Reuters*, June 3, 2009.
25. Prince Saud Al-Faisal, remarks at U.S. State Department press conference, Washington, July 31, 2009, [www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/july/126829.htm](http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/july/126829.htm). (Accessed on May 15, 2010).
26. Bureau of Democracy, "Human Rights and Labor, Human Rights Report: Israel and the Occupied Territories," March 11, 2010, [www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/nea/136070.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/nea/136070.htm). (Accessed on April 17, 2010).
27. *Al Jazeera*, "US House Rejects Goldstone Report," November 4, 2009, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/americas/2009/11/200911320434191455.html>. (Accessed on April 18, 2010).
28. Eve Zibel, "State Department 'Regrets Loss of Life' in Free Gaza Flotilla Violence, Calls on Israel to Conduct 'Full and Credible Investigation.' Israeli PM Cancels White House Visit—Phones President Obama," *Fox News*, May 31, 2010, <http://whitehouse.blogs.foxnews.com/2010/05/31/breaking-israeli-pm-cancels-white-house-visit-phones-president-obama/>. (Accessed on June 1, 2010).
29. Prince Turki Al-Faisal, "Don't be Crude: Why Barack Obama's Energy-Dependence Talk Is Just Demagoguery," *Foreign Policy*, September–October 2009, [www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/17/dont\\_be\\_crude](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/17/dont_be_crude). (Accessed on October 15, 2009).
30. Abdullah Al-Shayeji, "Real Change Needed," *Gulf News* (Dubai), June 7, 2009.

## EGYPT: FROM STAGNATION TO REVOLUTION

*Michele Dunne*

Now, it is not the role of any other country to determine Egypt's leaders. Only the Egyptian people can do that. What is clear—and what I indicated tonight to President Mubarak—is my belief that an orderly transition must be meaningful, it must be peaceful, and it must begin now.

Furthermore, the process must include a broad spectrum of Egyptian voices and opposition parties. It should lead to elections that are free and fair. And it should result in a government that's not only grounded in democratic principles, but is also responsive to the aspirations of the Egyptian people.<sup>1</sup>

President Barack Obama reversed decades of U.S. policy toward Egypt on February 1, 2011 in the middle of that country's uprising, which began on January 25 and culminated in the end of the 30-year presidency of Hosni Mubarak on February 11. Obama steered just clear of saying publicly that Mubarak had to step down, but his February 1 remarks left little doubt that he believed such a course was necessary and desirable. His statement clarified the U.S. stance toward the uprising and the possibility of a democratic future for Egypt, which had been called into doubt following ambivalent remarks by various U.S. officials in the preceding days.

Obama went further with a sweeping statement—unusually emotive for the typically reserved president—made just hours after Mubarak's ouster:

There are very few moments in our lives where we have the privilege to witness history taking place. This is one of those moments. This is one of those times. The people of Egypt have spoken, their voices have been heard, and Egypt will never be the same.<sup>2</sup>



Perhaps even more unusual was a comment that the White House reported Obama made during follow-up telephone calls regarding Egypt on February 12 with counterparts in the United Kingdom, Jordan, and Turkey: “The President emphasized his conviction that democracy would bring more—not less—stability to the region.”<sup>3</sup>

This was a far cry from the early days of Obama’s presidency, when both his administration and the government of Egypt were eager to put aside the sharp differences over democracy that characterized relations during much of the presidency of George W. Bush. When Secretary of State Hillary Clinton received the Egyptian foreign minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit on February 12, 2009, just two weeks after Obama’s inauguration, the two ministers reportedly discussed principally the recent Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza. Although Egyptian domestic politics were not specifically on the agenda, they were nonetheless very much part of the context of the meeting. Within one week, the Egyptian liberal opposition politician and presidential candidate Ayman Nour was released from prison, ending a sentence that began in December 2005 when tensions between the Egyptian government and the Bush administration were at their height. Thus, in a gesture reminiscent of the 1981 Iranian release of American hostages as soon as President Jimmy Carter left office, Egypt hit the reset button in the bilateral relationship.

And yet, as much as Egyptian and U.S. officials seemed eager to close the democracy chapter and return to traditional good state-to-state relations, within a bit more than a year of the Clinton-Aboul Gheit meeting, these issues were very much on the agenda again because of looming elections and presidential succession in Egypt. And two years into the Obama administration, Egypt’s uprising forced an about-face in U.S. policy. At this juncture, it is useful to look back to explore the various imperatives that have driven U.S. policy toward Egypt over time, what changed during the Bush administration, and how the Obama administration has responded to a rapidly changing situation.

## U.S.-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS IN PERSPECTIVE

The United States has long viewed good relations with Egypt as critical to achieving various policy goals: minimizing Soviet influence in the Middle East, pursuing Arab-Israeli peace, fighting terrorism, and promoting economic and political reform. Egypt’s importance has demographic, geographic, political, religious, and cultural aspects. Egypt’s current population is approximately 82 million, growing at a rate of about 2 percent annually; it is the most populous Arab country

and fifth among the 57 member states of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).<sup>4</sup> Approximately 90 percent of Egyptians are Sunni Muslims, but Egypt also has the largest Christian population (approximately 9 percent<sup>5</sup>) of any Arab country, and its Coptic Christians trace their roots back to the earliest days of Christianity. Geographic factors also contribute to Egypt's importance; located in the northeastern corner of Africa, for much of its contemporary history, Egypt has controlled long Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts, the Suez Canal linking the two seas, and the Sinai, a natural land bridge between Africa and the eastern Mediterranean region.

As a result of Egypt's geostrategic assets, political rulers of the area—whether of the ancient Nile kingdoms, the medieval Islamic sultanates, or the modern Arab Republic of Egypt—have been able to project influence into areas near and far, particularly in Sudan, Palestine, Syria, and (a short distance across the Red Sea) Yemen. Egyptians make up a quarter of all native Arabic speakers worldwide.<sup>6</sup> Egyptian judges, teachers, preachers, and skilled and unskilled workers also have played significant roles in the development of oil-rich Arab countries in the Arabian Peninsula, as well as Iraq and Libya. The distinctive Egyptian dialect remains the single most widely understood among speakers of Arabic worldwide, a result of the omnipresence of Egyptians in the media, popular culture, education, and the labor force.

Egypt's influence has not, however, been confined to the Arab arena, particularly when one considers the effect of religious and cultural institutions originating in what is now Egypt. Al-Azhar, for example, a religious and educational institution over a millennium old, remains the most prominent center of Sunni religious learning in the Muslim world. And Egyptian movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood—as well as individual religious thinkers from Muhammad Abduh in the nineteenth century to Hassan al-Banna in the twentieth century to Yusuf al-Qaradawi in the current era—have profoundly affected religious and political thought and action in Arab and non-Arab Muslim countries.

Viewed from the United States, Egypt's importance looms particularly large. Egypt has received more U.S. military and economic assistance than any other OIC member, totaling roughly \$65 billion between 1979 and 2009.<sup>7</sup> Among OIC states, only Turkey, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia (as well as Iran before 1979) have been military and strategic allies as important to the United States as Egypt. Moreover, Egypt has been a key participant in U.S. efforts to bring about peace between Israel and the Palestinians for more than 30 years.

As British and French influence in the Middle East ebbed after World War II, so grew the influence of the United States. U.S. interest in petroleum and the resulting special relationship with Saudi Arabia had already been established during the 1930s. The United States also showed keen interest in the emerging state of Israel, although the special U.S.-Israeli relationship did not emerge fully until after 1967. The other major U.S. preoccupation regarding the Middle East from the late 1940s until the mid-1960s was combating the spread of communism and the influence of the Soviet Union, an effort that led to a series of new approaches and setbacks in U.S.-Egyptian relations during the presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser.

When the Free Officers overthrew the Egyptian monarchy in a bloodless coup in 1952, the U.S. government welcomed the development, coming as it did after a period of political chaos and antiforeign violence. The U.S. embassy in Cairo set out to develop relationships with the Free Officers and looked for ways to assist them in their drive to eliminate corruption and develop the economy through industrialization and land reclamation. Misunderstandings and conflicting interests, however, plagued the assistance relationship, and the Egyptian-American Rural Improvement Service (which was to have combined land reclamation and rural social development) ended in disappointment for Egyptians and U.S. officials alike.<sup>8</sup>

President Eisenhower at first tried to reach out to Gamal Abdel Nasser, but a series of misunderstandings led Nasser to accept an arms package from the Soviet bloc in 1955 and the United States to withdraw proffered assistance to build the Aswan High Dam in 1956. Eisenhower did force Israel, Britain, and France to back away from their effort to topple Nasser in the Suez war of October 1956, but troubles in the relationship persisted; the formation of the short-lived Egyptian-Syrian United Arab Republic in 1958 and pro-Nasserist instability in Lebanon caused strong concern in Washington.<sup>9</sup>

The pattern of disappointment on both sides of the Egypt-U.S. relationship continued in the 1960s. President Kennedy thought Egypt too important to U.S. cold war interests to isolate the country and so tried to improve relations with Nasser, an initiative that ultimately foundered because of basic contradictions in interests and the fact that Nasser's regional assertiveness threatened key U.S. allies, notably Saudi Arabia and Jordan. In particular, Nasser's military involvement in Yemen and encouragement of an antimonarchist coup in Jordan put the United States in an uncomfortable position and led to a souring of relations and the cutoff of assistance by 1963.<sup>10</sup> In 1967 Egypt broke relations with the United States over U.S. assistance to Israel

in the Six-Day War, although Nasser in 1970 accepted the plan by the U.S. secretary of state William Rogers to end the war of attrition with Israel.

Although the cold war persisted into the late 1980s, by the mid-1970s, U.S. strategic imperatives in the Middle East had shifted to a new emphasis on securing peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Once again, Egypt was deemed imperative to the effort. Egyptian-U.S. relations underwent a revolution during the presidency of Anwar al-Sadat, who expelled Soviet military advisors in 1972, initiated the 1973 war to regain the Sinai from Israel but then cooperated with U.S.-sponsored disengagement agreements, and finally undertook the process of making peace with Israel through his 1977 trip to Jerusalem, the 1978 Camp David agreement, and the 1979 peace treaty between the two countries. The United States responded enthusiastically, with an assistance program that by 2006 had provided over \$34 billion in military assistance (\$1.3 billion annually) and over \$25 billion in economic assistance. Although economic assistance began a gradual decline in the 1990s by mutual agreement, President Mubarak also gained forgiveness of Egypt's \$7 billion military debt to the United States through participation in the 1991 Gulf War.

The Egyptian-U.S. partnership flourished in the 1980s–1990s, as cooperation expanded in diplomacy, military interoperability, and economic reform. Mubarak participated actively in U.S.-sponsored efforts to make peace on bilateral (Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian) and multilateral tracks, “Bright Star” multilateral exercises held every two years in Egypt became the largest military exercises in the world, and Vice President Gore initiated a bilateral commission with Mubarak in order to encourage Egypt to undertake needed economic reforms.

### RELATIONS DURING THE GEORGE W. BUSH ADMINISTRATION

U.S. policy toward Egypt went through significant change, and a general sense of malaise, in the years between the collapse of the Arab-Israeli peace process in 2000 and the end of Bush's tenure in 2008. As part of the disillusionment in American circles after the Clinton administration's peace process efforts went up in flames in the fall of 2000, Egypt took its share of the blame for the failure to convince Palestinians to sign on to the deal offered at Camp David.<sup>11</sup> Members of the U.S. Congress and supporters of Israel became

increasingly vocal about the cold peace that prevailed between Egypt and Israel. Moreover, 30 years after the treaty between the two countries and the general military and economic aid package that accompanied it, U.S. officials and observers began to take stock of the rather modest progress Egypt had made toward the modernization, liberalization, and prosperity it was hoped that U.S. assistance would bring.

In 2001 Bush and his advisers brought to Washington a view of the Middle East that differed radically from that of his predecessors. The Arab-Israeli conflict was no longer seen as the central or defining problem of the Middle East, and, therefore, the role of Egypt did not seem as critical as it had in the past. The Bush team saw the central problems as troublemaking by powers hostile to U.S. influence (Iraq, Iran, and Syria) and—especially after the September 2001 terrorist attacks—the lack of freedom and democracy in the region. The fact that it was an Egyptian who masterminded and led the September 11 terrorist attacks strengthened what was already a growing negativity in the United States about trends in Egypt.

Egypt also struggled, as did other Arab countries friendly to the United States, with the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the United States' failure to pursue Israel-Palestinian peacemaking in a serious way. Mubarak and his director of intelligence, Umar Sulayman, tried to be helpful to the United States—and to protect Egypt's own critical equities—by facilitating Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon's initiative for unilateral withdrawal from Gaza and serving as a channel to Palestinian factions to whom the United States refused to speak directly, first Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat and later Hamas.

On the economic front, U.S.-Egyptian relations have presented a mixed picture since 2000. On one hand, the United States applauded the economic reforms undertaken in Egypt since 2004 and in 2004 agreed to establish Qualifying Industrial Zones so that Egyptian products with some Israeli inputs could be imported duty free into the United States. On the other hand, Egyptian hopes for a free trade zone with the United States remained frustrated. The two countries appeared to be on the verge of beginning formal free trade talks twice, in 2002 and 2005, only to have the United States pull out—the first time over a dispute within the World Trade Organization and the second time over the conviction of an opposition politician.

As U.S. policy toward the Muslim world, and particularly the Arab world, evolved after the September 2001 terrorist attacks, so did U.S. goals regarding the relationship with Egypt. The United States still

valued Egyptian stability, and military, counterterrorism, and diplomatic cooperation remained paramount. The United States also had long taken an interest in Egypt's economic development generally and particularly in persuading the government to move gradually from a statist to a free market economy. What was new after 2002 was a U.S. interest—demonstrated by members of Congress from both parties, as well as the administration of George W. Bush—in promoting political reform and eventual democratization in Egypt. As first articulated by President Bush during a November 2003 speech and repeated many times afterward, “The great and proud nation of Egypt has shown the way toward peace in the Middle East, and now should show the way toward democracy in the Middle East.”<sup>12</sup>

Whereas the United States had long pressed the Egyptian government to carry out economic reforms, this emphasis on political issues was new. In private negotiations with Egyptian officials in 2003–2004, U.S. officials began proposing benchmarks for political as well as economic reform as part of the U.S. assistance package. In December 2004, the U.S. senator Sam Brownback sponsored an amendment to the legislation appropriating funds for the U.S. Department of State that specified that

with respect to the provision of assistance to Egypt for democracy, human rights, and governance activities, the organizations implementing such assistance and the specific nature of that assistance shall not be subject to the prior approval by the Government of Egypt.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, opposition activity was growing in Egypt; the Egyptian Movement for Change, known by its catchy slogan *Kifaya* (enough), had begun in late 2004 to challenge the long-standing taboo on protesting against Mubarak himself. Egypt's largest opposition movement, the banned Muslim Brotherhood, had declared its desire to participate more actively in electoral politics and had issued a reform program the same year.

In February 2005, Mubarak proposed an amendment to the constitution allowing direct popular election of the president; previously, he had been nominated by the parliament and simply confirmed by the public in a referendum. Mubarak probably took this step partly to create a pathway for his second son, Gamal, to succeed to the presidency with a vestige of electoral legitimacy, but he was also reacting to growing domestic and international urging for political reform. Another significant change in the period between 2002 and 2005 was the creation of independent media in Egypt, apparently a result

of market forces as well as of persistent domestic and international urging; the independent daily *al-Masry al-Youm* began publishing in June 2004 and quickly surpassed the stodgy government dailies to become the country's most widely read and influential paper.

Throughout 2005, the Bush administration pushed for freer parliamentary elections in Egypt, scheduled for the autumn of that year. Secretary of State Rice gave a major speech in Cairo in June 2005, saying,

The Egyptian Government must fulfill the promise it made to its people—and to the entire world—by giving its citizens the freedom to choose. Egypt's elections, including the Parliamentary elections, must meet objective standards that define every free election.<sup>14</sup>

That pressure, which complemented a significant domestic movement for free elections and included coordination with European donors to Egypt, resulted in the freest (though far from perfect) elections Egypt had held to date. Opposition candidates, including those from the banned Muslim Brotherhood, were allowed to register their candidacies and campaign with unprecedented freedom. Judges supervised both polling and counting places and served as whistle-blowers against fraud. Although the government vigorously rebuffed requests for international monitoring, it acceded to domestic and international pressure to allow the training and deployment of some 5,000 Egyptian monitors.

In retrospect, Egypt's 2005 elections had mixed results. On the one hand, the freedom accorded to opposition candidates and judicial and civilian monitors was unprecedented, leading to the most transparent elections in the country's history. Mubarak ran for the presidency against opposition for the first time, although his closest competitor (Ayman Nour) received some 7 percent of the vote to Mubarak's 89 percent. Opposition candidates won more than 20 percent of the parliament, with independent candidates for the Brotherhood taking 88 out of 444 elected seats. On the other hand, security forces closed in harshly during the latter rounds of the elections, surrounding polling places and using coercion and intimidation to prevent voting by opposition supporters. Moreover, the Egyptian government took a series of steps in late 2005 and early 2006—starting with the December 2005 conviction of Nour on forgery charges and continuing with the cancellation of scheduled municipal elections, the renewal of the state of emergency, and the implementation of many other measures—that effectively reversed some of the reform gains of 2004–2005.

The Bush administration initially reacted to Egyptian backtracking—specifically Nour’s conviction—by canceling bilateral free trade talks that were to have begun in January 2006. But after that step, U.S. democracy efforts in Egypt began to lose steam, especially after the Hamas victory in Palestinian legislative elections, which magnified concerns in Washington about the Brotherhood’s strong showing in Egypt. Spiraling sectarian violence in Iraq also raised questions in the United States about the wisdom of democracy promotion in the Middle East.

Differences began to emerge between a White House still enamored of Middle East democracy and a State Department concerned about regional affairs spinning out of control. As a result, a disparity arose between the fairly energetic pro-democracy rhetoric that continued to come out of the White House and the absence of serious behind-the-scenes engagement on democracy issues by high-level State Department officials. Secretary Rice became somewhat defensive about the shift away from what she had termed “transformational diplomacy” toward a more traditional brand of diplomacy, in which democracy and human rights took a lower place. In one notable episode, Rice was asked during an October 3, 2006, press conference if she had raised Nour’s case with the Egyptian foreign minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit during their meeting. Rice responded, “I’ve spoken about Ayman Nour each time I meet my Egyptian counterparts,” only to have Aboul Gheit interject, “You didn’t raise it today.” Rice retorted, “I will Ahmed. I’m certain. You can be certain I will,” and went on to make fairly extensive remarks about the importance of the United States standing up for democratic values in Egypt.<sup>15</sup>

By late 2006, in the aftermath of a bruising summer war between Israel and Hizbullah in Lebanon, Rice had become convinced of the need to get Israeli-Palestinian negotiations restarted and to work closely with Arab governments, including that of Mubarak. A *New York Times* story on January 16, 2007, was headlined “Rice Speaks Softly in Egypt, Avoiding Democracy Push.”

Meanwhile, White House and State Department spokesmen continued to criticize the Egyptian government for steps deemed to be violations of human or political rights, and the administration increased U.S. Agency for International Development spending on democracy programs in Egypt. President Bush continued to make pointed references to the need for democracy in Egypt from time to time. He made the following remarks—which were viewed as aimed directly at Mubarak—at a May 18, 2008, World Economic Forum



meeting in Egypt: “True democracy requires competitive elections in which opposition candidates are allowed to campaign without fear or intimidation. Too often in the Middle East, politics has consisted of one leader in power and the opposition in jail.”<sup>16</sup>

But the combination of rhetoric and assistance was ineffective without the critical element of diplomacy in support of democracy, and Egyptian civil society activists felt the diminution of support keenly.<sup>17</sup>

### OBAMA POLICY BEFORE AND AFTER THE JANUARY UPRISING

President Obama came to office with the view that Bush had been foolhardy and ineffective in promoting democracy in the region. Determined to repair bilateral relationships throughout the Middle East, Obama reached out not only to hostile states such as Iran but to old friends who had become alienated, such as Egypt, choosing Cairo as the venue for his address to the Muslim world in June 2009. The Obama administration expressed regard for the Egyptian role in helping to resuscitate an Israeli-Palestinian peace process, eschewed criticism of Cairo’s human rights record, invited Mubarak to visit Washington in August 2009, and cut assistance to independent civil society organizations in an effort to improve the climate of the relationship. Mubarak and other Egyptian officials were clearly delighted to be back in Washington’s good graces.

The Obama team took steps from its earliest days—during the November 2009–January 2010 transition period, before Obama even entered office—to repair the perceived damage done to U.S.-Egyptian relations during the Bush years. The first notable step was to cut democracy assistance to Egypt, which had increased markedly during the previous administration. By 2008 such assistance constituted nearly \$55 million out of an economic assistance package of \$415 million (in addition to \$1.3 billion in military assistance) annually. The Bush administration’s final budget request to the U.S. Congress, which still had not been passed by the time Obama won the November 2009 presidential election, suggested a cut in economic assistance to Egypt to \$200 million, of which roughly one-quarter would be democracy assistance. But during the November 2009–January 2010 transition period, congressional staff and members of the Obama transition team agreed to cut democracy assistance for Egypt to \$20 million.<sup>18</sup>

The Obama administration also made two policy decisions apparently intended to ease Egyptian government annoyance over U.S. democracy promotion efforts. First, within the remaining \$20 million in democracy assistance, programs carried out with the cooperation of the Egyptian government (such as decentralization and judicial reform) were preserved, whereas grants to independent civil society organizations were cut by approximately two-thirds.

Second, the U.S. mission in Cairo reversed a Bush administration policy decision regarding the provision of direct grants to civil society organizations. From the 1970s until 2004, all economic assistance to Egypt was subject to a bilateral agreement between the U.S. and Egyptian governments, meaning that the Egyptian government had to approve each and every project. As the United States began to expand democracy assistance to Egypt, that became increasingly problematic, given that many Egyptian civil society groups working in the fields of human, civil, or political rights faced government harassment and were either unable or unwilling to register officially as NGOs and submit to the extensive and intrusive regulations procedures mandated under Egyptian law.

Following the passage of the Brownback Amendment in December 2004, the United States began making grants to civil society organizations directly, whether or not they were formally registered as NGOs and without seeking the Egyptian government's approval. But in 2009, the Obama administration reversed that policy—although the Brownback Amendment language was still in the current legislation—and resumed clearing organizations to receive funding with the Egyptian government. The Department of State made available smaller pools of funding (approximately \$2.5 million) through its Middle East Partnership Initiative and Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, which would be available to organizations not registered with and cleared by the government. These decisions were made despite the fact that a U.S. Agency for International Development internal audit report determined that direct grants to civil society organizations were the most effective aspect of democracy assistance to Egypt.<sup>19</sup>

Diplomatic actions by the Obama administration also reinforced the impression that democracy promotion had fallen lower on the U.S. policy agenda with Egypt. In June 2009, President Obama chose to make a major speech to the Muslim world from Cairo, a move that many Egyptians initially greeted with optimism. Obama's message focused on making a new beginning in U.S. relations with Muslim

communities, scarred by the 2001 terrorist attacks and the subsequent war on terror and invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as by the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He mentioned democracy as the fourth of seven issues, saying:

I do have an unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed; confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose. These are not just American ideas; they are human rights. And that is why we will support them everywhere.<sup>20</sup>

Unlike Bush and Rice, however, Obama made no specific mention of the need for democracy or increased respect for human rights in Egypt in his speech. Nor did he raise such issues publicly during the August 18, 2009, visit of President Husni Mubarak to Washington, the first such trip since 2004. During the press availability after their meeting, Obama confined his remarks to Arab-Israeli peace issues, but Mubarak alluded to the fact that Obama had raised Egyptian domestic affairs:

We discussed the issue of reform inside Egypt. And I told to President Obama very frankly and very friendly that I have entered into the elections based 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.<sup>21</sup>

Mubarak thus implied that the issue Obama raised with him was the implementation of Mubarak's 2005 electoral campaign promises, which notably included lifting the state of emergency in place continuously since 1981.

Together, the diplomacy and assistance decisions of the Obama administration constituted an approach to promoting democracy in Egypt that differed from that of its predecessor in several ways. First, Obama would raise issues privately but avoid criticizing publicly (Bush-era officials did both). Second, Obama would address with Mubarak pledges that the Egyptian leader himself had made but not fulfilled, rather than bringing up the demands of Egyptian civil society as Bush had. Third, the Obama administration would diminish or eliminate democracy assistance programs unloved by the Egyptian government. In the words of one Department of State official to this author, "we do not intend to use our assistance to annoy the Egyptian government."<sup>22</sup>

By early 2010, however, the political climate in Egypt had begun to heat up in anticipation of autumn parliamentary elections and a 2010 presidential election, and the relatively low-key approach of the Obama administration began to be tested. The health of Mubarak (who turned 82 in May 2010) seemed precarious following surgery in Europe in March to remove his gallbladder and an unspecified tumor, and it was unclear whether his son Gamal commanded enough support within the ruling establishment to ensure a smooth succession. Former International Atomic Energy Agency director Mohamed ElBaradei appeared on the scene as a figure possibly capable of galvanizing the disparate Egyptian opposition, gathering a broad following among young people, civil society, and secular opposition groups. Expressing disappointment that the rhetoric of Obama's Cairo speech had not been followed by effective action to promote democracy, members of Egyptian civil society became increasingly critical of the new U.S. approach. "Obama wants change that won't make the Egyptian government angry. . . . And in the Egyptian context, that means there will be no change," said the NGO leader Ahmad Samih.<sup>23</sup>

Whereas senior U.S. officials generally remained silent on the subject, the Obama administration began to issue some criticisms of the Egyptian government and mention the need for a freer political process in early 2010 after several incidents in which peaceful protestors were detained and abused. The State Department spokesman P. J. Crowley said on March 2, for example, that

I think we would like to see the emergence of a more inclusive political process in Egypt, and one that is competitive and provides the opportunity for more citizens in Egypt to both participate in the process and have faith and opportunity to shape the future of governance in that country.

The U.S. administration issued a stronger criticism when the government of Egypt, on May 11, 2010, renewed the state of emergency for another two years. Secretary Clinton termed the renewal "regrettable,"<sup>24</sup> and the White House spokesman Robert Gibbs issued a somewhat stiffer statement, saying that the United States was "disappointed" and that the Egyptian government had "missed an opportunity" to signal its embrace of universal values and civil liberties.<sup>25</sup> The administration apparently reacted to the state of emergency extension this strongly because it represented an explicit failure of Obama's strategy of private, respectful engagement; Mubarak had

refused to do exactly what Obama discussed with him during the Egyptian leader's August 2009 Oval Office meeting.

Obama administration officials faced another disappointment when the government of Egypt turned down U.S. urging that it allow international observers and domestic monitors access to polling for the November 28, 2010 elections. Those elections turned out to be the most troubled Egypt had held in at least a decade, with groups such as Human Rights Watch reporting that opposition candidate representatives and supporters were barred from polling stations and journalists were subject to harassment and violence.<sup>26</sup> Opposition parties and independent candidates were so unhappy with the process that several parties decided weeks in advance to boycott the elections, and those that did participate (including the venerable Wafd Party and the banned Muslim Brotherhood, which ran candidates as independents) boycotted the runoff round and surrendered the few seats they had won in protest. The U.S. National Security Council issued a statement expressing "disappointment" with the "numerous reported irregularities," lack of international observers, impediments to domestic monitoring, and restrictions on basic freedoms of association, speech, and press leading up to and during the elections.<sup>27</sup>

## REVOLUTION AND BEYOND

Dissatisfaction with the government, Mubarak, and the ruling party among the Egyptian public was high following the November 2010 elections, but protest demonstrations petered out after a few days. Egypt might well have remained quiet until the summer of 2011 (when there most likely would have been strong protests in advance of the presidential election planned for September) had the Tunisian uprising not succeeded in overturning the 28-year rule of President Zine Abidine Ben Ali on January 14, 2011. Within a few days, several Egyptian protest organizations used Facebook to mobilize support for a "Day of Anger" on January 25, which succeeded beyond their wildest dreams.

In the tense three weeks that followed, U.S. official rhetoric on the uprising gradually shifted, from Secretary of State Clinton's January 26 statement that the Egyptian government was "stable" and looking for ways to respond to the aspirations of its people, to calls for the Mubarak government to carry out political reform, to Obama's call less than a week later for a "meaningful" transition that "must begin now." Two consistent themes in U.S. rhetoric that emerged during the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings were that authorities

should not use force against peaceful demonstrators and that citizens in Arab countries should enjoy rights protected under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. U.S. rhetoric about whether demonstrators' demands—including for the removal of leaders—were legitimate and needed to be met varied much more from one situation to another and sometimes from one day to another.

What proved particularly useful as the Egyptian crisis deepened were U.S. government contacts with the top leadership of the Egyptian military, which quickly emerged as the ultimate arbiter. Protesters tried to make common cause with the armed forces—as distinct from the police and internal security services—from the beginning, chanting repeatedly that “the people and the army are one,” decorating tanks with flowers, and offering handshakes and hugs to soldiers. The United States, which had given the Egyptian military tens of billions of dollars over more than three decades, used its close relations with key players such as Defense Minister Muhammad Hussein Tantawi and Chief of Staff Sami Anan to urge the military to find a peaceful exit to the situation. This was largely successful, although in the end more than 300 Egyptians were killed in the uprising.

In the new era that began in February 2011, the United States and Egypt will need to find their way to a new relationship. If Egypt ends the period of military rule that began with Mubarak's removal and proceeds toward a democratic transition that includes a new constitution and free and fair elections for the parliament and president, that new relationship might be more durable than the previous alliance because it would be based on shared values as well as interests. But Egypt's transition will unfold over years, not months, and among the demons of the old era to be exorcised are not only corruption, human rights abuses, and political repression but also a widespread public sense that the United States exacted a price for its support, preventing Egypt from playing its rightful role as regional leader. Future Egyptian governments are likely to be far more responsive to public opinion on foreign policy issues than was Mubarak, and Washington might well have to grow a thicker skin. Two issues of particular concern to the United States will be Egyptian adherence to the 1979 peace treaty with Israel and the building of a non-religious democratic order in which many political forces, including Islamists, may play but in which the rights of all citizens (including women and non-Muslims) are protected.

The Obama administration's initial demotion of democracy promotion in Egypt and perceived slowness in responding to the January revolution has also created a new sense of resentment in Egypt that

will need to be overcome. Secretary Clinton discovered this during her first post-uprising trip to Egypt in March 2011, when a group of youth activists refused to meet with her due to her early statements on the uprising. Google executive-turned-activist Wael Ghonim tweeted tartly on March 15, 2011: “Dear Hillary Clinton, thanks to the Internet, we can search for anyone’s quotes within any period of time. Did you ever try this?”<sup>28</sup>

When Egyptians write their own history of the revolution, it is not clear whether they will say that the United States did or did not support them. What is clear is that once again Egypt has become central to U.S. interests in the region. As change sweeps the region, the Obama administration has come to realize that it must support the establishment of successful democracies in Arab countries in which citizens have overthrown autocratic leaders, despite the well-known risks. The alternatives—failed states that become havens for terrorists, theocratic regimes, or military dictatorships that would eventually bring more popular unrest—are too painful to contemplate. And Egypt, to borrow a phrase from the recent financial crisis, is too big to fail. The success or failure of democracy in Egypt will have a tremendous ripple effect throughout the Arab world and beyond.

The challenge for the United States over the next several years will be determining how to support Egypt’s transition. While traditional democracy assistance such as training for new political parties, electoral administration, civic education, etc. will certainly be needed, economic assistance to help create jobs and get Egypt back on a sound path to economic growth and development is likely to prove just as crucial.

## NOTES

1. President Barack Obama, February 1, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/02/01/remarks-president-situation-egypt>, accessed March 25, 2011.
2. President Barack Obama, February 11, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/02/11/remarks-president-egypt>, accessed March 25, 2011.
3. Readout of the President’s calls to discuss Egypt, February 12, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/02/12/readout-presidents-calls-discuss-egypt>, accessed March 25, 2011.
4. Population estimate is from the CIA World Factbook (July 2011 estimate), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html>, accessed March 25, 2011. OIC member states with populations larger than Egypt’s are Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nigeria.

5. Ibid.
6. CIA World Factbook, estimated compiled populations of Arab states as of July 2011.
7. For a detailed yearly breakdown, see Jeremy M. Sharp, "Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations," CRS Report for Congress, September 2, 2009, pp. 34–35.
8. See Jon B. Alterman, *Egypt and American Foreign Assistance, 1952–56: Hopes Dashed* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).
9. See Warren Bass, *Support Any Friend* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 39–46.
10. Bass, *Support Any Friend*, 98–135.
11. See, for example, Dan Eldar, "Egypt and Israel: A Reversible Peace," *Middle East Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (2003): 57–65.
12. President George W. Bush, remarks at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy, November 6, 2003, [www.ned.org/george-w-bush/remarks-by-president-george-w-bush-at-the-20th-anniversary](http://www.ned.org/george-w-bush/remarks-by-president-george-w-bush-at-the-20th-anniversary), accessed March 25, 2011.
13. Stephen McInerney, "The Federal Budget and Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2010: Democracy, Governance, and Human Rights in the Middle East," Project on Middle East Democracy, Washington, DC, July 2009, p. 26. Also see Sharp, "Egypt," 32.
14. Secretary Condoleezza Rice, remarks at the American University in Cairo, June 20, 2005.
15. Secretary Condoleezza Rice, remarks with the Egyptian foreign minister Aboul Gheit after their meeting, October 3, 2006, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/73525.htm>, accessed March 25, 2011.
16. White House Archives, "President Bush Attends World Economic Forum," May 18, 2008, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/05/20080518-6.html>, accessed March 25, 2011.
17. For more on the Bush administration record on democracy promotion in the Middle East, see Michele Dunne, "The Baby, the Bathwater, and the Freedom Agenda in the Middle East," *Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2009): 129–141.
18. McInerney, "Federal Budget and Appropriations," 26.
19. Office of Inspector General, U.S. Agency for International Development, "Audit of USAID/Egypt's Democracy and Governance Activities," Audit Report No. 6-263-10-001P, October 27, 2009, p. 9.
20. President Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President on a New Beginning," Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt, June 4, 2009, [www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09), accessed March 25, 2011.
21. President Barack Obama, "Remarks by President Obama and President Mubarak of Egypt During Press Availability," August 18, 2009, [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/), accessed March 25, 2011.



22. Author conversation with U.S. Department of State official, January 27, 2009.
23. "US Aid Cut Hits Egypt Democracy Groups," Associated Press, April 18, 2010, [www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36628581/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36628581/), accessed August 5, 2010.
24. Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Egypt's Renewal of State of Emergency," U.S. Department of State, May 11, 2010, [www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/05/141736.htm](http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/05/141736.htm), accessed March 25, 2011.
25. "Statement of Press Secretary Robert Gibbs on Egypt's Renewal of State of Emergency," May 11, 2010, [www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/statement-press-secretary-robert-gibbs-egypts-renewal-state-emergency](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/statement-press-secretary-robert-gibbs-egypts-renewal-state-emergency), accessed March 25, 2011.
26. Human Rights Watch, "Elections Marred as Opposition Barred from Polls," November 29, 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/11/29/egypt-elections-marred-opposition-barred-polls>, accessed March 25, 2011.
27. Statement by NSC Spokesman Mike Hammer, November 30, 2010, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/11/30/statement-nsc-spokesman-mike-hammer>, accessed March 25, 2011.
28. Twitter, Wael Ghonim, March 15, 2011, 10:20 am, <http://twitter.com/Ghonim/status/47723742729736193> accessed March 25, 2011.

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIAN  
AUTHORITY: RESIGNING TO  
STATUS QUO

*Beverley Milton-Edwards*

In March 2010, U.S. vice president Joe Biden stood by Israeli prime minister Netanyahu in Jerusalem and was lauded as Israel's friend, symbolizing, the "unbreakable bond" between Israel and the U.S. administration headed by President Barack Obama. The purpose of Biden's visit was to provide impetus to the Israeli and Palestinian leadership as the U.S. president's team sought to breathe life into an expiring peace process.

The bond that Netanyahu referred to, however, would be severely tested within hours of the meeting when an official in his government announced that Israel would commence construction of 1,600 housing units in Jerusalem on land that the international community officially viewed as occupied territories. The announcement was considered an act of pure defiance in the face of the Obama administration's call to halt illegal settlement building—considered fundamental to reviving peace negotiations with the Palestinians.

Vice President Biden condemned the Israeli announcement, declaring that it undermined trust "at a time when we should all be building some trust." In private, Obama administration officials fumed at the perceived insult to the vice president that Netanyahu's government appeared to deliver with the announcement of the settlements. Signaling an ongoing breach in U.S.-Israeli relations as well as attempts to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this indicated the start of an unusual power struggle as the Obama administration attempts peace mediation. In this chapter, the legacy of foreign policy relations inherited by the Obama administration and the developing

position of the administration toward U.S. relations in the Middle East region, as well as concepts of power, are addressed. Along with these issues, the extent to which the bond between Israel and the United States had been tested and its implications for the Palestinian Authority (PA), led by President Mahmoud Abbas, are examined.

## HAND IN GLOVE: THE TWO-PLUS-ONE OPTION

The main characteristics of the U.S. policy toward Israel and the PA prior to the Obama presidency were determined by the core relationship between Israel and the United States—more commonly referred to as the “special relationship.”<sup>1</sup> Throughout the existence of the Israeli state, it has enjoyed significant support from the United States.<sup>2</sup> Even after the war of 1967, when Israel occupied Palestinian territories and commenced the construction of illegal settlements in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, the United States continued to extend more economic and military aid, loans, and assistance to it than to any other country in the world.<sup>3</sup>

Over the decades, this bond has been institutionalized and reflected throughout the American political system as well as more broadly in the United States, where sympathies for Israel have been strong and crystallized around assumptions that the country is an “island of democracy” in a region of hostile and violent Arab-Muslim neighbors.<sup>4</sup> Israel, in this respect, “plays an outsized role in U.S. politics and diplomacy,” which Kurtzer and Lasensky describe as a “fact of life that transcends party politics and carries over from one administration to the next.”<sup>5</sup> Hence, the United States rather than Israel is sometimes understood as being constrained by this relationship in the context of negotiating peace with the Palestinians. Rarely is the relationship seen as a lever that could be employed by the more powerful partner, and the Bush administration is critiqued for reducing its credibility as a peace broker.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the effectiveness of “soft power” practices is limited and the effectiveness of hard-power practices is extended through support for Israel’s military actions against the Palestinian opponent. In the past, this was explicable by reference to the cold war, by superpower rivalry, and by the need for local proxies. In the two decades since the United States emerged as the global superpower, it has been more difficult to explain unless one also reviews the U.S. connection to the other parties to the conflict—the Palestinians.<sup>7</sup>

The Palestinians and their political leaders have largely endured a pariah status. U.S. perceptions of the Arabs, and more specifically

Palestinian Arabs, are created by an absent narrative that began in 1918 and in part continues to the present. Christison contends that “for the vast majority of Americans . . . Palestinians have never had a history; they were never there until . . . they began preying on Israel.”<sup>8</sup> When Palestinian-Arabs did enter the U.S. consciousness, they were singularly defined as either refugees or terrorists. The history of sympathy for Israel and antipathy toward the Palestinians remains largely unaddressed in terms of systemic impacts on policymaking by various administrations determining conceptions of the two peoples and the politics of conflict, resistance, and resolution. Israel has enjoyed more than 60 years of recognition from the United States and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) less than 20.

Despite the 1993 Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO, including the famous handshake between the Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and the PLO leader Yasser Arafat, it was less than a decade before the U.S. administration under President Bush was once again aligning with Israel in declaring that the PLO chief was the single obstacle to a peace deal mediated by the United States.<sup>9</sup> The transformation in U.S. policy consciousness of Palestinians from terrorist to peacemakers was disrupted by predominant media portrayal—even in the Oslo peace-era years—of Palestinian terrorist violence as it was manifest in suicide bombing attacks against Israelis. Palestinian spoiler violence was represented as reflecting the mainstream at a time when support for a negotiated final-status peace agreement with Israel was never higher.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, under Presidents Clinton and Bush, it was always a matter of explaining U.S. failings by allowing the blame to be placed on the Palestinians for peace process shortcomings rather than on any other party.<sup>11</sup>

The United States has promoted itself as an honest broker in terms of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, but even its own officials acknowledged that, in fact, bias toward Israel and against the Palestinians has stymied such attempts. “For far too long,” wrote former official Aaron Miller, “many American officials . . . have acted as Israel’s attorney, catering and coordinating with the Israelis at the expense of successful negotiations.”<sup>12</sup> In sum, Israel and the United States, under successive American presidents, have enjoyed a cooperative, enduring, and “special” relationship. The same cannot be argued of the Palestinians in this two-plus-one formula. The Palestinians have always been the outsiders, in a perpetual quest for recognition of their rights from the United States. They remain a disempowered other in a triangular relationship. U.S. governments have struggled to align that issue of recognition of Palestinian rights over the prior

claim and prior relationship with Israel. This is a relationship embedded and ingrained through common ideological, cultural, economic, military, strategic, religious, and geopolitical bonds, which have been significantly difficult for Palestinian political leaders to surmount.<sup>13</sup>

### PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE LET ME GET WHAT I WANT: UNDER BUSH

The fusion between U.S. national interest and support for Israel became more pertinent in terms of the wider U.S. Middle East policy under the Bush administration (2000–2008) as it became embroiled in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Iranian nuclear issue, counterterrorism, the War on Terror, and democracy promotion.<sup>14</sup> Despite these issues—and the need, therefore, to reconsider U.S.-Arab alliances—U.S. security concerns in the wider region were still tempered by its primary relationship with Israel. Questioning the power dynamics of this relationship, Mearsheimer and Walt asked,

Why has the U.S. been so willing to set aside its own security...in order to advance the interests of another state? One might assume that the bond between the two countries was based on shared strategic interests or compelling moral imperatives, but neither explanation can account for the remarkable level of material and diplomatic support that the U.S. provides [Israel].<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, under President Bush, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was largely deemphasized in terms of the wider ordering of U.S. interest in the Middle East region. Bush did not pick up the peacemaking baton dropped by Clinton in the dying days of his presidency; throughout the eight years spent in the White House, he and his officials were wary of forcefully promoting a peace process that would have compelled concessions from Israelis, who at the same time were enduring suicide attacks perpetrated by Palestinian groups.<sup>16</sup> The stalemate of aggression—including Israel's continuing occupation and disproportionate tally of violence against Palestinian civilians—left the Bush administration disinclined to active peace promotion, which would fundamentally address the powerful asymmetry between the two sides. Mead refers to “a string of poor policy choices by the Bush administration,” making “a bad situation significantly worse,” with impacts on moderate pro-peace leaders in the region.<sup>17</sup>

True, in the last years of the Bush presidency, there did appear to be an attempt to create a new dynamic. Diplomatic moves born out

of the passing of Yasser Arafat—who was replaced by “negotiation-friendly” Mahmoud Abbas—encouraged initiatives such as the 2007 Annapolis peace talks. Conversely, the Bush presidency was publicly appalled at the results of the January 2006 elections, which brought Hamas to power and ousted its nationalist rivals in Fatah. Despite a democratic victory, the U.S. administration moved to curtail Hamas.<sup>18</sup> Further, the Bush administration refused to condemn Israel’s targeted assassinations of Palestinian leaders and the large number of civilian casualties that such actions incurred. Instead, a preference for the Palestinian West Bank leadership of the PA, mainly Fatah and smaller secular national parties, quickly became apparent within the White House; this set course for relations continued under the Obama presidency.

The zero-sum formula of Bush’s presidency took the form of the United States’ demand for Palestinians to reject Palestinian Islamism and all that it represented (including the reform and anticorruption agenda) and instead to embrace the PLO’s Fatah (despite its record of maladministration, corruption, and nepotism). Presidential visioning at this stage was predicated on improvements to the Palestinian economy, reorganization of the Palestinian security sector (with assistance of the U.S. Security Coordinator), and a strategy against Hamas. Hamas-controlled Gaza would continue to be excluded until the mechanisms of economic deprivation exerted by Israel through blockade and with the support of the international community resulted in internal collapse of the Islamist regime there.

For the Bush administration, these policies would be considered sufficient to end a presidency on. The Annapolis “peace” conference in late 2007 appeared to signal U.S. engagement with peace negotiations. In reality, the last two years of the Bush administration were typified by Hamas’s consolidation of power in Gaza, continuing Palestinian disunity, and an absence of U.S. leverage over Fatah to sign up to a reconciliation deal with Hamas. In the West Bank, President Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad presided over an administration that was allowed to work with the United States. Israeli settlement expansion continued unabated, and a diplomatic stalemate prevailed. Indeed, in the dying days of the Bush era, as Israel exercised hard military power against the Gaza Strip in Operation Cast Lead (leaving over 1,300 Palestinians and 9 Israelis dead), evidence of U.S. soft power through diplomatic measures and calls for a ceasefire was barely palpable. The Bush tilt toward Israel, emphasizing the ideological neoconservative sympathies of the administration, undermined the legitimacy of previous U.S. claims to

“balanced” mediation of peace efforts. Furthermore, it served to further radicalize certain constituencies—including formerly moderate voices—against the United States. The appeal of radical elements in the Middle East—jihadist<sup>19</sup> and others—grew amid the mass populations’ perception of unbiased U.S. treatment of Israel at the expense of the Palestinians. This was Obama’s inheritance.

### THIS CHARMING MAN: OBAMA’S NEW POSITION AND LIMITATIONS

There was some degree of optimism that the new Democrat presidency led by a man who promised “Yes, We Can” would mean new life would be breathed into Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking. Although for the large part Obama had avoided falling into the foreign policy trap of commenting extensively during presidential campaigning on policy articulation or visioning around the resolution of the conflict, there was a widespread hope that—for a variety of reasons—there would be a change. A deeper examination of the reasons why there was new hope abroad, however, demonstrates what might be termed a “rune-effect” borne out of desperation in some quarters for conflict resolution and for settlement to proceed. Expectations were raised further when the new president and his secretary of state announced on January 22, 2009, the appointment of the former senator George Mitchell as his new special envoy for the Middle East. This was seen as encouraging; Mitchell had been fundamental to the Northern Ireland peace process in 1998, culminating in the Belfast Agreement on power sharing, decommissioning, and the end of a bitter civil war. Mitchell had a track record and had also successfully headed the 2001 committee that investigated the outbreak of the second Palestinian Intifada. Mitchell’s appointment was perceived as signaling the importance that the new administration attached to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its resolution. Amid impatience for action on the ground, Mitchell initially declared he was in “listening” mode. Nevertheless, President Obama’s keystone Cairo speech of June 2009—when he declared, “so let there be no doubt: the situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable. America will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity, and a state of their own”—was read positively in some circles.<sup>20</sup>

Israel, for its part, also under the leadership of a new prime minister and a right-wing coalition government, mobilized to counteract the positive diplomatic speak about the Palestinians. The Israelis were alarmed further when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called for a

settlement freeze. This was an early indication of a different stance from the Bush administration, which had largely remained silent in its criticism of Israeli settlement building. There was evidence of emerging difficulties in the relationship that, to some extent, was unprecedented. The U.S.-Israel alliance was coming under significant strain—epitomized by posturing, reactions, and positions on an increasingly uncompromising and unilateral stance taken by Netanyahu's government on settlements, conflict resolution, security, the blockade of Gaza, geostrategic concerns in the Middle East, and Iran.<sup>21</sup>

The strains epitomize a power struggle over a key dimension of Israel's visioning of itself as a state and as a regional actor. This is a vision that is at odds with a new and emerging consensus within the Obama administration, which has begun to question Israel's value as a strategic asset in the region when the U.S. national interest has to be so finely calibrated against other demands.<sup>22</sup> In light of events in Egypt in 2011 moreover that national interest would need further calibration in terms of U.S. alliances across the Middle East region. The Israeli settlements in Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, are a touchstone for the government of Netanyahu. The Obama administration also now considered settlements the key to progress in the peace process with the Palestinians. The Israeli decision to focus on settler expansion in occupied East Jerusalem also hit a nerve that goes deeper than the power struggle unfolding between a new president and a battle-hardened veteran of Israeli politics. Ever since 1993, when the Oslo Accords were signed between Israel and the Palestinians, the United States has acknowledged and recognized the status of Jerusalem, along with the dismantling of the settlements as an inviolable item on the agenda for a peace agreement. The fact that Israel has been prepared to defy the United States and at the same time embarrass its vice president over this issue has soured relations. As the country was a regional actor, Israel's call over Iran struck a firm chord with the Bush administration but again has been questioned by elements within the new administration of President Obama who wish to contain Israel in this context and to enjoy the strategic lead that the United States itself believes it should have.

The Palestinian leadership has been marginalized from this power struggle, bystanders to the diplomatic spat. A domestically beleaguered Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, and his prime minister, Salam Fayyad, have instead preoccupied themselves with meeting security reform commitments (supported by the presence of the U.S. Security Coordinator, General Keith Dayton) and with a plan to



prepare for statehood within two years. The continuing failure to achieve a national reconciliation pact between Fatah and Hamas is both a blessing and a curse to the notion of a revived peace process with Israel and the role that the United States might play. There is little if any evidence of an appetite in the Obama administration to encourage Hamas into a domestic power-sharing arrangement with Fatah. Despite one largely unpublicized encounter between Hamas and a low-level U.S. State Department official, the Obama administration has not indicated it is ready to listen or talk to a movement that remains proscribed as a terrorist organization in the United States.<sup>23</sup> The Obama administration has maintained its position on this situation by reiterating its call for Hamas to abide by the international Quartet statement of March 2006 when it called on them to—renounce violence and recognize Israel and the terms of previously signed peace agreements between Israel and the PLO. In this respect, the legacy remains intact, along with the traditional limitations imposed on diplomatic stances toward peace negotiations in this most intractable of conflicts. There is little by way of evidence to show that new means and forms of engagement, dialogue, and action have been explored to rethink the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its resolution.<sup>24</sup> The default position regarding the international Quartet demands on Hamas have proved inviolable on this issue, thus severely limiting the maneuverability of the Obama administration. Even Israel's deadly commando assault on a humanitarian flotilla in international waters as it sought to break the Gaza blockade did not alter this U.S. demand. While the blockade was eased, the Obama administration remained content to let Israel conduct its own investigation into the incident.

Palestinians remained skeptical about Obama's apparent interest in helping them secure statehood and independence from Israel, the occupying power. A poll in April 2010 highlighted that only 9.9 percent believe Obama would bring a peace settlement.<sup>25</sup> Israeli officials were also skeptical of U.S. efforts to encourage concessions and yielding from the Palestinian side. They were concerned about the long-term effects, for example, of U.S. programs that assisted with the empowering of PA security forces in the West Bank at the expense of the Israel Defence Force's (IDF) own mission there. This skepticism drew on lessons learned within the Israeli military establishment about the limits of partnership with Palestinian security forces in the wake of Operation Defensive Shield in 2002.<sup>26</sup> Hence, U.S. support under Obama for West Bank "security reform" has been influenced by the belief that this will address one of Israel's primary concerns—security

to the point that it will be rewarded by Israel in terms of a concession over settlement building. For Israel, this equation does not work. Good security performance by the Palestinians—in other words, stopping Palestinian terror attacks against Israel and eradicating the perpetual Islamist threat—is a precondition for the resumption of negotiations and not for making major concessions vis-à-vis conflict settlement. The security dimension of the policy inherited by Obama, then, does not pay off in terms of the exercise of American leverage because of Israeli disinclination.

Furthermore, the Palestinian leadership in the West Bank, as damagingly revealed in the leak to international media of the “Palestine Papers” in 2011, is forced to continue to recognize its dependence on the presence of the Obama administration in their domestic affairs and in relation to Israel. They recognize that they are unable to tackle Israel without U.S. support, and yet the closer they tie themselves to this, the greater the distance in terms of other relationships with both internal and regional constituencies. Hamas, for example, used the close relationship among President Abbas, Prime Minister Fayyad, and Washington as a powerful propaganda tool in its battle against Israel. The Palestinian leadership, under Abbas, has to convince Washington to in turn put pressure on Israel to yield in order for the end goal of statehood to be realized. The structural problem with this dynamic confronted the Obama administration as it attempted to activate a diplomatic process and an outcome that are different from the failed legacy of its predecessor. Bush had obscured the essentials of peace, fiddling at the margins with local security reform and training support, initiatives for relieving economic stasis in the West Bank as a result of Israel’s closure, and checkpoint policies instead of tackling substantives.

### BACK TO THE OLD HOUSE: U.S. POWER AND THE POLICY OF CHANGE?

As the first-year anniversary of the Obama presidency approached, there was little cause for optimism in relation to the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>27</sup> Palestinian hope in Obama’s policies, as epitomized by Senator George Mitchell’s appointment as special envoy, had peaked early and subsequently crashed. Peace negotiations did resume in September 2010 but quickly stalled. The Palestinian national leadership was in crisis, and President Abbas announced he would not stand for reelection. Internal squabbles in Fatah led to a withholding of support for Abbas as he went to peace talks. The attempt

by the Obama team to restart direct final-status talks was deteriorating almost as soon as the “talking between Abbas and Netanyahu commenced. By early 2011 the peace process had stalled again.

Bush’s policy of strengthening President Abbas (first as a prime ministerial foil to the autocratic President Arafat) has been maintained by degrees under the Obama government. President Abbas symbolizes the pro-negotiation strand within Palestinian politics, and if his star is ascendant, then Hamas’s descends.<sup>28</sup> For Abbas, however, U.S. support or patronage has become a double-edged sword in terms of constituencies of support within the Palestinian territories and elsewhere in the Arab region. This policy of strengthening has in fact weakened President Abbas. Because Washington has failed to win Israeli concessions on settlements, President Abbas cannot negotiate—he has no constituency of support large enough for him to risk talking to Israel while settlements continue. The United States has not been able to provide the necessary leverage. The Obama administration preconditioned negotiations on a settlement freeze from Israel but did not anticipate the Israeli response.

It is apparent that the Obama administration has attempted to change its policy with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. This in turn has been reflected in the exercise of “soft power” in a more direct fashion in relation to Israel. The consequences of this are apparent in the defiant Israeli stance, which furthermore relies on the structural and deep ties to the United States cemented through the decades-old “special relationship” rather than on a new relationship with a new political administration headed by President Obama. This strategy has become problematic because of the notion of the emerging consensus that Israel’s actions, both domestic and regional, are running at odds with the Petraeus-led perspective of asset versus burden.<sup>29</sup> In the wake of the collapse of the Mubarak regime in Egypt, the United States has to calibrate its relation with Israel along with other pro-Western Arab actors in the region much more carefully.

The Palestinian leadership of President Abbas and the West Bank government of the PA led by Salam Fayyad remain shackled rather than empowered in the face of pressures from local constituencies in relation to current U.S. policy and the ties to Israel. This has, to a certain extent, undermined the legitimacy of the Ramallah-based regime. The Palestinian leadership has yielded to U.S.-Israel demands and preconditions for proximity peace talks, but the United States, under Obama, appears to have failed to persuade Israel to yield in return. The Obama administration has remained firm in its commitment to maintain Israel’s security, but it has attempted to temper that

with its own security assessments in terms of U.S. interests in the wider Middle East. From this perspective, the linkage is still determined as important; conflict settlement between Israel and the Palestinians is significant in the ordering of U.S. relations with Arab regimes to which in turn it needs to have behind it as the policy toward Iran in terms of both Tehran's regional and nuclear ambitions appear in ever starker relief for the United States under the Obama presidency.

Hence, the limitations of Obama's power have become apparent. A serious difference has become noticeable in U.S.-Israeli relations over strategic visioning, but it has yet to engender significant opportunities for the Palestinian leadership. Israel's unilateralism now appears to strike a negative chord with the Obama administration. Each of the above issues reflects a readjustment in policy that points to different strategic trajectories and approaches to conflict management and power relations within the region. The United States—under Obama—is attempting to transit away from the exercise of hard power and its outcomes across the region; and there would no better expression of this than in the mediation of a negotiated resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict—the ultimate soft-power trophy. The repercussions for the United States would be manifold for other strategic issues. This approach has signaled a desire to break with the hard-power approach of the Bush era and its consequences in terms of regional hostilities and threats to the United States. Israel, on the other hand (and particularly under the leadership of PM Netanyahu and a rightist coalition), remains tied to hard-power concepts with respect to both in terms of its Palestinian neighbors and its regional strategy, whether in relation to near neighbors such as Hizbullah in Lebanon, to the Syrian regime, or to those farther afield in Iran. In the case of Iran, Israel has made no secret of its intentions, but it is also argued that the United States should “protect” Israel from Iran as if it were an extension of sovereign American territory.<sup>30</sup>

It has been said that “with alarming regularity since 1967 American presidents have found themselves dealing with Middle East crises for which they were poorly prepared”; in this respect, Obama is no different.<sup>31</sup> Even before inauguration, the challenge of the Israeli-Palestinian issue was there demanding his response. He has acknowledged it as a “vital national security interest” for the United States and is supported in that view by others within the administration, including important power brokers in the Pentagon. The inevitable logic that has emerged is one of linkage—whether in terms of building a regional and international coalition of support against Iran's nuclear program, countering radical Islamism and global jihadi

networks, or democracy promotion, there is a resurgent belief that all these pressures will be partly relieved if there is resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The sense of prioritizing conflict resolution, however, is not apparent in the Netanyahu government. Most of the parties to this coalition did not campaign on a pro-peace negotiation agenda with the Palestinians. Indeed, the key coalition partner, Avigdor Lieberman (leader of *Yisraeli Beiteinu*), is a champion of the settler movement and antinegotiation. The appetite for peace remains among Israelis, but the political concessions that this requires at a time when Israel needs unity in the face of the Iranian threat and other regional threats are not seen as valid.<sup>32</sup> Israel's security debate is oriented less to its Palestinian neighbors and more to Iran and its Hizbullah proxies on Israel's Northern frontier. How Israel wins is a domestic affair, but regarding Iran, Israel's perceived intransigence could hurt its relationship with the United States. In principle, the two governments concur over Iran and the strategy for containment, particularly on the nuclear issues. They tellingly differ over the details. Obama, as with previous U.S. administrations, continues to see an important linkage between Israeli-Palestinian conflict resolution and the maintenance of the Arab coalition behind the United States as it seeks to limit Iran's power. In this respect, Israel and the Palestinian territories are but one theater in which this U.S. policy of containing Iran and the Iranian muscle flexing in return is apparent. The head of the U.S. Central Command, General David Petraeus, reiterated the linkage in a 56-page CENTCOM report in spring 2010, emphasizing the view within the Middle East region that the lack of progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process was hindering the advancement of U.S. strategic goals—particularly in relation to Iran, radical Islamism, and terrorism. Israel turned that logic on its head.<sup>33</sup>

In this respect, President Abbas and the government led by Salam Fayyad in Ramallah are increasingly irrelevant to Israeli orientations. Israel, moreover, rejects the linkage that the United States has made in relation to Iran and the peace process. President Obama and his administration have, however, taken a "stance" and created a degree of linkage to these issues, which, coupled with the diplomatic fallout and tensions in the wake of the Biden visit to Israel in March 2010, make it difficult for a retreat with dignity. The consequences for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process are a continuing stalemate and inertia. The diplomatic ruse of U.S.-proposed proximity talks and rumors of unilateral U.S.-inspired solutions are elements of diplomatic good intentions rather than evidence of a change in strategy.

There was little to indicate—during Obama’s first 18 months in office, when the peace process was considered an important item on the U.S. foreign policy agenda—that when pushed the administration would consider robust leverage on Israel. Yet it is apparent that without it, Israel would not yield and furthermore could be inclined to unilateralism when dealing with the Iranian issue. Whereas the United States has regarded such unilateral military actions against the Palestinians in Gaza unproblematic with respect to U.S. national and strategic interests, it is unlikely that this would be the case should Israel take on Iran. The Obama administration has sought Israel’s collaboration in the coordination of a regional Middle East policy for which the resolution of the conflict with the Palestinians is a major strategic consideration. The Palestinian leadership is considered flexible and yielding at a time when Israel, under the Netanyahu coalition, is increasingly regarded as the opposite.

### THE WAY FORWARD

The Obama administration has faced significant challenges in its attempt to renew the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. In seeking to move away from the legacy of Bush’s hard-power approach to the region, however, it has not yet employed the leverage that it could behind the alternate model of soft power in its relationship with Israel under the premiership of Netanyahu. Furthermore, as the administration develops a consensus around wider Middle East issues, it is not clear whether this will be construed as a positive or a negative development in terms of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its resolution. Much of the early energy expended in pursuit of peace dissipated in the first years of the administration, and the notion of a way forward is unclear. Policy statements and declarations at the start of the presidency have largely failed to materialize with any substantive resumption of meaningful peace negotiations or a change in the status quo of Israeli occupation or Palestinian opposition (including the continued incumbency of the Hamas regime in Gaza) to such peace initiatives.

### NOTES

1. Eytan Gilboa and Efraim Inbar, eds., *US-Israeli Relations in a New Era: Issues and Challenges after 9/11* (Abingdon, England: Routledge, 2009), 4.
2. Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan. Palestine. Iraq* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2004), 77.

3. Jeremy M. Sharp, *US Foreign Aid to Israel* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 2009), 1.
4. Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics of the Middle East* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), 257–259.
5. Daniel Kurtzer and Scott Lasensky, *Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace: American Leadership in the Middle East* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2008), 83.
6. Walter Russel Mead, “Change They Can Believe in, To Make Israel Safe, Give Palestinians Their Due,” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1 (2009): 59.
7. Joseph S. Nye, “The Decline of America’s Soft Power, Why Washington Should Worry,” *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 3 (2004): 16.
8. Kathleen Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine, Their Influence on US Middle East Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 2.
9. Beverley Milton-Edwards and Stephen Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), 97.
10. Khalil Shikaki, “The Peace Process, National Reconstruction and the Transition to Democracy in Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no. 2 (1996): 6.
11. Ahron Bregman, *Elusive Peace: How the Holy Land Defeated America* (London: Penguin, 2005), 223.
12. Aaron David Miller, “Israel’s Lawyer,” *Washington Post* (May 23, 2005), A19.
13. Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999), xiv.
14. Gilles Kepel, *Beyond Terror and Martyrdom: The Future of the Middle East* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 6.
15. John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, “The Israel Lobby,” *London Review of Books* 28, no. 6 (2006): 3.
16. Beverley Milton-Edwards, *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, A People’s War* (Abingdon, England: Routledge, 2009), 156.
17. Mead, “Change They Can Believe in,” 59.
18. Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas*, 283–284.
19. Beverley Milton-Edwards, “Political Islam and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict,” *Israel Affairs* 12, no. 1 (2006): 84.
20. President Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President on a New Beginning,” Cairo University, Egypt, June 4, 2009, [www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09). (Accessed on 15 February 2011).
21. Geoffrey Aronson, “The Obama Administration Talks Tough,” *Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories* 20, no. 2 (2010): 6.
22. Rebecca Anna Stoil, “Dagan: Israel Less of a Strategic Asset for the US,” *Jerusalem Post*, June 1, 2010, should be compared with Joe Stork, “Israel as Strategic Asset,” *Middle East Research and Information Project*, May 1982: 3–13.

23. Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas*, 164–166.
24. Jeremy Kinsman, “The Gaza Conflict, the Obama Factor and the Endless Search for Peace in the Middle East,” *Policy Options*, March 2009: 55.
25. Avi Issacharoff, “Obama Polls Poorly in PA; Abbas’ Support Growing,” *Haaretz* (Israel), April 22, 2010.
26. Sergio Catignani, “The Strategic Impasse in Low-Intensity Conflicts: The Gap between Israeli Counter-insurgency Strategy and Tactics during the Al-Aqsa Intifada,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 1 (2005): 57; and Clive Jones, “One Size Fits All, Israel, Intelligence and the Al Aqsa Intifada,” *POLIS Working Paper*, Leeds, 2004, p. 23.
27. Aaron David Miller, “The False Religion of Mideast Peace,” *Foreign Policy*, May/June 2010: 1.
28. Ilan Peleg and Paul Scham, “Historical Breakthroughs in Arab-Israeli Negotiations: Lessons for the Future,” *Middle East Journal* 64, no. 2 (2010): 225.
29. Saad Jawad, “A Taboo Being Challenged in Washington,” *Bitter Lemons* 9, no. 8 (2010). (Accessed on 15 February 2011).
30. Amitai Etzioni, “Israel: Samson’s Children,” *Society* 46, no. 6 (2009): 477.
31. William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2005), 415.
32. Peleg and Scham, “Historical Breakthroughs,” 223.
33. Mark Perry, “The Petraeus Briefing: Biden’s Embarrassment Not the Whole Story,” *Foreign Policy*, March 13, 2010.





## THE MAGHREB: STRATEGIC INTERESTS

*Yahia H. Zoubir*

Since the 1990s, numerous analysts in France and in the Maghreb have been concerned that the United States is showing too much interest in the Maghreb region.<sup>1</sup> There were suspicions that the United States, in fact, wished to displace French influence in this area. But what has really happened? What are the United States' interests in the Maghreb? Is it true that the United States wishes to eliminate French and European influence in the Maghreb? Is it true that a conspicuous U.S. presence aims at countering the growing Chinese and Russian influence in the region? Is it also true that the United States—through various programs, such as the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and the Millennium Challenge Account—seeks to undermine European initiatives, such as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Process), replaced by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in 2008? The main argument in this chapter is that U.S. interest in the Maghreb region has grown considerably and that, in terms of regional security, Washington has already downgraded Europe's (mainly France's) influence in what it now considers a strategic area for the United States following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. If in the 1990s, transatlantic relations in the area were more complementary than competitive,<sup>2</sup> it has become obvious that the United States now plays a role of leadership in the area of security. This chapter analyzes the evolution of U.S. policy toward the Maghreb. One of the objectives is to demonstrate that President Barack Obama is consolidating the policy that his predecessor President George W. Bush pursued for the region. When Barack Obama became president of the United States

in January 2009, there were widespread expectations that he would pursue a less militaristic, more multilateral, and much more cooperative policy than that of President Bush. There was also anticipation that he would push for genuine democratization and thus put pressure on authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to implement concrete democratic reforms. Following the 9/11 events, the United States urged Arab regimes to democratize; however, it became obvious after Hamas's 2006 democratic electoral victory in Palestine that the United States, and Europe for that matter, would prefer authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes to Islamist-oriented ones. This is why expectations were high in the MENA that Obama's policy would make good governance and democracy an essential part of U.S. foreign policy. Although it is still relatively early to assess whether there has been a major shift in U.S. policy toward the Middle East in general and toward the Maghreb in particular, a close examination demonstrates that continuity rather than change characterizes U.S. policy toward the Maghreb and that security issues predominate over questions of democracy and good governance. In May 2010, the administration unveiled the National Security Strategy; in the strategy, it stated,

The United States supports the expansion of democracy and human rights abroad because governments that respect these values are more just, peaceful, and legitimate. We also do so because their success abroad fosters an environment that supports America's national interests. Political systems that protect universal rights are ultimately more stable, successful, and secure. As our history shows, the United States can more effectively forge consensus to tackle shared challenges when working with governments that reflect the will and respect the rights of their people, rather than just the narrow interests of those in power.<sup>3</sup>

Although this statement reflects the hoped-for changes after eight disastrous years under the Bush administration, as well as Obama's foreign policy orientation before his election, there currently is little evidence in U.S. policy conduct to support the policy declarations enunciated in the National Security Strategy document. Indeed, regardless of the rhetoric about democracy and good governance, security relations remain paramount. For example, military assistance to the Maghreb regimes has continued and, in some instances, has increased. It is safe to argue at the onset that the continuity in policy reflects Obama's genuine belief in the logic of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), or what the new administration soon after its

inauguration relabeled Overseas Contingency Operation.<sup>4</sup> Regardless of which phrase is used, the Obama administration, through its actions, has in many ways pursued the same strategic logic as that of the second-term Bush administration. In other words, the ideological foundations of U.S. policy have in many ways remained the same. An analysis of U.S. policy toward the Maghreb and its contiguous region, the Sahel, corroborates this observation. This analysis focuses on the period before the Arab “revolutions” that have taken place since early 2011 which resulted in the fall of the dictators in Tunisia and Egypt. The wave of uprisings has compelled the Obama administration to adopt a reactive policy that supports an “orderly transition to democracy” and “support for the people.”<sup>5</sup> As of yet, though, no consistent foreign policy has been articulated.

### THE UNITED STATES AND THE MAGHREB: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although for decades it had been marginal to American interests, the Maghreb has definitely become a region of strategic significance. Not only has the search for energy become a paramount objective, but the events of 9/11 have played a critical factor in persuading U.S. policy makers to establish a presence in the Maghreb and its neighboring Sahel region. The expansion of the Al Qaeda network into the Maghreb-Sahel region compelled the United States to devise a number of security measures to counter the suspected threats emanating from the sizable, vastly barren, not fully controlled area. As is seen in this chapter, the United States has instituted many security and military arrangements with the local governments to achieve its objectives. Yet it is uncertain whether the United States has sought to establish its hegemony in this region as it has in the Middle East. The objective here is twofold: (a) identify U.S. interests and analyze how Washington has sought to achieve them and (b) determine whether any major shift in policy toward the region is taking place under the Barack Obama administration.

Throughout the cold war period, the United States in the main paid relatively little attention to the Maghreb, as American policy makers considered that the Maghreb lay within Europe’s zone of influence, France’s in particular. This did not mean, however, that the United States did not have interests in the region or that it was oblivious to events there. Indeed, during certain periods, the United States showed greater economic and political interest. One can cite a few important phases during which the United States became involved

in the Maghreb: the Second World War, the decolonization period in the 1950s and 1960s, the conflict in Western Sahara since 1975, the Algerian crisis in the 1990s, the period since 9/11, and the current period of uprisings against authoritarian regimes long supported by the United States. In spite of its desire to see the formation of an integrated region in North Africa, the United States seldom viewed the Maghreb as a regional entity, notwithstanding its geopolitical importance; Washington preferred to maintain bilateral relations with each state. Bilateral relations with Morocco and with Tunisia had been close since the independence of these two countries in 1956 and have remained so until today.<sup>6</sup> Bilateralism rather than regionalism best characterized U.S. involvement in the Maghreb. The Maghreb as a regional entity was significant only insofar as the events in the area could potentially threaten the stability of Southern Europe, NATO's Southern Flank. Throughout the cold war period, the main objective was curbing communist influence, in particular that of the USSR, and promoting Western interests. In spite of close relations with Morocco and Tunisia, Americans relied on France, the old colonial power, to play the dominant role in the Maghreb. Therefore, until the beginning of the 1990s, there was no American regional policy in the Maghreb. However, following the end of the cold war and the collapse of the Eastern bloc, a regional policy (dictated by the global strategy of the now unrivaled U.S. superpower) seemed to gradually take shape. Thus, in the 1990s, American policy favored the emergence of a regional entity in the Maghreb, an integrated market economy following the concept of "trading blocs" or trade zones. Although Libya was excluded from the plan, the United States considered its eventual integration once relations with that country were normalized. Following full, formal normalization of relations with Libya in 2008, the United States has included Libya in the North Africa Partnership for Economic Opportunity (NAPEO),<sup>7</sup> which has replaced the U.S.-North Africa Economic Partnership, launched in 1999, from which Libya had been excluded.

In the post-cold war period, U.S. interest in the Maghreb increased considerably. This resulted from two major factors: (a) globalization of economic and trade relations and (b) the events of 9/11, not least because members of the Al Qaeda terrorist network, the so-called "Arab Afghans," are of North African origin. By the end of the 1990s, American policy makers were persuaded that the Maghreb was a promising regional economic entity. However, as this chapter shows, the stalemate in Western Sahara has hitherto precluded regional integration because of the tension over the conflict between

the two pillars of the process of integration—Algeria, which supports the independence movement, and Morocco, the occupying power in Western Sahara. Since its inception in 1975, the Western Sahara conflict aggravated tensions in Algerian-Moroccan relations, thus making their economic integration virtually impossible.<sup>8</sup> To this day, the conflict between Morocco and the Sahrawi nationalists remains unsolved. The continued stalemate has not only worsened Algerian-Moroccan relations, accelerated an arms race, and prevented regional integration, but it has also compelled Washington to readjust its policy to adapt to that reality. Although the status quo in Western Sahara has not had a major negative impact on U.S. policy in the region, it has nonetheless severely constrained the security cooperation between Algeria and Morocco, two of the United States' major partners in the fight against international terrorism.

The issue that has kept the most attention of U.S. policy in the Maghreb relates to the Western Sahara conflict.<sup>9</sup> Given the cold war context and America's traditionally close ties with Morocco, the United States used its power to ensure that Morocco would prevail in Western Sahara. Because Algeria was a friend of the USSR, the United States viewed the conflict from a cold war perspective and left no doubt as to what side it was on, regardless of the fact that the question of Western Sahara was (and remains) a decolonization issue and that Sahrawi nationalism received no support from the Soviet Union.

### THE UNITED STATES' BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE MAGHREB STATES

Despite their proclaimed statements about building a unified entity similar to the European Union, the Maghreb states have failed to materialize that vision, even with the creation in 1989 of the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA). Their differences derive from the ideological, political, and economic orientations that the Maghreb states established following their independence from colonial rule. Morocco and Tunisia opted for a pro-Western orientation and thus established close security relations with the Western countries. Algeria, though genuinely nonaligned, established close political and military relations with the socialist countries. Also nonaligned, Libya adopted an anti-Western orientation that brought it at loggerheads with the Western world, the United States in particular, while maintaining strong ties with Moscow to offset Western pressure.<sup>10</sup> Enmity between the United States and Libya took on serious proportions in the 1980s.

Even if the United States welcomed an integrated Maghreb, especially economically, it has always favored bilateral relations over a regional policy.

### Morocco

Given their historic ties, coupled with the ideological and political affinities that bound the two countries, it is not surprising that Morocco occupied a strategic position in U.S. policy toward the Maghreb. During the cold war, Morocco played a key role as a proxy for U.S. interests in Africa and the Middle East, dispatching its armed forces to troubled areas and giving the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency (NSA) wide latitude to activate in the kingdom. Notwithstanding the geopolitical transformations that have occurred since the cold war, Morocco has retained its strategic significance for the United States because the monarchy has consistently played a key role on behalf of the United States in various areas. This explains why it has received more U.S. aid than any other Arab country except for Egypt. This aid, which increased manifold during the war between 1976 and 1991, was instrumental in allowing Morocco to continue its illegal occupation of Western Sahara. The United States' assistance to Morocco, though it decreases occasionally, has remained relatively constant. Under the Obama administration, such aid has now extended to yet other allocations, such as the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), through which Morocco received military and security assistance. Actual assistance to Morocco amounted to \$25.2 million. In 2010 security assistance amounted to \$35.3 million. The congressional budget request for fiscal year 2011 was set at \$42.5 million, thus confirming that the U.S. emphasis on military/security assistance under the Obama administration has not abated. In late December 2009, Lockheed Martin (with Washington's support) secured an \$842 million contract to finalize production of 24 new F-16 fighters for the Kingdom of Morocco, as well as for electronic-warfare gear and support equipment. The contract builds on a preliminary \$233 million award Lockheed obtained in June 2008 to start off the construction of the airplane.<sup>11</sup> Although it is true that Algeria in 2006 had purchased considerable hardware to replace and/or upgrade its near-obsolete equipment, the decision of the United States to allow the sale and the financing of sophisticated equipment to Morocco contributed to the arms race in the region.<sup>12</sup>

American concern with the survival of the pro-Western, "moderate" monarchy—as guarantor of the U.S. and Western presence in the

area—has overridden other regional concerns. The emergence of the GWOT after 9/11 bolstered Morocco's standing in U.S. policy, even though neighboring Algeria, whose security and military cooperation has been very effective, is now a strategic partner of the United States in the region. One cannot understand U.S. support for Morocco, which has continued under the Obama administration, without comprehending the historic centrality of Morocco in U.S. policy toward the Maghreb. In the era of globalization, America's support for Morocco is perhaps also related to the acceleration of the economic reforms and the liberalization of the market, which included large-scale privatization, an approach that coincides with one of the American ideological objectives. Also significant is the support in favor of Morocco within the U.S. Congress, mainly because Morocco is regarded as less hostile toward Israel. In spite of human rights violations, the United States did not change its policy toward Morocco, which it often depicts as a model of democracy in the Arab world.

The long-standing ties with Morocco explain why the United States has prevented the emergence of an independent Western Sahara since 1975, espousing instead Morocco's so-called autonomy proposal, on the table since 2007, to a referendum on self-determination as recognized in UN resolutions.<sup>13</sup> Morocco not only enjoys support in the U.S. Congress, but it also benefits from the backing of the pro-Israeli lobby. In 2008 more than 200 congressmen signed a letter supporting Morocco's autonomy plan against independence for Western Sahara. In March 2010, the American Jewish Committee addressed a letter to U.S. senators urging them to support the letter circulated by Senators Diane Feinstein (D-CA) and Kit Bond (R-MO) that advocated endorsement of Morocco's autonomy plan. This letter obtained a positive response from more than half the senators, particularly the most pro-Israeli among them. However, despite this support, the United States has not sought to impose the Moroccan plan because of the implications that this would have on international legality. Another reason, of course, is to avoid alienating Algeria, an important economic and security partner.

### **Algeria**

Until the last decade, Algeria's relations with the United States were not all that close, which explains why the regime received little support when it was on the brink of collapse in the 1990s. But because of European concerns, the United States became more involved in the region and eventually provided some conditional support to Algeria.



By the close of the 1990s and into early 2000, the situation in Algeria had improved considerably. This normalization, coupled with the events of 9/11, resulted in a staggering rapprochement between Algiers and Washington, most notably in the security realm. Algeria has since regularly taken part in numerous joint military exercises. Given Algeria's geographical location and its geopolitical significance, Americans reiterate ad nauseam that Algeria is "an exceptional partner of the United States in the global war on terrorism." The United States succeeded in drawing Algeria into a regional security arrangement, which includes not only the Maghreb countries (Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia—and now Libya) but also the Sahel states, such as Chad, Mali, Senegal, Niger, and even Nigeria.

The bilateral military cooperation is evident on the ground as American and Algerian troops work closely together in the Algerian desert.<sup>14</sup> Yet the amount of U.S. military assistance to Algeria remains insignificant. In 2009 the United States provided Algeria with a modest \$898,000 within the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program (\$950,000 in FY 2010) for training military personnel in the United States and a mere \$500,000 in counterterrorism assistance, although the request for 2010 is double this amount.<sup>15</sup>

The United States no longer seems to make an issue with the obvious resurgence of authoritarianism in Algeria. The strong cooperation in the security field has allowed not only Algeria but also other authoritarian states to collect dividends from their security cooperation with the United States.<sup>16</sup> Under the Obama administration, the United States has been pleased with the leadership that Algeria has taken in promoting regional security cooperation. On March 16, 2010, Algeria organized a successful ministerial conference in Algiers that brought together the Sahara-Sahel countries Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad. The main objective was to strengthen the war on terrorism in the region and to implement UN antiterrorism resolution 1904 (December 2009),<sup>17</sup> which criminalizes the payment of ransoms to hostage takers who use the ransoms to fund terrorist activities.<sup>18</sup> Needless to say, the United States expressed great support for this initiative.<sup>19</sup>

One should also note that economic relations between Algeria, a hydrocarbons producer, and the United States have also witnessed considerable expansion since July 2001, when the two countries signed a Framework Agreement on Trade and Investment; the accord instituted a consultative procedure on trade and investment that will eventually result in a bilateral investment treaty, mutual

trade benefits, and a double taxation arrangement, and it effectively opened up Algeria's profitable oil and gas resources more broadly to multinational corporations. Bilateral trade between Algeria and the United States has grown continuously; the volume of exchanges has surpassed \$12 billion. Given U.S. energy dependence, Algeria will remain, however, a strategic market for the United States for the years to come, given that (according to the CIA) Algeria has the eighth-largest reserves of natural gas in the world and is the fourth-largest gas exporter; it ranks 14th in oil reserves.<sup>20</sup>

### Tunisia

Since its independence in 1956, Tunisia maintained almost unbroken, friendly relations with the United States. Tunisia's pro-Western stance proved extremely attractive, as did its model of political, economic, and social development. In the 1990s, it was common for American policy makers to portray Tunisia as a success story: reforms, market liberalization, secularism, promotion of women's rights, unconstrained use of birth control, and elimination of illiteracy.

The United States and Tunisia conduct many joint military operations annually. Owing to its strategic importance and its "moderation," Tunisia has succeeded in escaping, at least publicly, condemnation of its serious violations of human rights. Tunisia was spared because, like Morocco and Egypt, it justified repression in the name of maintaining the stability and the survival of the government against "radical" Islamist forces hostile to the Western world. Tunisia continued to benefit from Washington's leniency and tolerance of its authoritarian regime,<sup>21</sup> until Ben Ali's escape on January 14, 2011 following the people's upheaval. Given the refusal of the pro-U.S. military to shoot at the demonstrators, Ben Ali had no choice but to flee the country. Apparently, the United States arranged for his exile to Saudi Arabia. As well documented in WikiLeaks documents, the United States was well aware of the utter corrupt nature of the regime.

Tunisia receives hefty support from the Defense Department, whose officials wish to keep Tunisia on the side of the United States. An official at the State Department argued, "The Department of Defense serves as a lobby for Tunisia in Washington DC; here at State, we were serious about putting pressure on the Ben Ali regime, but DOD persuaded the White House otherwise."<sup>22</sup> Similarly to other Arab governments, Tunisia benefited from the events of 9/11 and their aftermath and thus succeeded in obtaining support from the United States through its participation in the GWOT, assistance

to Iraq, recognition of the Iraqi Council of government, and participation in peacekeeping operations. Of course, Tunisia is also an active member of the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership. The security relationship is paramount; the United States has consolidated its military cooperation with Tunisia, whose armed forces receive more than 70 percent of their military hardware from the United States. In 2009 Tunisia received \$12 million in foreign military financing, which increased to \$15 million in 2010, while the IMET program also increased from \$1.7 million to \$1.95 million.<sup>23</sup> In 2006 the United States and Tunisia worked on a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA).<sup>24</sup>

The United States supported the Ben Ali regime against its perceived domestic and foreign enemies because Washington sees Tunisia as an important security partner. In fiscal year 2011, the United States committed to assist Tunisia in countering the threat of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and to collaborate with the country in strengthening its counterterrorism and border security capabilities.

### Libya

Following 30 years of hostility, including direct confrontation, the United States and Libya finally normalized their relations in a relatively very short time span.<sup>25</sup> The settlement in 2003 of the Lockerbie affair (the bombing of Pan Am flight 103 in December 1988 over Scotland, allegedly by Libyan operatives) marked the culmination of the process begun in 1999, followed by Libya's astonishing proclamation on the eve of Christmas 2003 that it decided to dismantle its WMD programs and adhere to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). On April 22, 2004, President Bush partially lifted sanctions on Libya, a move that allowed U.S. citizens to do business and invest in Libya. Most sanctions were finally revoked in September 2004. This allowed the return of U.S. oil companies; hence, in January 2005, Occidental and Chevron secured 11 of the 15 contracts in Libya's first open competition for oil contracts.<sup>26</sup> In December 2005, Exxon Mobil Corporation signed agreements for the exploration and the production of oil with the Libyan National Oil Company (NOC). After 2006 the United States removed Libya from the list of countries that support terrorism and excluded Libya from the annual list of countries not fully cooperating with U.S. antiterrorism efforts. Libya and the United States share what some have referred to as "permanent interests," which in the case of U.S.-Libyan relations include counterterrorism, trade, energy, regional

stability, nuclear proliferation, Africa, cultural and other initiatives, human rights, and (to a lesser degree) democracy.<sup>27</sup> Condoleezza Rice's trip in 2008 was the first of a U.S. secretary of state since John Dulles's visit to King Idriss I in 1953. The trip was a way to recompense Libya for abandoning its WMD program and for the Jamahiriya finalizing payments to the victims of the Lockerbie incident. Issues of human rights, however, did not make the top of Rice's agenda.

The United States and Libya have since 2003 extended negotiations to widen discussions connected with policies on Africa, terrorism, human rights, and economic reforms in Libya. The discussions on oil and commercial questions resulted in extremely lucrative deals for American companies.

The normalization of relations with Libya confirmed that during Bush's second term the United States was no longer making democracy a *sine qua non* for its relations with autocratic regimes in MENA. Clearly, the United States resorted to realism by sacrificing human rights principles in exchange for abundant Libyan oil.<sup>28</sup> The Jamahiriya boasts the largest reserves of oil in Africa, estimated by OPEC at 41,464 million barrels, and the eighth-largest reserves in the world. Gas reserves are estimated at 1.419 trillion cubic meters. Given the U.S. thirst for oil, normalization with Libya (at no real cost for the regime) should have come as no surprise. In any event, Libya's energy resources are considerable, particularly because much of the oil and gas wealth remains untapped. The problem, certainly, is that this wealth, far from encouraging reforms, has strengthened the authoritarianism of the regime and provides little incentive for democratization.

The other area of interest for the United States is Libya's role in the GWOT. Even before 9/11, Libya cooperated with the United States on matters of terrorism,<sup>29</sup> as Libya itself also faced armed Islamist groups. After 9/11, the Libyan regime cooperated fully with the United States and Europe in the global war on terrorism. The United States recognized the importance of Libya's cooperation and began co-opting it into the security network that the United States has built in the Sahara-Sahel region and Maghreb-Sahel. Libya is part of the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) Operation Enduring Freedom Trans Sahara (OEF-TS), which provides military support to the TSCTP program.<sup>30</sup>

In January 2009, the United States and Libya signed a historic pact on defense cooperation. The nonbinding agreement, signed at the Pentagon, indicated that the two countries now have

military-to-military relations and will work together in areas such as peacekeeping, maritime security, counterterrorism, and African security and stability, according to Theresa Whelan, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for African affairs. Whelan anticipated foreign military sales between the countries. However, despite the no-less-astonishing ties between the United States and Libya, despite the growing military cooperation, Libya (like Algeria) strongly opposes the presence of AFRICOM on the African continent, which derives from powerful anticolonial sentiments.

Regardless, the Libyan regime, like many others in the region is fighting for its survival. The upheavals that have taken place in Benghazi and Tripoli have resulted in more than 200 deaths and the prospects for civil war are real. It is not yet certain how the United States will recalibrate its policy toward Libya. The partition of the country is plausible.

### THE MAGHREB: REGIONAL ENTITY WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

As should have been evident through the bilateral relations that the United States maintains with the Maghreb states, the main U.S. goal is to develop close political, military, economic, and security cooperation with the region. An examination of official statements, press conferences, and various government documents shows that the United States wishes to set up an economic alliance with the Maghreb by accelerating structural reforms within each country, by offering a greater role to the private sector, and by dismantling the intraregional barriers, which represent obstacles for trade and investment. In the 1990s, the United States was intent on reigniting Maghreb integration through the U.S.-North Africa Economic Partnership, also known as the Eizenstat Initiative, named after its main advocate Stuart Eizenstat, then undersecretary of state for economic, business, and agricultural affairs who initiated it in 1999. The objective of this initiative and now part of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)—was “to link the United States and the three countries of North Africa much closer together in terms of trade and investment, to encourage more trade between our countries, [and] to encourage more U.S. companies to invest in the region.”<sup>31</sup> Implicit in this statement was a clear encouragement for the Maghreb countries to revive the moribund UMA and for the reopening of the Algerian-Moroccan land border, closed since August 1994. Undoubtedly, from an economic perspective, the United States has made it plain that its business community prefers an integrated Maghreb, which now could

include Libya, because it would constitute a much bigger market than the separate national markets. Recently, Eizenstat has been actively seeking to revive the UMA and has identified one of the major factors hindering the realization of an integrated market:

In an effort to combat the terrorist threat, the countries of the region have tightened restrictions on the movement of people and goods at their borders, which has had the unintended consequence of further reducing cross-border commerce in the region and decreasing economic activity. The US and EU likewise have encouraged the Maghreb countries to take anti-terrorism measures, and economic development and integration have consequently been deemphasized. These countries are taking steps to enhance their cooperation on security matters; in my view, these efforts should go hand-in-hand with cooperation on economic matters in order to create greater long-term stability in the region.<sup>32</sup>

In July 2010, the deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs, Janet Sanderson, expressed the willingness of the administration to reignite the Eizenstat Initiative to build an integrated Maghreb.<sup>33</sup> In late 2010, the United States launched the U.S.-North Africa Partnership for Economic Opportunity (NAPEO), “a new public-private partnership to better link entrepreneurs and business leaders in the United States and North Africa (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia).”<sup>34</sup> But, as was seen earlier, one of the main obstacles to Maghreb regional integration remains the conflict in Western Sahara, which has aggravated the already tense relations between Algeria and Morocco. Undoubtedly, the United States and Europe, because of geopolitical considerations, have been instrumental in the persistence of the stalemate rather than part of the solution that would lead to Maghreb integration.<sup>35</sup>

Although it has failed to persuade the countries in the region to revive the Arab Maghreb Union, the United States is more interested in securing access to oil and natural gas (mainly in Algeria and Libya) and security. In this context, the conflict over Western Sahara has taken on a new dimension, given that its persistence remains a major obstacle in achieving one of America’s regional policy objectives. This is why the United States insists on seeing a resolution of the conflict. But the bias in favor of Morocco has in fact produced the opposite effect, a lasting stalemate—which, though tolerable for the moment, has the potential of destabilizing the area. The persistence of the conflict has had a number of negative consequences: regional insecurity and the arms race;<sup>36</sup> Algerian and Moroccan arms purchases at the

expense of much-needed socioeconomic development; cyclical uprisings in the occupied territory accompanied by human rights violations against Sahrawis; a freeze of the Arab Maghreb Union; and limited security cooperation between Algeria and Morocco.

### FROM “DEMOCRATIZATION” TO SECURITIZATION: U.S. SECURITY POLICY IN THE SAHARA-SAHEL

After 9/11, democracy promotion in the Arab world became part of U.S. strategic interests. U.S. policy makers made explicit the correlation between democracy promotion and stability on the one hand and strategic interests on the other.

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.<sup>37</sup>

In fact, the United States, and the EU for that matter, equated the “enduring security” of the American and European peoples with the promotion of “a world of democratic and well-governed states.”<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, they both stressed their “shared commitment to promoting democracy” as “one of the fields where . . . [they] can do, and should do, even more together.”<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, this joint emblematic pledge never resulted in a cohesive, viable strategy. For, despite the Wilsonian rhetoric, in practice, realism prevailed. Indeed, in spite of his pro-democracy crusade, Bush never truly moved it forward. As a keen analyst put it,

Underneath [Bush’s] lofty prodemocracy rhetoric and mild prodding of Arab counterparts, business as usual continued for the most part, that is, close U.S. security and economic ties with autocratic Arab allies like Saudi Arabia, the smaller Gulf States, Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco.<sup>40</sup>

Inevitably, the necessity of cooperation on counterterrorism resulted in rapprochement with, rather than distancing from, many authoritarian or semiauthoritarian regimes around the globe, particularly

in the Middle East and North Africa. Thus, by 2006 democratization tended to take a backseat and is no longer mentioned today as a prerequisite for close cooperation with regimes in the south. In reality, security considerations have remained paramount. The Tunisian case best illustrated that evolution. For instance, in February 2004, the United States publicly pushed for political reforms in Tunisia; however, during his visit to Tunisia two years later, Donald Rumsfeld made no mention of human rights concerns or political reforms. Instead, he praised the moderation of the regime and its opposition to extremism.<sup>41</sup>

This is true also of the Obama administration. In his Cairo speech on June 4, 2009, Obama stressed democracy and human rights and argued that “governments that protect these rights are ultimately more stable, successful and secure.” But his statement that “no system of government can or should be imposed by one nation by any other”<sup>42</sup> was a rather clear indication that the United States was not intent on pressuring incumbent authoritarian regimes in the region to democratize. By the midterm of his administration, the promotion of democracy, or even any emphasis on political reform, was missing from Obama’s foreign policy. Perhaps this should not be surprising given that during her confirmation speech on January 13, 2009,<sup>43</sup> Secretary of State Hillary Clinton referred to the so-called “three Ds” (diplomacy, development, and defense) as the elements of U.S. power, but conspicuously absent was any reference to a fourth D, democracy promotion, although she did state that the United States had “deep commitment to the cause of making human rights a reality for millions of oppressed people around the world.” The “three Ds” does not imply a rejection of democratization but seems to suggest a reinterpretation of democracy through development. In January 2010, Hillary Clinton made the link between development and democracy, stating that “development also furthers a key goal of our diplomatic efforts: to advance democracy and human rights worldwide.”<sup>44</sup> Although advancing development and linking it to democracy—albeit through the prism of realism—is quite essential, it does not seem, however, that the conduct of U.S. foreign policy has so far reflected that commitment, official statements to the contrary notwithstanding. For instance, neither Obama nor his secretary of state had overtly reproached Egypt or Tunisia for their poor performance on democracy and human rights. In fact, in 2010 Tunisia saw an increase of foreign aid without any conditions. Clearly, the heavier D relates to defense, interpreted in the broadest sense. Counterterrorism is paramount; this has remained evident as far as the Sahara-Sahel is concerned.



The United States' foreign and security policies shifted after 9/11 and the war in Iraq in 2003. The defense strategy was no longer centered on regions and structured around alliances but was now determined by key issues adapted to specific events and finally put into practice with tailor-made coalitions depending on the mission. In other words, the tendency was toward flexible coalitions for varying missions but always under U.S. overall command. Global issues—such as the proliferation of WMD, terrorism, energy security, economic and political reforms, as well as what one might term “selective demands for democratization”—led the list of priorities. U.S. policy makers suggested that because these phenomena are global in nature, the fight must be global, with appropriate regional applications. George W. Bush announced in the *United States National Security Strategy Report, 2002*,

We will continue to encourage our regional partners to take up a coordinated effort that isolates the terrorists. Once the regional campaign localizes the threat to a particular state, we will help ensure the state has the military, law enforcement, political, and financial tools necessary to finish the task.

Regarding the southern Mediterranean, this meant setting new priorities, which had to be tackled with or without the help of partners. It is precisely this perspective that explains current U.S. involvement in the western Mediterranean, especially in the Sahara-Sahel region.

As has been evident in the analysis of U.S. bilateral relations with Maghreb states, in the wake of 9/11, the key objective of the United States in the Maghreb has been to develop and strengthen closer military and security cooperation and economic partnerships with those states. The events reinforced the development of relations between the United States and the Maghreb authoritarian governments—Algeria (especially since 2001), Mauritania (since 2002), Morocco (since May 2003), Libya (after December 2003), and Tunisia (since 2002).

The United States' interest in the Sahara-Sahel, a region where sub-Saharan Africa meets North Africa, covers both security/military and economic interests. Washington perceives the Sahel as a vulnerable region because of its low demographic density and its permeable borders. This region falls within the so-called “safe havens” that terrorists can use for mounting attacks against U.S. soil—as they did before 9/11—and thus represents a genuine threat to the security of the United States.<sup>45</sup> There is evidently a correlation in U.S. strategic thinking regarding the notion of “safe havens” or “ungoverned

spaces” and “failed states,” a concept expanded during the Bush administration but that has continued under the current one. Failed states, like Somalia, were seen as the worst security threat to the United States. The current administration has supported this view. Indeed, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates declared, “Dealing with such fractured or failing states is, in many ways, the main security challenge of our time.”<sup>46</sup>

U.S. decision makers argue that terrorist groups—local as well as international—devote themselves to all kinds of smuggling, including weapons, and recruit new members among the local populations. According to Washington’s senior security officials, Islamist terrorist groups—the most active being the Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), renamed Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in 2007—represent a threat to this area, which has more than 100 million inhabitants.<sup>47</sup>

The area has even been regarded as “the new front in the global war against terrorism.” The appointment by Obama of General James Jones as the national security adviser was already a clear indication that, if anything, the Obama administration has subscribed to its predecessor’s views on African security in general and on the Sahara-Sahel in particular. Jones, prominent for his views on African security matters, made it obvious that “African security issues will increasingly continue to directly affect our homeland security” and that “North Africa and, in particular, the Pan-Sahel region of sub-Saharan Africa, provides opportunities to Islamic extremists, smugglers and other insurgent groups.”<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the objective of the United States has been since 2002 to assist cooperation among governments in the region (Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, Senegal, and Nigeria) and reinforce their capacity to fight terrorist organizations but also to purportedly inhibit terrorist groups from setting up bases in this region as terrorist groups had done in Afghanistan before 9/11. This is why at the end of 2002 the United States started the Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI) in order to train specialized troops in the fight against terrorism in Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. In 2003–2004, American Special Forces of the European Command (EUCOM) were detached to train the security forces of these nations. Later, indigenous forces of Chad and Niger fought the GSPC members in their respective countries. Because the PSI program, completed in early 2004, was seen as a success, U.S. policy makers decided to create the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), to replace PSI. The objective of the TSCTP has been to reinforce local capacities to fight terrorism in the area and

to consolidate and institutionalize cooperation between the security forces across the region. TSCTP officially started in June 2005 with Exercise Flintlock 2005, which was repeated two years later as Flintlock 2007. In November 2008, 14 nations participated in Flintlock 2009, “developed as a joint multinational exercise to improve information sharing at the operational and tactical levels across the Saharan region while fostering increased collaboration and coordination.”<sup>49</sup> Flintlock 2010 was launched on May 3, 2010, and lasted until May 23, 2010. Flintlock 2011 kicked off on February 21, 2011 in Thies, Senegal for a three-week period. The mission now remains for U.S. special operations forces to provide training for their counterparts in Saharan countries, teaching military tactics, and to prevent alleged terrorists from setting up sanctuaries in that region.

Undoubtedly, the Maghreb-Sahel region has inexorably become a strategic region for U.S. security interests, although other outside powers (such as Russia, an arms supplier, or France and China, key economic actors) also play important roles. The underlying rationale for such U.S. presence is articulated in the “Report on Global Terrorism 2009,” which was published in August 2010:

Ongoing concern that extremists continued to seek safe havens and support networks in the Maghreb and Sahel—as well as recognition that al-Qa’ida and others were seeking to impose radical ideologies on traditionally moderate Muslim populations in the region—highlighted the urgency of creating an integrated approach to addressing current threats and preventing conditions that could foster persistent threats in the future.<sup>50</sup>

Some critics argue that not only is U.S. presence in the region a destabilizing factor but also that the United States has “fabricated” or greatly exaggerated the terrorist threat in order to maintain its presence—to be institutionalized through AFRICOM, the U.S. Command for Africa set up in 2007—and to achieve its goals of controlling the region’s hydrocarbon resources and warding off China’s advance in mineral-rich Africa. As one expert observed, the United States is “making [Africa] into another front in its Global War on Terrorism, maintaining and extending access to energy supplies and other strategic raw material, and competing with China and other rising economic powers for control over the continent’s resources.”<sup>51</sup> However, the United States would rather avoid direct military intervention and instead use friendly regimes, preferably

those rich in natural resources, to serve as proxies for the United States. In sum,

The hope that the Pentagon can build up African surrogates who can act on behalf of the United States is precisely why Washington is providing so much security assistance to these regimes and why it would like to provide even more in the future.<sup>52</sup>

In the Maghreb, Morocco and Tunisia continue to gain from an important level of security assistance from the United States. Morocco benefits from State Department programs, such as the ATA (Anti-Terrorism Assistance) and the TIP (Terrorist Interdiction Program). But whereas security cooperation with Morocco and Tunisia is a commonplace, cooperation with Algeria is one of the most important developments in bilateral relations since 9/11. This cooperation is centered on the exchange of information, military cooperation, and the monitoring of the transfer of funds; the most recent ATA training was held in Algiers in July 2010.<sup>53</sup> Given the U.S. push for greater military cooperation with Libya, following the signing of the pact on military cooperation in January 2009, it is likely that the two countries will improve their military ties in the near future. Regardless, both countries already work together on counterterrorism, especially in the Sahel region. The head of AFRICOM, General William “Kip” Ward, visited Libya twice in 2009 and met with Colonel Muammar Qaddafi in May that year.

The U.S. administration has drawn some conclusions from its experience in Afghanistan and Iraq, where American soldiers face violent opposition from the local populations. U.S. officials under the Obama administration have carried on Bush’s policy in Africa: instead of mobilizing a heavy U.S. military presence in given areas of intervention, the new program consists of dispatching Special Operations forces to countries like Mali and Mauritania in West Africa to train their soldiers and supply them with pickup trucks, radios, and global-positioning system equipment. According to General James Jones, no U.S. forces have been committed to combat in Africa. U.S. deployment has primarily consisted of training and advisory teams. The hope, of course, is that American influence will be effective without being too conspicuous. The U.S. ambassador to Algeria, David Pearce, has confirmed this policy. In June 2009, he insisted that should the governments in the region solicit the United States, Washington would be willing to provide them with the necessary assistance in the fight

against terrorism: "It's a huge, difficult region to control without regional cooperation."<sup>54</sup> This explains why the United States welcomed "the decision of the governments of Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger to meet on March 16 in Algiers to collectively confront the threat of terrorism."<sup>55</sup>

### OBAMA AND THE QUESTION OF WESTERN SAHARA: CONTINUITY OR CHANGE?

The Bush administration supported the Moroccan autonomy proposal despite its illegality and its utter ambiguity.<sup>56</sup> Owing to the principles that Obama upheld as presidential candidate, many anticipated that there would be a reversal of U.S. position in this conflict under Obama, for there were some signs indicating that the Obama administration may not be decidedly biased in favor of Morocco. Indeed, in June 2009, it appeared that the United States no longer supported unequivocally the Moroccan autonomy plan; Obama's evading the mention of the autonomy plan in his letter to King Mohamed VI was interpreted as an about-face in U.S. policy on the question. One passage in the letter was particularly revealing: "I share your commitment to the U.N.-led negotiations as the appropriate forum to achieve a mutually agreed solution. . . . My government will work with yours and others in the region to achieve an outcome that meets the people's need for transparent governance, confidence in the rule of law, and equal administration of justice."<sup>57</sup> Citing diplomatic sources, the report in which the letter was quoted suggested, "The United States no longer supports or endorses the Moroccan autonomy plan. . . . Instead, the administration has returned to the pre-Bush position that there could be an independent POLISARIO (Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro) state in Western Sahara."<sup>58</sup> U.S. officials refused to confirm or deny such reports, stating only that the United States encourages the parties to engage in discussions under the UN auspices.<sup>59</sup> Unquestionably, by referring to international legality (which in the case of Western Sahara would include the option of independence), Obama seemed to abide by the values he promised to uphold. Yet in reality, there has not been any substantial shift in policy toward Western Sahara. What is apparent is that the administration seems torn between continuing to support a traditional ally, Morocco, and setting a new course that would contradict the interests of that ally. The conflicting pronouncements in Obama's letter and those issued by Hillary Clinton during her visit to Morocco in November 2009 highlight the policy constraints of

the new administration. During her visit to Marrakesh in November 2009 to attend the Forum for the Future, Hillary Clinton responded to the question as to whether the Obama administration had changed its position on the autonomy plan by saying, "Our policy has not changed, and I thank you for asking the question because I think it's important for me to reaffirm here in Morocco that there has been no change in policy."<sup>60</sup> In another interview, she was asked what she meant by her affirmation that there was "no change in the Obama administration's position as far as the Moroccan autonomy plan in the Sahara is concerned." Her response was,

Well, this is a plan, as you know, that originated in the Clinton Administration. It was reaffirmed in the Bush Administration and it remains the policy of the United States in the Obama Administration. Now, we are supporting the United Nations process because we think that if there can be a peaceful resolution to the difficulties that exist with your neighbors, both to the east and to the south and the west that is in everyone's interest. But because of our long relationship, we are very aware of how challenging the circumstances are. And I don't want anyone in the region or elsewhere to have any doubt about our policy, which remains the same.<sup>61</sup>

This being said, the United States displayed a tougher stand toward Morocco during the hunger strike of Aminatou Haidar, the Sahrawi human rights activist. The United States was instrumental in resolving the case,<sup>62</sup> thus making it possible for Haidar to return to her home in Western Sahara. But, as UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1920 demonstrates, the United States has not changed its position and continues to use the same language that prolongs the stalemate in this conflict.<sup>63</sup> What is certain is that conflict in Western Sahara is low on the list of U.S. priorities, and it would be surprising if the U.S. government took any initiative to resolve the issue. Washington's agenda is pretty full. But, as paradoxical as it may seem, failing to resolve this conflict will sooner or later hamper U.S. security objectives in the region.

## CONCLUSION

For the United States, the events of 9/11 changed the Maghreb's geopolitical importance. Not only did it encourage the bringing together of the Maghreb states with the United States, but it also made the latter take a greater interest in the area, which, from a security point of view, now extends to the Sahel region. Undoubtedly,

this is a significant region because—despite the poverty prevalent in some of the countries surrounding the Maghreb and the authoritarianism that characterizes practically all the incumbent regimes—it boasts valuable resources, not only hydrocarbons but also vital minerals. Furthermore, China's growing presence and Russia's return as an important arms supplier in the Maghreb (to Algeria and Libya) provide the unspoken reason for the United States' increasing interest in containing what it perceives as genuine threats to its national security. This continued concern with security has raised the question as to whether the Barack Obama administration is intent on promoting democracy as its predecessor attempted to do during its first term. Although the debate is still ongoing, a preliminary analysis suggests that though the administration is concerned with democracy, it is searching for new formulas to overcome the dilemma that Obama himself raised before his election:

I recognize that our security interests will sometimes necessitate that we work with regimes with which we have fundamental disagreements; yet, those interests need not and must not prevent us from lending our consistent support to those who are committed to democracy and respect for human rights.<sup>64</sup>

Until the uprisings of January and February 2011, his foreign policy reflected the first part of this realist statement rather than the second. The authoritarian regimes continued to draw the dividends from their antiterrorism cooperation with the United States. However, although after much hesitancy the United States sided with “the Tunisian people” and then with “the Libyan people,” these very same people had taken notice that it was not until the fall of the two dictators became ineluctable that the U.S. administration sided with the demonstrators. In sum, as Jamal, Lust, and Masoud astutely observed:

When the history of the Middle East's winter [2011] revolutions is written, and scholars try to explain why those remarkable events ushered in an era of region-wide hostility toward and non-cooperation with the United States, they will point to Vice President Biden's refusal to call Mubarak a dictator, or Hilary Clinton's urging Egypt's brave pro-democracy activists to calm down, or President Obama's blithe announcement that the protests indicated that ‘now would be a good time to start some reform.’<sup>65</sup>

Even if one is not sure what the outcome of the uprisings will be, what is certain is that the future of U.S. relations with the Middle East

and North Africa will be different. One can only concur with Jamal, Lust, and Masoud that the people in the region “are not only waging a battle against authoritarian oppression—but a battle against the ways in which the U.S. manifests its quest to secure its geo-strategic interest.”<sup>66</sup>

## NOTES

1. The Maghreb refers to Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. However, since the creation of the Arab Maghreb Union in 1989, two other countries are considered part of the Maghreb: Libya and Mauritania.
2. See Yahia H. Zoubir, “Les Etats-Unis dans l’espace Euro-Méditerranéen: Complémentarité, Rivalité et Réajustement d’influence,” *Géoeconomie* 35 (2005): 65–83.
3. Office of the President, *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2010), [www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf). (Accessed on July 15, 2010).
4. Scott Wilson and Al Kamen, “‘Global War on Terror’ Is Given New Name: Bush’s Phrase is Out, Pentagon Says,” *Washington Post*, March 25, 2009, [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/24/AR2009032402818.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/24/AR2009032402818.html). (Accessed on March 26, 2009).
5. “Egypt protests: Hillary Clinton urges ‘orderly transition,’” *BBC News*, January 30, 2011, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-12319445>. (Accessed January 31, 2011).
6. For U.S. relations with Morocco, see Yahia H. Zoubir, “The United States and Morocco: The Long-Lasting Alliance,” in *Handbook of US–Middle East Relations: Formative Factors and Regional Perspectives*, Robert E. Looney, Editor (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 237–248. On U.S.–Tunisian relations, see Yahia H. Zoubir, “The US and Tunisia: Model of Stable Relations,” in *Handbook of US–Middle East Relations: Formative Factors and Regional Perspectives*, Robert E. Looney, Editor (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 249–261.
7. Assistant Secretary of State for Economic, Energy and Business Affairs, Jose W. Fernandez, travelled to the Maghreb in December 2010. After the conference held in Algiers, he went to Libya “to galvanize support for NAPEO [North Africa Partnership for Economic Opportunity] and to further economic engagement throughout the Maghreb region.” US Department of State. *Assistant Secretary Jose W. Fernandez Holds Press Briefing on His Travel to North Africa*. Office of the Spokesman, Washington, DC, December 7, 2010 Available online at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2010/12/152467.htm> (Accessed on February 12, 2011).
8. Yahia H. Zoubir, “Algerian-Moroccan Relations and Their Impact on Maghrebi Integration,” *Journal of North African Studies* 5, no. 3 (2001): 43–74.



9. For an extensive account of U.S. policy toward the conflict in Western Sahara, see Stephen Zunes and Jacob Mundy, *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism, and Conflict Irresolution* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010).
10. See Yehudit Ronen, *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2009), chapter 2.
11. Tony Capaccio, "Lockheed Martin to Sell Morocco 24 New F-16s for \$841 Million," Bloomberg, December 22, 2009, [www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aaF5gcH2t8H8](http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aaF5gcH2t8H8) (Accessed on December 26, 2009); see also Global Security, "Royal Moroccan Air Force," [www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/morocco/air-force.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/morocco/air-force.htm). (Accessed on August 8, 2010).
12. See the special dossier "Maghreb: Les Dessous d'une Course à l'Armement," *El Watan* (Algiers), May 21, 2009, pp. 1–4.
13. See Zunes and Mundy, *Western Sahara*.
14. See Robert D. Kaplan, *Hog Pilots, Blue Water Grunts: The American Military in the Air, Sea, and on the Ground* (New York: Random House, 2007).
15. These figures are taken from U.S. Department of State, "FY 2011 Foreign Operations, Congressional Budget Justification," vol. 2, [www.state.gov/documents/organization/137936.pdf](http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/137936.pdf). (Accessed on July 26, 2010).
16. On this point, see Clement M. Henry, "Reverberations in the Central Maghreb of the 'Global War on Terror,'" in *North Africa: Politics, Region, and the Limits of Transformation*, Yahia H. Zoubir and Haizam Amirah-Fernández, Editors (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 294–310.
17. UN Security Council, *United Nations S/RES/1904 (2009)*, adopted by the Security Council at its 6247th meeting, December 17, 2009.
18. "Messahel: Lutte Antiterroriste, les Participants se Sont Engagés à Mettre en Œuvre les Conventions," Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 21, 2010, [http://193.194.78.233/ma\\_fr/stories.php?story=10/03/21/5613238](http://193.194.78.233/ma_fr/stories.php?story=10/03/21/5613238). (Accessed on March 30, 2010).
19. See Philip J. Crowley, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Public Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC, March 16, 2010, [www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2010/03/138370.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2010/03/138370.htm). (Accessed on March 27, 2010).
20. CIA World Factbook, Algeria, September 15, 2010, [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ag.html#Econ](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ag.html#Econ). (Accessed on September 25, 2010).
21. For instance, shortly after criticizing Tunisia, Powell praised the changes that were taking place there. See Colin Powell, Fox News Sunday, March 14, 2004, [www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,114159,00.html](http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,114159,00.html). (Accessed on March 17, 2004).
22. Interview with the author, Washington, DC, May 16, 2004.

23. See U.S. Department of State, *Congressional Budget Justification. Foreign Operations. Annex: Regional Perspectives. Fiscal Year 2011* (Washington, DC: March 2010), [www.state.gov/documents/organization/137937.pdf](http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/137937.pdf). (Accessed on August 8, 2010).
24. Al Pessin, "Rumsfeld Discusses Expanding Military Ties with Tunisia," *Global Security*, February 11, 2006, [www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2006/02/mil-060211-voa03.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2006/02/mil-060211-voa03.htm). (Accessed on February 25, 2006).
25. See Yahia H. Zoubir, "The U.S. and Libya: The Lengthy Road to Reconciliation," in *Handbook of US–Middle East Relations: Formative Factors and Regional Perspectives*, Robert E. Looney, Editor (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 262–280; Yahia H. Zoubir, "Libya in US Foreign Policy: From Rogue State to Good Fellow?" *Third World Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2002): 31–53; and Ronald Bruce St. John, *Libya and the United States: Two Centuries of Strife* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).
26. Willa Thayer, "Libya Awards Oil Contracts," *Associated Press*, December 20, 2006.
27. Ronald Bruce St. John, "A New U.S. Relationship with Libya?" *Foreign Policy in Focus*, March 27, 2009, [www.fpif.org/articles/a\\_new\\_us\\_relationship\\_with\\_libya](http://www.fpif.org/articles/a_new_us_relationship_with_libya). (Accessed on March 28, 2009).
28. See Yahia H. Zoubir, "The United States and Libya: The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy," *Journal of North African Studies* 16, no. 2 (June 2011): 273–295.
29. Ronald Bruce St. John, "'Libya Is Not Iraq': Preemptive Strikes, WMD, and Diplomacy," *Middle East Journal* 58, no. 3 (2004): 391–392.
30. According to the information available on AFRICOM's official website, "OEF-TS engagement in TSCTP focuses on overall security and cooperation rather than solely on Counter Terrorism. OEF-TS partnership comprises the United States and eleven African countries: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal." (Accessed on July 15, 2010).
31. Stuart E. Eizenstat, Undersecretary for Economic, Business, and Agricultural Affairs, Third Annual Les Aspin Memorial Lecture, Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, March 8, 1999.
32. Stuart E. Eizenstat, "Prospects for Greater Global and Regional Integration in the Maghreb," remarks at Peterson Institute for International Economics, Washington, DC, May 29, 2008.
33. Ziad Salah, "Lutte Antiterroriste: Les Américains s'Alignent sur la Position Algérienne," *Le Quotidien d'Oran* (Algeria), July 22, 2010, [www.lequotidien-oran.com/index.php?news=5140941&archive\\_date=2010-07-22](http://www.lequotidien-oran.com/index.php?news=5140941&archive_date=2010-07-22). (Accessed on July 22, 2010).
34. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Economic, Energy, and Business Affairs, available at, <http://www.state.gov/e/eeb/rls/fs/2010/152223.htm> (Accessed on January 15, 2011).

35. Yahia H. Zoubir, "Conflict in Western Sahara," in *Interpreting the Modern Middle East: Essential Themes*, ed. David Sorenson (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2010), 303–336; Hakim Darbouche and Yahia H. Zoubir, "Conflicting International Policies and the Western Sahara Stalemate," *International Spectator* 43, no. 1 (2008): 91–105.
36. See note 10.
37. "President Bush Discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East," remarks by the President at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy, Office of the White House Press Secretary, November 6, 2003.
38. See, for instance, "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America," March 2006, [www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/nss2006.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/nss2006.pdf); and "The European Security Strategy," December 2003, [www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf). (Accessed on March 22, 2007).
39. Jose Manuel Barroso, EU-US Summit Press Conference, Vienna, June 21, 2006.
40. Thomas Carothers, "Democracy Promotion under Obama: Finding a Way Forward," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Policy Brief* 77 (February 2009), p. 3.
41. John D. Banusiewicz, "Rumsfeld Meets with Leaders in Tunisia," *American Forces Press Service*, February 11, 2006, [www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=14876](http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=14876). (Accessed on February 18, 2006).
42. President Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President on a New Beginning," Cairo University, Cairo, June 4, 2009, [www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09). (Accessed on June 9, 2009).
43. Hillary Clinton, "Clinton Expresses Plans for New World Approach," *Transcript of Clinton's Confirmation Hearing-In Depth: Clinton's Hearing*, January 13, 2009, [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99290981](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99290981). (Accessed on March 15, 2009).
44. Hillary Clinton, remarks on Development in the 21st Century at the Center for Global Development, Washington, DC, January 6, 2010, [www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/01/134838.htm](http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/01/134838.htm). (Accessed on February 15, 2010).
45. U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism—Country Reports on Terrorism, Chapter 5–5.1. Terrorist Safe Havens: Strategies, Tactics, Tools for Disrupting or Eliminating Safe Havens, April 30, 2008, [www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2007/104103.htm](http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2007/104103.htm). US Department of State website. (Accessed on May 14, 2008).
46. As cited in Fareed Zakaria, "The Real Failed-State Risk," *Newsweek*, July 19, 2010, [www.newsweek.com/2010/07/19/the-real-failed-state-risk.html](http://www.newsweek.com/2010/07/19/the-real-failed-state-risk.html). (Accessed on July 25, 2010).
47. Statement of Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson, Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Hearing on Counterterrorism in Africa's Sahel Region*, November

- 17, 2009, <http://foreign.senate.gov/hearings/hearing/20091117/> (Accessed on January 20, 2010); Testimony: *Hearing on Counterterrorism in Africa's Sahel Region*, November 17, 2009, cited in US AFRICOM Public Affairs, [www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=3735](http://www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=3735). (Accessed on January 20, 2010).
48. Chris Scott, "Obama Announces James Jones as National Security Advisor," December 1, 2008, [www.one.org/blog/2008/12/01/obama-announces-james-jones-as-national-security-advisor/](http://www.one.org/blog/2008/12/01/obama-announces-james-jones-as-national-security-advisor/). (Accessed on January 20, 2009).
49. For details, see Major Eric Hilliard, "Multinational Exercise Sparks Change for Africa," *American Forces Press Service*, November 20, 2008, [www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=52031](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=52031). (Accessed on January 22, 2009).
50. U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2009," Washington, DC, August 2010, [www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2009/index.htm](http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2009/index.htm). (Accessed on August 10, 2010).
51. Daniel Volman, "Obama, Africom, and U.S. Military Policy toward Africa," *Program of African Studies Working Paper* no. 14 (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 2009), 7.
52. *Ibid.*, 9.
53. U.S. Embassy in Algiers, "U.S. and Algeria Exchange Antiterrorism Expertise," July 25, 2010, <http://algiers.usembassy.gov/event4.html>. (Accessed on July 27, 2010).
54. Djamel Bouatta, "Plusieurs Fois Reporté, Le Sommet de la Sécurité au Sahel Maintenu," *Liberté* (Algiers), June 2, 2009.
55. Phillip J. Crowley, "Statement by Philip J. Crowley, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs," Office of the Spokesman, March 16, 2010, [www.america.gov/st/texttransenglish/2010/March/20100316130306aifas0.8310009.html](http://www.america.gov/st/texttransenglish/2010/March/20100316130306aifas0.8310009.html). (Accessed on March 20, 2010).
56. Anna Theofilopoulou, "Western Sahara—How to Create a Stalemate," *US Institute of Peace Briefing*, May 2007, [www.usip.org/resources/western-sahara-how-create-stalemate](http://www.usip.org/resources/western-sahara-how-create-stalemate). (Accessed on June 12, 2008).
57. Cited in "Obama Reverses Bush-backed Morocco Plan in Favor of POLISARIO State," *World Tribune*, July 9, 2009, [www.worldtribune.com/worldtribune/WTARC/2009/af\\_morocco0547\\_07\\_09.asp](http://www.worldtribune.com/worldtribune/WTARC/2009/af_morocco0547_07_09.asp). (Accessed on July 14, 2009).
58. *Ibid.*
59. See [www.elmuhajer.com/statedepartment.php](http://www.elmuhajer.com/statedepartment.php).
60. Secretary of State Hillary Rodman Clinton, "Remarks with Moroccan Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi-Fihri," November 2, 2009, [www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/11/131229.htm](http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/11/131229.htm). (Accessed on November 5, 2009).
61. Hillary Clinton, "Interview with Fouad Arif of Al-Aoula Television," Marrakech, Morocco, November 3, 2009, [www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/11/131354.htm](http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/11/131354.htm). (Accessed on November 5, 2009).
62. Aboubakr Jamaï et Abdelkader Rhanime, "Enquête à Washington—Affaire Haidar Histoire d'un Ratage," *Le Journal*, January 22, 2010,

- [www.lejournal-press.com/articles\\_plus.php?id=2195](http://www.lejournal-press.com/articles_plus.php?id=2195). (Accessed on January 25, 2010). Access to the article is no longer available as the Moroccan authorities shut down the newspaper since its publication, though they justified the closure on financial grounds.
63. Anna Theofilopoulou, “Western Sahara: The Failure of ‘Negotiations without Preconditions,’” *Institute of Peace United States Brief 22*, U.S. Institute of Peace, April 23, 2010, [www.usip.org/resources/western-sahara-the-failure-negotiations-without-preconditions](http://www.usip.org/resources/western-sahara-the-failure-negotiations-without-preconditions). (Accessed on April 27, 2010).
64. “Illinois Senator Responds to Written Questions Submitted by the Washington Post—Q&A: Obama on Foreign Policy,” *Washington Post*, March 2, 2008, [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/02/AR2008030201982\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/02/AR2008030201982_pf.html). (Accessed on March 3, 2008).
65. Amaney Jamal, Ellen Lust, Tarek Masoud, “President Obama: here is your ‘game changer’“, *Foreign Policy Blog*, January 29, 2011, available at: [http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/01/29/president\\_obama\\_here\\_is\\_your\\_game\\_changer](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/01/29/president_obama_here_is_your_game_changer). (Accessed on January 29, 2011).
66. Ibid.

## SOMALIA: UNWANTED LEGACY, UNHAPPY OPTIONS

*Ken Menkhaus*

For the newly formed Obama foreign policy team, the prospect in 2009 of inheriting an intractable mess in Somalia was both frustrating and deeply ironic. The frustration was that Somalia was only one of an overwhelming number of “wicked problems” the administration was bequeathed, all demanding immediate attention in an era of greatly reduced resources. The irony was that much of Obama’s foreign policy team—which includes many veterans from the Clinton administration—had already been through this before when, in late 1992, President George Bush Sr. authorized an unprecedented 30,000-man humanitarian intervention into war-torn Somalia just months before handing over power to Clinton. That Somalia intervention soon became a debacle for the Clinton administration. More than a few members of the Obama foreign policy team had had their fingers burned in Somalia in 1993 and must have had an unnerving sense of *déjà vu* as they were handed an even more nettlesome Somalia portfolio from another outgoing Bush administration 16 years later.

And the challenge Somalia posed in 2009 was indeed daunting. There, the new Obama administration faced a “perfect storm” of crises, including protracted and complete state collapse; a weak, corrupt, Western-backed transitional government (TFG) that was unwilling and unable to govern and viewed as illegitimate by most Somalis; a radical armed insurgency known as *shabaab* (youth), with links to Al Qaeda, in control of much of the country; proxy wars by neighboring states entangling Somalia in a wider regional “conflict complex”; one of the world’s worst humanitarian and refugee crises; a

piracy epidemic; and widespread anti-Americanism in Somalia fueled in large part by the Bush administration's support of an Ethiopian armed occupation of the country in 2007–2008.

The Bush administration also bequeathed Obama's foreign policy team deep interagency divisions and institutional fragmentation over Africa policy, exacerbated by the weakened capacity of both the Department of State (DOS) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and by the dramatic expansion of the role and resources of the Department of Defense (DOD). This ensured that any policy review would get caught up in what Ambassador Mark Bellamy depicted as “stark tensions” across these three agencies.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, the Bush administration's actual Somalia policies constituted a problematic inheritance. Those policies shifted over the course of President Bush's eight years in office, but throughout the post-9/11 period, the Bush team viewed Somalia's complex web of problems almost exclusively through a counterterrorism lens. Ironically, the terrorist threat emanating from Somalia was minor in 2002, but by 2008 it had grown exponentially, despite—some would argue because of—U.S. counterterrorism policies there. From 2002 through 2006, the United States pursued a policy of partnership with local militias. Starting in 2007, U.S. policy partially shifted, toward greater support to state-building efforts in Somalia as a long-term antidote to jihadism and Al Qaeda influence. That state-building initiative tethered the United States and other donors to a profoundly corrupt transitional government that had little capacity to help with counterterrorism operations and that did much to push Somalis into the embrace of Islamist insurgents. It also meant that the Bush administration uncritically backed a very heavy-handed and deeply unpopular Ethiopian military occupation of southern Somalia. During this time, the United States also engaged in a number of direct military operations inside Somalia and appeared, at least in the eyes of most Somalis, to favor a military rather than political response to the growing threat Somalia posed to the region and the world. The establishment in 2002 of the U.S. military base in neighboring Djibouti (the Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa, or CJFT-HOA), hosting about 1,800 U.S. troops, reinforced perceptions of the militarization of U.S. policy in the region.<sup>2</sup> Princeton Lyman, a leading expert on U.S. policy in Africa, concluded that “the Horn of Africa is the object of the most intense and the most militarized response to terrorism in Africa.”<sup>3</sup>

The arrival of the Obama administration was expected to change all this. It was no secret that the Obama foreign policy team hoped

to “rebalance” U.S. policy worldwide, to place greater emphasis on diplomatic rather than exclusively military solutions to security challenges, and to seek dialogue with adversaries when appropriate. President Obama said as much in his inaugural address, promising that the United States “will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist.”<sup>4</sup> Obama’s personal roots in East Africa also raised hopes in the region that his administration would devote more resources and attention to the Greater Horn of Africa. As Elizabeth Schmidt noted, Obama’s election

seized the popular imagination in Africa. . . . There was much hope and enormous goodwill on the continent. . . . There was hope that the Obama administration would initiate new policies based on mutual respect, multilateral collaboration, and an awareness that there will be no security unless there is common security.<sup>5</sup>

The appointment of an excellent State Department team on Africa, one with deep experience in the Horn of Africa, raised hopes still further that the Obama administration would possess stronger contextual knowledge of Somalia and the Horn and avoid the history of misreading the region that had bedeviled previous administrations.

Yet U.S. policy on Somalia remained largely unchanged in the first year and a half of the Obama administration. Speaking in April 2010 about the Obama administration’s Somalia policy, Bush’s assistant secretary of state for African affairs, Jendayi Frazer, opined that “there’s not much variation in policy at all, it is the same” as the policies of the Bush administration.<sup>6</sup> This stasis in Somali policy reflects a broader pattern of continuity in U.S. policy in Africa as a whole, a pattern that a number of analysts predicted was likely.<sup>7</sup>

An announcement of a policy shift in September 2010—one calling for a dual-track approach in Somalia, in which the United States is expanding and deepening political engagement with substate polities—may signal the first step toward an evolution of U.S. Somali policy away from the legacy of the Bush administration.<sup>8</sup> But for now, the general pattern of continuity in the United States’ Somalia policy remains the rule and requires explanation.

This chapter explores the theme of continuity versus change in the United States’ Somalia policy in the Bush years and in the early Obama administration. It argues that several factors have worked against a major policy shift in the first year and a half of Obama’s term in office, including the paucity of good options in Somalia, risk aversion in the face of a high likelihood of failure, delays in assembling



a full Africa policy team, bureaucratic inertia, and a strong domestic political preference to avoid appearing weak on national security. In Somalia, this latter concern has translated into policies designed not to “lose Somalia” to the radical Islamist group shabaab, even though the movement already controls most of south-central Somalia and most of the capital, Mogadishu. The United States and its allies have as a result continued to provide modest support to a failed Somali transitional government that remains precariously perched in a few neighborhoods of the capital under the protection of a 7,000-man African Union peacekeeping force. For the moment, Obama administration officials view neither of the major alternative policies—allowing the TFG to fall to shabaab or committing to a robust military response to shabaab—as acceptable. But impending crises inside Somalia are likely to force the hand of U.S. policy makers and to prompt more substantial policy changes in coming years.

### THE INHERITANCE: THE SOMALI CRISIS AND U.S. POLICY UP TO 2009

The current disaster in Somalia forms part of a long chain of events spanning several decades, during which time U.S. government engagement in Somalia has alternated (sometimes wildly) between episodes of intense intervention, complete disengagement, and routinized, low-level involvement. Dramatic swings in U.S. engagement in the past serve as a reminder that long periods of policy continuity can be quickly overturned, either by events on the ground or by decisive moves by top U.S. officials. Somalia’s long history of crisis also serves to remind that each international misstep and misreading in the country—whether they resulted in disengagement or intervention—has contributed to the ever-worsening options that the country poses to the international community. The Somali crisis inherited by President Obama far exceeds any worst-case scenario country analysts could have conjured up 10 or 15 years earlier.

#### **Somali Policy in the 1990s**

In the 1980s, the United States forged a close alliance with the government of President Siyad Barre to advance what were seen as important geostrategic interests in the cold war. Somalia’s airport and seaport at Berbera provided an important forward base in the event the United States needed to project force into the Persian Gulf. Somalia became

one of the top recipients of U.S. foreign aid in Africa in the 1980s. But U.S. officials were deeply frustrated at the corruption and oppression of the Barre regime, and as the cold war waned, the U.S. government and other donors froze assistance to the government on human rights grounds.<sup>9</sup> When in January 1991 the Barre government collapsed in the face of multiple clan-based militias and the country was plunged into a two-year period of anarchy and civil war that claimed 240,000 lives, the United States and other Western donors largely ignored the crisis. Somalia was no longer of strategic importance, and the world's attention was turned to weightier matters—the democratic transformation of Eastern Europe, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the Gulf War. As the U.S. ambassador to Somalia, Frank Crigler, later observed, the United States “turned out the lights, closed the door, and forgot about the place.”<sup>10</sup>

That two-year period of neglect was dramatically reversed in November 1992, when George Bush Sr. (a lame-duck president) ordered the unprecedented 30,000-troop peace enforcement intervention Operation Restore Hope into southern Somalia to put an end to the war and famine. That humanitarian intervention placed Somalia at the center of an ambitious post-cold war plan to help build capacity for multilateral “peacekeeping with teeth” to cope with rising pockets of civil war and instability in the 1990s.<sup>11</sup> Somalia was selected as a test run for UN peace enforcement because it looked doable—“because it wasn’t Bosnia,” to quote the acting secretary of state, Larry Eagleburger.<sup>12</sup> Months later, when the peace operation was handed over to the UN (at which point it was titled the UN Operation in Somalia, or UNOSOM) and the White House was handed over to the incoming Clinton administration, the UN peacekeepers were attacked by a clan militia, and the entire operation became bogged down in an urban guerilla war. The four-month struggle culminated in the disastrous “Black Hawk Down” battle in October 1993, in which 18 army rangers and hundreds of Somalis lost their lives. The Clinton administration was hammered by political opponents for the debacle, and the entire enterprise of UN peacekeeping, “nation-building,” and “fixing failed states” was subjected to a barrage of criticism and at least temporarily discredited in Washington. The United States and UN withdrew from Somalia in 1994 and 1995. For years, Somalia was, in the eyes of many U.S. policy makers, not so much a country as a metaphor—for humanitarian quagmires and failed-state “basket cases.” The U.S. government treated Somalia as a virtual nonentity for years thereafter.

### Somali Policy in the Bush Administration, 2001–2006

Initially, the George Bush Jr. administration gave every indication of continuing this policy of neglect. During the 2000 presidential campaign, Bush and his supporters ridiculed the Clinton administration's alleged preoccupation with small states and small wars. Bush's foreign policy team was, in the words of James Traub, "ideologically opposed to state-building," a sentiment perfectly captured by Condoleezza Rice's line "we don't need to have the 82nd Airborne escorting kids to kindergarten."<sup>13</sup> Given this sentiment, Somalia stood little chance of gaining sustained policy attention.

All that changed with the 9/11 attacks. The U.S. counterterrorism strategy posited that in the aftermath of the U.S. attack on Afghanistan, Al Qaeda would decentralize into small cells and seek new safe havens in "ungoverned space."<sup>14</sup> Somalia immediately made the short list of countries of concern. It presented what on paper was the perfect profile for Al Qaeda—a desperately poor Islamic country with a completely collapsed state, where an armed Islamist movement, Al-Ittihad, already existed, and in a neighborhood that Al Qaeda already exploited in launching several major terrorist attacks against the United States and its allies (the bombing of U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998 and the bombing of the USS *Cole* off the coast of Yemen in 2000).<sup>15</sup> U.S. intelligence and defense assets were shifted to Somalia in consequence.

U.S. anticipation that a portion of Al Qaeda would attempt to regroup in countries like Somalia made good sense in theory, but it was based on an inaccurate understanding of Al Qaeda's preferred operating environment. Specifically, the claim that "ungoverned space" is an ideal terrorist lair was partially incorrect. As assessments of Al Qaeda's first efforts to penetrate the Horn of Africa in the early 1990s have made clear, Somalia's condition of complete state collapse proved to be as nonpermissive an environment for Al Qaeda as it has been for international relief agencies.<sup>16</sup> Chronic levels of insecurity, clannism, extortion, logistical difficulties, and the impossibility of keeping one's activities and whereabouts secret as a rare foreigner in Somalia all worked against Al Qaeda's efforts to operate in Somalia. Moreover, al-Ittihad was led by Somali Islamo-nationalists whose agenda was local and who had little interest in Al Qaeda's global struggle. It was in the weak, corrupt, multiethnic, and target-rich neighboring country of Kenya that Al Qaeda found conditions to establish a base of operations, recruit locals, and plan and execute terrorist attacks. To their credit, some U.S. government

officials recognized this and attempted to refocus U.S. counterterrorism efforts toward Kenya.<sup>17</sup>

Starting around 2004, two important developments occurred inside Somalia that elevated concern. One was evidence that a small number of “high-value” East Africa Al Qaeda (EAAQ) cell members (almost all non-Somali) were coming and going from Mogadishu. The second was the establishment and rapid strengthening of a circle of hard-line Somali Islamist fighters in 2 of the 16 local sharia courts in Mogadishu. Whereas other sharia court militias were simply local police, this group of Somali mujahideen, numbering about 400, included a number of veterans of the war in Afghanistan who had direct links to Al Qaeda. They came into public view as a shadowy paramilitary engaged in a “dirty war” of assassinations of Somalis believed to be collaborating with U.S. and Ethiopian intelligence, as well as other with Somalis they deemed a threat.<sup>18</sup> Their radicalism, which manifested itself in the desecration of an Italian colonial cemetery and the razing of tombs of Somali Sufi saints, shocked Somalis. The group eventually became known as *shabaab* and was suspected of providing safe houses for the EAAQ cell visitors.

Starting in 2004, U.S. government officials took a series of actions meant to address the small but growing threat of Islamic radicalism in Somalia. Each decision ended up making things considerably worse, so that by 2008 the threat posed by jihadism in Somalia was infinitely greater than anything that could have been imagined as a worst-case scenario in 2004. Some of the policies were reasonable and well-intentioned; others were utterly ill-conceived, in some cases the results of actions taken by operatives who should have been under “greater adult supervision,” in the words of one U.S. diplomat.<sup>19</sup> Whether well-intentioned or badly conceived or both, U.S. policies during this period were all subject to the law of unintended consequences—and the law won.

Initially, U.S. policy from 2004 through 2006 focused on capturing the half dozen or so EAAQ figures passing through Mogadishu. In the absence of a functional Somali central government, U.S. intelligence agents partnered with local non-state actors—mainly clan militia leaders, some of whom had earned the appellation of warlord in Somalia. In exchange for cash payments, these militia leaders were asked to monitor and if possible apprehend the EAAQ figures. This outsourcing effort failed to yield results. The clans from which *shabaab* derived much of its support at that time controlled neighborhoods that were beyond the reach of the clan militia leaders the United States had partnered with. They were thus of little use; in fact, they devoted much of their energies to fighting one another.

Worse, U.S. support of these militia leaders was a poorly kept secret and fueled Somali anger that the United States was reinforcing warlords who were responsible for the crisis of prolonged state collapse in the first place.<sup>20</sup>

Under pressure from the United States to cooperate, in early 2006, a number of these militia leaders announced the establishment of the grandly named Coalition for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism. That alarmed an ascendant Somali Islamic umbrella movement, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), which viewed the coalition as a plan by the United States to attack them. In February, fighting broke out between the two. Shabaab fighters constituted a critical part of the ICU's overall fighting force and effectively routed the poorly paid and poorly motivated U.S.-backed militias. In June 2006, the ICU took control of the entire city of Mogadishu, uniting a capital that had been divided for 16 years. Remarkably, they then extended their authority across most of southern and central Somalia within two months. Though the ICU was only a loose umbrella movement of nationalists, Sufis, Salafists, and jihadists and had had no expectation it would be administering most of the country, it did an admirable job of reasserting law and order across the country, removing militia roadblocks and reopening the international airport and seaport. Tens of thousands of Somali refugees returned for the first time to a safe Mogadishu. For the vast majority of Somalis, the long national nightmare of war and state collapse appeared to be over.

This entire turn of events in the first half of 2006 was an embarrassment for the U.S. government. In response, the U.S. Department of State sought to reassert control over Somalia policy and embarked on a hopeful diplomatic effort to promote peace talks between the ICU and a transitional Somali government, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), which had been formed in late 2004 with extensive international support but had never been strong enough to establish a presence in the capital. The reasoning was that a TFG-ICU power-sharing accord would consolidate the peace in the country, and the initiative was the right move. But the talks floundered. Hard-liners in the TFG wanted no part of a deal with Islamists; ICU hard-liners saw no need to share power when they already enjoyed a victor's peace over most of the country. Worse, hard-liners in the ICU marginalized the moderates and began pushing the ICU into more radical positions, alarming an already nervous Ethiopia. The ICU began calling for jihad against Ethiopia, made territorial claims on Ethiopia, backed two armed insurgent groups fighting Ethiopia, called on the Ethiopian people to overthrow Meles Zenawi, and

forged an alliance with Ethiopia's regional enemy Eritrea. Up until October 2006, the United States had sought to restrain Ethiopia from attacking, but at some point in late fall, key U.S. government officials concluded that the ICU was irredeemable. The assistant secretary of state Jendayi Frazer, who came to play a lead role on Somalia policy after mid-2006, stated publicly in mid-December that the ICU leaders were "extremists to the core" and "controlled by Al Qaeda cell individuals."<sup>21</sup> At that point, an Ethiopian offensive was inevitable, and though some in and out of the U.S. government expressed worries that Ethiopia would get caught in a quagmire, the United States was intent on ensuring Ethiopian success. Defense attachés and intelligence assets were rapidly shifted to the Horn of Africa to provide support.

The Ethiopian offensive occurred in late 2006 and was initially an astounding success. The ICU forces in the countryside were quickly overwhelmed, and the ICU leadership disbanded, handed control over fighters and weapons to clan elders, and fled the country to Asmara. Shabaab took heavy losses and melted into the countryside. Against the advice of U.S. officials, Ethiopia occupied the capital Mogadishu. The apparent victory vindicated Bush administration officials who saw it as proof of the effectiveness of "outsourcing" the war on terror to regional allies, though in reality Ethiopia was acting on its own behalf and bristled at the idea of being portrayed as doing the United States' bidding.<sup>22</sup>

But actually this victory was a chimera, and catastrophic troubles loomed on the horizon. Even critics of the Ethiopian occupation failed to fully appreciate just how disastrous the situation was about to become. Ethiopia's attempt to remove an increasingly radical Islamist threat instead produced ideal conditions for a much more radical, Al Qaeda-inspired movement in Somalia. Worse, the United States was viewed by Somalis as having directly backed and orchestrated the Ethiopian intervention and so was held responsible for all of the subsequent calamities it brought to the Somali people. This Somali perception was reinforced by the fact that the United States briefly became directly involved in the fighting, attacking convoys in southern Somalia that it believed carried EAAQ cell leaders. Those missiles killed and injured several shabaab figures, but no EAAQ cell members were among them. The U.S. government was also involved in renditions of over 80 ICU-linked Somalis from Kenya back to Somali authorities, who turned them over to Ethiopia and the United States for questioning.<sup>23</sup> The questionable legality of these renditions, and the physical treatment of the detainees, became the source of sharp

criticism from international and Somali quarters and further fueled a spike in anti-Americanism.

### **The Three Pillars: U.S. Policy in 2007–2008**

In response to the Ethiopian occupation, the U.S. State Department advanced a policy on Somalia that would frame and constrain U.S. options toward Somalia for years to come and that constituted the main legacy inherited by the Obama administration. This policy was built around three pillars. All three were entirely reasonable and constructive and arguably constituted the best available options at the time. In retrospect, however, all three were based on overly optimistic assumptions about the intentions of key local and regional actors.

The first pillar was a commitment to state-building in Somalia, specifically to provide robust support to the Somali TFG. Previous U.S. policy had paid lip service to the TFG but had worked around rather than through it in pursuit of counterterrorism objectives, on the eminently practical grounds that the TFG had no physical presence in Mogadishu and was therefore useless as a partner. The new Somalia policy meant to make the TFG the “only game in town”—the only legitimate arena within which Somali political movements could advance their claims. The United States and its allies recognized that the TFG was exceptionally weak. To shore up the TFG’s capacity and legitimacy, the United States and other donors channeled capacity-building aid to the TFG, underwrote salaries and budgets for parts of the TFG, and provided training and equipment to TFG security forces. The United States provided an immediate \$40 million as a “down payment,” with more to follow.<sup>24</sup> U.S. counterterrorism measures were redirected to partner with the TFG security sector so that—at least in theory—state-building and counterterrorism efforts were no longer working at cross-purposes. This pillar tethered the United States to a fledgling and deeply contested unity government. If it proved unwilling or unwilling to govern, U.S. policy was in trouble.

The second pillar was promotion of national reconciliation and dialogue, with the specific aim of making the TFG more inclusive. Though the TFG was supposed to be a government of national unity, it had from the outset been dominated by a narrow coalition of clans and political interests closely associated with Ethiopia. Many of the most powerful Mogadishu clans and business interests felt excluded from the TFG and had been strong supporters of the ICU. U.S. and UN diplomats pushed for dialogue between the TFG and those groups in the hope of bringing them into the government and

weaning them away from the ICU in exile. This would deprive shabaab of social support in the capital, improve the TFG's legitimacy, and make it easier to justify support to the TFG as a bona fide unity government. If this policy failed, state-building and other support to the TFG would amount to taking sides in a civil war.

Finally, the United States and others recognized that the Ethiopian military occupation of Mogadishu, though essential to provide armed protection of the newly arrived TFG, was incendiary and would provoke an armed insurgency if not removed. To that end, the U.S. State Department pledged to drum up support for an African Union peace operation to replace the Ethiopian troops. The goal was to deploy 8,000 forces in an African Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) within months of the Ethiopian occupation, with the principal mission of providing protection to the transitional government and vital facilities, such as the seaport and airport.

All three pillars of U.S. policy met with frustration. African governments were deeply skeptical about committing their forces to a troubled setting like Somalia and saw deep risks in being associated with U.S. counterterrorism initiatives on the continent. Assistant Secretary of State Fraser was unable to deliver the promised 8,000-man force; only a 2,000-man Ugandan force was belatedly mustered in 2007. The Ethiopian government, which fully backed the TFG, thus felt obliged to keep its forces on, guaranteeing the rapid rise of an armed insurgency fueled by a powerful cocktail of anti-Ethiopianism, Somali nationalism, and Islamism. By April 2007, the capital was plunged into unthinkable levels of armed violence. Heavy-handed Ethiopian responses to insurgency attacks led to the emptying of whole neighborhoods; about half of the 1.3 million residents of Mogadishu were displaced, producing one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters that year. Worst of all, a regrouped shabaab took full advantage and came to assume the lead role in the insurgency, winning support from a wide array of Somalis radically angered by the Ethiopian occupation.<sup>25</sup>

Under those circumstances, policies designed to promote national reconciliation went nowhere. Political polarization and enmity in Mogadishu were intensified by the insurgency and counterinsurgency violence, and prospects for building bridges were remote. A UN-backed dialogue in Mogadishu in the summer of 2007 produced nothing. Indeed, the very notion that dialogue could woo aggrieved clans into the TFG in such a context of hyper-violence came across as either naive or disingenuous.

The third pillar of the U.S. policy, state-building, also went awry. First, the TFG leadership—President Abdullahi Yusuf, Prime Minister



Mohamed Ghedi, and most of their top cabinet members—demonstrated no commitment to or interest in building up the capacity of the TFG to govern and even less interest in advancing key transitional tasks. Instead, they approached their positions in the TFG as a lucrative windfall profit, focusing on securing and diverting as much money as they could. Weapons and ammunition provided to the TFG were sold, sometimes to shabaab. The TFG never functioned as a remotely competent government; instead, it constituted a loose collection of autonomous clan paramilitaries using the TFG as a flag of convenience but answering only to their clan militia leaders.<sup>26</sup> This was doubly disastrous for the United States because the TFG-affiliated paramilitaries—the police, the presidential guard, and the armed forces—devoted themselves mainly to preying on the Mogadishu civilian population, which they viewed as the enemy. Security forces whose salaries were being provided by various external donors visited serious human rights abuses on the population. Finally, these TFG paramilitaries were not ideal partners for counterterrorism operations. They were deeply unpopular in southern Somalia, had little ability to gather accurate intelligence in those communities, and turned many Somalis to shabaab. They were also infiltrated by shabaab, making them dangerously unreliable in some instances.

The result was a catastrophe in 2007—for the United States, for Ethiopia, and for the Somali people. The only group that benefited from the extraordinary levels of political violence, displacement, and radicalization in Mogadishu was shabaab. By early 2008, it controlled most of southern Somalia and parts of the capital and was inflicting heavy losses on Ethiopia, TFG officials, and the AMISOM forces. It was far more radical than its former leaders in the ICU, openly embracing affiliation with Al Qaeda. It was able to raise funds and even recruit fighters from among the one million Somalis in the diaspora. For Ethiopia, Mogadishu had in fact become a quagmire. For the United States, it was now tethered to a TFG and an Ethiopian occupation that could not have been more despised by the Somali people. Anti-Americanism was fierce and pervasive among Somalis in and out of the country. Somalis interpreted silence by the State Department in the face of TFG and Ethiopian abuses as consent.

### DESIGNATION OF SHABAAB AS A TERRORIST GROUP

In response, the State Department took a step with lasting consequences. On February 26, 2008, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced the designation of shabaab as a foreign terrorist

organization.<sup>27</sup> On one level, this was a straightforward decision—the group expressed openly its affiliation with Al Qaeda and engaged in extensive use of improvised explosive devices and suicide bombings that fell squarely in the repertoire of terrorist tactics. On the other hand, shabaab had not launched attacks on American targets, nor had it engaged in terrorism outside Somalia, though it frequently threatened to. For many Somalis, shabaab was first and foremost a legitimate form of “defensive jihad,” a form of resistance against an illegal foreign occupation of Somali soil. The tired old bromide “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” found a new application in Somalia.

The designation had immediate and enduring consequences. First, it criminalized financial and other support provided to shabaab by Somalis around the world. The large Somali diaspora now became the subject of close scrutiny by law enforcement agencies in the United States and the West, especially once it became known that two dozen Somali diaspora youth had been recruited into shabaab and in a number of cases served as suicide bombers. The Somali crisis was formally incorporated into the global war on terror at that point, and its scope was as global as the one million or more Somalis living around the world. Fear that Somali Americans could be recruited, trained, and indoctrinated by shabaab and then return to form sleeper cells in the United States fueled growing concerns in 2008 of the threat of “homegrown” terrorism. Financial support to shabaab from the Somali diaspora was also the target of law enforcement responses. Somali remittance (or *hawala*) companies were required to submit to much more rigorous compliance measures to ensure that they were not being misused to channel funds to shabaab, raising concerns about the vulnerability of the entire remittance economy on which Somalia is now heavily dependent.

Second, the designation potentially criminalized all other sources of financially and resource flows into Somalia that might benefit shabaab. This was a particularly sensitive issue for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the international relief organizations (principally the World Food Programme, CARE, and World Vision) that handled sizable food aid delivery into southern Somalia. Somalia was at once the site of the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, a zone largely under the control of shabaab, and a highly insecure area that some relief agencies dubbed an “accountability free zone” because of the difficulty of monitoring food aid distribution. Under those circumstances, it was impossible to verify with certainty that none of the food aid or the local contracts needed to move it was benefiting shabaab. The reality was that virtually any resource

injected into Somalia—food aid, support to the TFG, piracy ransoms, or remittances to family members by the diaspora—eventually provided some indirect revenues to shabaab. Under the terms of the 2001 Patriot Act and related antiterrorism legislation, the legal implications for any American working for a group found to have knowingly given any material support to a terrorist individual or organization are potentially severe. These concerns grew into a major intragovernmental debate in the first year of the Obama administration (discussed later).

Third, the designation placed the United States squarely and directly in conflict with shabaab, which until March 2008 had directed most of its venom at Ethiopia and the TFG. When in May 2008 the U.S. military successfully launched a missile attack on a remote site in central Somalia, killing shabaab leader Aden Hashi ‘Ayro, shabaab announced that it was broadening its targets to include all U.S. and Western citizens and installations in the Horn of Africa, all regional governments allied with the United States, and all Somalis collaborating with the United States. The “decapitation” tactic against shabaab failed to break or weaken the group; it only widened the war shabaab sought to fight.

Finally, the designation of shabaab as a terrorist group greatly reduced U.S. and other diplomats’ room to maneuver to reach out to “salvageable” elements of shabaab in an effort to divide and weaken the overall movement. Though distinctions between “moderate” and “hard-line” camps in jihadist movements are often painfully crude and sometimes naive, there is no question that shabaab is far from a unified movement. Some of the group’s leadership, and many of its estimated 2,000–3,000 fighters, are not deeply indoctrinated jihadists; they represent a wide range of interests and are divided over a number of issues.<sup>28</sup> This is precisely the kind of context that lends itself to strategies of co-optation to divide and weaken the insurgency. But the legal implications of dialoguing with elements of a designated terrorist group greatly reduced the space for diplomats to explore this option. This concern is by no means unique to Somalia—it has been a major topic of conversation regarding strategies for dealing with insurgents in Afghanistan as well.<sup>29</sup>

## BUSH POLICY AND THE SOMALI PIRACY EPIDEMIC

In the midst of this crisis, Somalia also became the site of the world’s worst epidemic of piracy. What had been a relatively minor piracy

economy off the northeast coast of the country from 1995 to 2004 exploded into a major criminal activity in 2005. Somali pirates—cells of gunmen in small fishing boats, trolling the busy shipping lanes of the Gulf of Aden and the East Africa coastline in search of cargo ships—captured dozens of ships and held hundreds of crewmen captive, accruing ransoms that reached and exceeded \$1 million per ship.<sup>30</sup> Total ransoms paid are very difficult to calculate with accuracy, but estimates for 2009 ranged from \$82 million to \$100 million, making it one of the top sources of hard currency in Somalia.

From a strictly financial point of view, Somali piracy, until recently, constituted little more than a “nuisance tax” on international shipping. But from a security perspective, the dramatic expansion of Somali piracy has been alarming and has prompted an unprecedented multilateral naval response. The United States was among nearly two dozen countries that committed naval assets in the seas off the Somali coast in an effort to deter piracy. Despite a number of high-profile interdictions, the naval patrols failed to discourage Somali pirates—the number of cargo ships is too high, the seas where Somali pirates operate too vast, and the risk-reward calculus too irresistible for young Somali gunmen and their financial backers. By 2010, attempted and successful piracy attacks emanating from Somalia were more numerous than ever—in November 2010, twenty vessels and over 430 crewmen were being held by Somali pirates.<sup>31</sup>

### THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION AND SOMALIA: WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY?

By late 2008, the situation in Somalia was extraordinarily bleak. But the first months of 2009 appeared to present a rare window of opportunity for both Somalis and external actors. First, in January 2009, Ethiopia withdrew its forces from Somalia, removing a major source of radicalization and mobilization. That same month, the United States and Ethiopia pressured the TFG president Abdullahi Yusuf, a deeply polarizing and ineffective figure, to resign. He was replaced by moderate Islamist and former ICU leader Sheikh Sharif. This move was intended to rob shabaab of its other *bête noire* and encourage defectors from the insurgency. Shabaab could no longer define itself by what it opposed—it would have to explain what it was for; and its extreme interpretations of Islam and affiliation with Al Qaeda would, it was hoped, alienate it from Somalis. The Somali people were war-weary and eager to embrace a solution that brought an end to the fighting. These positive developments in Somalia coincided with the

change of administration in the United States, raising hopes that Washington would respond with new policies.<sup>32</sup>

Shabaab sensed the danger and in May 2009 mounted an offensive against the TFG and the AMISOM forces. The TFG was in genuine trouble; some feared it could collapse altogether. The Obama administration's Africa team was still in transition and was forced to respond quickly. It did so by committing itself to shoring up the TFG militarily, sending tens of millions of dollars in weapons and ammunition. Much of that military assistance was allegedly sold on the open market in Mogadishu and ended up in the hands of shabaab. The Obama administration also decided to throw its full diplomatic support behind the TFG president Sheikh Sharif, made clear in the press conference held by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton following her meeting with Sharif in Nairobi in August 2009.<sup>33</sup>

The logic behind this move was twofold—first, it reflected a hope that a moderate Islamist leader in the TFG would help defuse and marginalize shabaab, and second, it signaled an effort to reemphasize political and diplomatic approaches to the Somali crisis. But more than anything else, it reflected a policy designed not to lose. The new administration was not about to expose itself to attacks from domestic rivals that it had “lost Somalia” to an Al Qaeda affiliate within months of taking office. By funneling military aid to Somalia and making a strong diplomatic commitment to the TFG, the administration demonstrated that it had done all it could. It was not the first time a U.S. administration had responded to a Somali crisis with a largely symbolic gesture designed mainly to show that it had “done something.” American policies in Somalia have often been shaped by domestic political concerns as much as by strategic calculations.

One element of the Somali crisis that the Obama team understood well and was in a position to do something about was the need to reframe the conflict as a largely internal Somali struggle, not a global war. The administration appreciated the fact that shabaab stood to lose if Somalis viewed the conflict as a choice between shabaab's deeply unpopular and radical vision for Somalia versus alternative Somali futures. Shabaab had every reason to regionalize and globalize the crisis in Somalia so that it could position itself as a defender of Somali interests versus non-Somalis and as a guardian of Islam against infidels. In 2010 the U.S. assistant secretary of state Johnnie Carson thus underscored that the United States had no intent of getting directly involved in an internal dispute among Somalis over how best to govern themselves. In a March 2010 press conference, he rejected reports that the United States had military advisers on

the ground and stressed that the United States was providing only “limited” military assistance to the TFG. He concluded, “This is a Somali problem primarily. . . . The United States believes that Somalis and Africans should. . . remain in the lead. This is not an American problem and we do not seek to Americanize the conflict there.”<sup>34</sup>

### BAD OPTIONS AND POLICY STASIS

Unfortunately, the newly constituted TFG in 2009 quickly turned out to be a major disappointment for the United States and other external actors, and it served as the latest in a long list of lost opportunities in Somalia. Although the TFG attracted a number of very dedicated and well-qualified civil servants, it was controlled by a circle of political figures whose interests were dominated by short-term profiteering. They appeared to have little confidence in the TFG as a long-term state-building enterprise but saw in the TFG a chance to control and divert foreign aid and customs revenues. The result was a TFG that remained as dysfunctional and corrupt as ever. It provided very little by way of governance to the small number of people in the area it controlled, and its security forces were utterly ineffective and uncommitted in the face of sustained shabaab attacks. “On paydays we have almost 20,000 soldiers,” complained one TFG official. “When there’s a battle, we can’t find 100.”<sup>35</sup> The TFG was able to retain a precarious physical presence in a small portion of Mogadishu only because of the continued protection afforded it by the AMISOM forces. The TFG’s legitimacy remained depressingly low in the eyes of most Somalis. Making matters worse, AMISOM counterattacks against shabaab assaults produced high levels of civilian casualties in Mogadishu, hardening Somali attitudes against the peacekeeping force and providing shabaab with a new foreign military to rally against.

Nonetheless, the Obama administration and other donor states supported a request from the TFG leadership to extend the transitional period for two additional years, to August 2011, to allow it time to advance key transitional tasks that the previous leadership had neglected. For U.S. officials, this was more a matter of buying time than a vote of confidence in the TFG. Keeping the TFG alive, even if only as a government on paper, was not an inspired policy. But the alternative—allowing the TFG to expire—was politically unacceptable to the United States and its allies.

Without an effective and willing local partner in the TFG, the Obama administration’s only recourse in Somalia was to work to weaken shabaab, mainly with the same policies and tools that the

Bush administration had used. The administration continued to squeeze shabaab financially, raising the costs and risks to Somalis fund-raising on its behalf. It also expanded support to Somali armed groups and polities that opposed shabaab, including the Sufi militia Awlu-Sunna wal Jamma and the regional governments of Puntland and Somaliland. In September 2010, the Department of State presented this diversification of points of contact with a wider range of Somali actors as a new “dual-track” approach. But to most observers, the proposed policy appeared to be at best a minor shift from what had been for years an established practice of working closely with a range of non-state actors and self-declared states inside Somalia.

Likewise, the Obama administration’s counterterrorism policies in Somalia shifted in tone but not dramatically in substance. Government agencies continued to work through TFG security forces that were in essence the same type of clan-based paramilitaries that had been U.S. partners in the pre-2007 period. American private security contractors continued to maintain a physical presence and a support role in the TFG-controlled areas of the capital. The U.S. military continued to make occasional use of direct military operations to kill or capture suspected Al Qaeda targets inside Somalia, most notably in a September 2009 daytime operation that killed top East Africa Al Qaeda figure Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan.<sup>36</sup> And U.S. naval patrols continued to combat Somali piracy offshore, including the heavily publicized standoff between pirates and the U.S. Navy over the captain of the *Maersk Alabama*, which ended with the deaths of three pirates.<sup>37</sup> One reason the U.S. Somali policy continued to feature a significant, if sporadic, military dimension was that the military and intelligence were the only government departments with a strong capacity in the region. The Obama administration was constrained by sharp imbalances in interdepartmental resources and personnel inherited from the Bush administration. J. Stephen Morrison observed in 2009 that

the State Department’s African Affairs Bureau is chronically weak and neglected, as was recently detailed in a harsh internal review. Similarly, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is widely acknowledged to have been hollowed out over the years and is ill-prepared to execute major new initiatives.<sup>38</sup>

The institutional weaknesses of the DOS and USAID not only reduced the Obama administration’s ability to shift the counterterrorism policy in Somalia away from a strictly military approach. They

were also the source of deep and ongoing intragovernmental tensions over mandates, resources, priorities, and coordination mechanisms. In a context of sharp power imbalances between government agencies, the Bush administration's push for a "whole of government" approach (or the "3-D approach," integrating defense, development, and diplomacy) inadvertently took on the appearance of subordination of the DOS and USAID to a hegemonic DOD. For its part, DOD under the Obama administration grew increasingly wary of and internally divided over calls to involve the U.S. military in any aspect of the Somali quagmire.<sup>39</sup> Obama's team thus took the reins of a government that was anything but integrated on foreign policy and that at times seemed preoccupied with narrow organizational rivalries and risk aversion in the face of poor policy options.

### HUMANITARIAN AID

In two areas, the Obama administration's Somalia policy did take dramatically new directions. In both instances, the policy shifts were reactive. First, the Obama administration concluded that the U.S. food aid channeled through aid agencies into shabaab-controlled areas was in fact at risk of violating the Patriot Act and thus had to be suspended. In reality, this very complex legal question and policy was handled not in an interagency policy forum but by government legal offices, where the question was initially over whether USAID officials could be legally liable if American relief supplies benefited shabaab. The Department of State sought to secure confirmation that the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) "will not seek enforcement action against United States government employees, grantees and contractors" if "accidental, unintentional or incidental benefits" flowed to shabaab.<sup>40</sup> OFAC replied that any transaction with shabaab was prohibited but assured the DOS that it would not prosecute U.S. government officials or contractors if they "acted in good faith." But apparently that exchange was enough to set wheels in motion that culminated in the United States insisting on tight new monitoring conditions on the World Food Programme (WFP) in December 2009. This had the net effect of suspending food relief operations in southern Somalia. WFP formally explained suspension of aid shipments on the grounds that the area had become unacceptably insecure for aid personnel. Somalia had indeed become extremely unsafe for international and national aid workers—in fact, a third of all humanitarian casualties worldwide occurred in Somalia in 2008. But the real driver of the policy shift was U.S. pressure. This prompted the UN resident



representative to Somalia, Mark Bowden, to accuse the United States of imposing “impossible” conditions on aid deliveries. “What we are seeing is the politicization of humanitarian issues,” he argued.<sup>41</sup>

The issue of whether to suspend food aid to Somalia generated extensive and heated debate within the administration, according to government officials.<sup>42</sup> Proponents of suspension of food aid argued that shabaab derived significant direct and indirect benefits from the delivery of food aid into their areas of control and that it was ludicrous for one hand of the U.S. government to be trying to squeeze the terrorist group financially while another hand of the government was feeding it. Opponents of food aid suspension argued that it was unethical to consider cutting emergency relief to a country where 3.5 million people were in urgent need of assistance and that it would be politically damaging to American efforts to win over Somalis if the United States cut food aid and starvation occurred there. The four logics—counterterrorism, the law, humanitarianism, and political interests—all clashed in the process. Had the administration succeeded in appointing a director for USAID over the course of 2009, many inside the administration argue that the matter might have been handled differently. But in the absence of a USAID director, the case was driven in the end by narrow legal considerations. To many Somalis, it appeared to be another instance of American counterterrorism policies trumping all other considerations, even if it put millions of Somalis at risk, though in this case it was just as likely that narrow legalism and fear of liability were the real drivers.

The humanitarian aid community was alarmed by this development and feared a major famine could break out by May 2010. Fortunately, that worst-case scenario did not come to pass. Rains were unusually good in Somalia in 2010, improving local crop, meat, and milk production, and the large Somali diaspora stepped up its remittances to relatives displaced by the fighting. Still, levels of malnutrition and hunger are exceptionally high in south-central Somalia, and a serious drought in 2011, combined with a spike in global food and fuel prices, forced the question of food aid suspension back on the desk of policy-makers.

## SOMALIA AND DOMESTIC LAW ENFORCEMENT

The second unexpected shift in Somali policy under the Obama administration has been greatly stepped-up law enforcement attention toward the estimated 150,000 or more Somalis living in the United States.<sup>43</sup> This reflected a growing concern over the newest iteration

of terrorist threats to the United States—the “home-grown terrorist” holding a U.S. passport and citizenship but with loyalty to a terrorist group. In October 2008, just one week before Barack Obama won the presidential election, a Somali American from Minneapolis named Shirwa Ahmed blew himself up in a suicide bombing in Somalia. He became the first known American citizen to engage in a suicide bombing in the name of an Al Qaeda–affiliated terrorist group. The investigation into his death revealed that approximately 40 Somali American youth had been recruited into shabaab since 2007. The Somali American community became the subject of intense law enforcement scrutiny, both as a potential source of recruits into terrorist organizations and as a source of fund-raising for shabaab. A number of Somali Americans were subsequently indicted or arrested for fund-raising or for intent to commit an act of terrorism in the United States, including one—19-year-old engineering student Mohamed Osman Mohamud—who attempted to detonate a car bomb at a Christmas tree lighting ceremony in Portland, Oregon, in November 2010. In the first 18 months of the Obama administration, the Somali threat completed a metamorphosis begun under the Bush administration. The most tangible and immediate security threat now posed by Somalia increasingly comes from a small but troubled portion of Somali American youth.

### SOURCES OF POLICY CONTINUITY

Why has Somalia policy remained much the same in the 18 months since President Obama came into office? A variety of factors have been at play, including:

- very poor policy options on Somalia. When faced with bad choices, policy makers often prefer not to choose, and existing policies remain intact not so much by preference as by default;
- risk aversion. Somalia has been a graveyard of foreign policy initiatives and interventions for the United States, the UN, and other external actors for 30 years. Few careers have been enhanced by close association with Somali policy, but many have been damaged. This reputation as a “third rail” discourages many policy makers from wanting to devote time and risk reputation on a new Somali policy;
- domestic political calculations. Obama officials are determined not to hand their political rivals an easy point of attack on foreign policy. This includes a commitment not to be portrayed as soft on

terrorism or losing a battle in the war on terrorism. This has produced policies in Somalia designed “not to lose” and explains the continued support to the TFG and to the African Union peace-keeping forces, despite low confidence in both;

- the relatively low priority accorded to Somalia and Africa in general. Despite genuine concern in the U.S. government about the threat Somalia poses, the urgency of other domestic and foreign policy crises has again relegated Africa to the status of “national interest backwater.”<sup>44</sup> Absent sustained and high-level attention from the National Security Council, Somalia policy has been defined by incrementalism rather than major policy shifts;
- delays in filling key positions on Africa. The position of director of USAID went unfilled for a year; the assistant secretary of state for African affairs was not confirmed until over six months after Obama’s election. That meant that caretakers were at the helm for an extended period of time in 2009, a recipe for policy stasis. It also meant that some important policy deliberations on Somalia ended up in the hands of government lawyers, creating frustrating legal entanglements and constraints on Somalia policy that might have been avoided had a USAID director been quickly appointed;
- institutionalization of government agency imbalances. The “steady growth of authority, responsibility, and resources of the U.S. military as civilian diplomatic and development capacities have declined”<sup>45</sup> has created a structural impediment to policy shifts designed to privilege diplomatic approaches. DOD officials recognize this imbalance and are among the many voices calling for greater investment in foreign aid and diplomacy in Somalia;
- fragmentation. Despite efforts to forge a “whole of government” approach, Somali policy now involves more U.S. government departments, agencies, and offices than ever, with very unclear lines of authority and crosscutting agendas. This includes the unfortunate problem of U.S. military integrated command structures that—both before and after the creation of AFRICOM in 2005—divide the Horn of Africa and its neighbors (Yemen and the Indian Ocean) into different commands;
- weak local knowledge. The United States and other external actors have to forge policies on Somalia with no physical presence on the ground and with weak knowledge of local political dynamics. This makes it very difficult to pursue policy shifts requiring surgical diplomatic approaches;
- a stretched military. Though most Obama officials are keen to shift policy emphasis away from the heavy focus on the military that

characterized Bush's foreign policy, Somalia continues to generate security threats to the region and to the United States that may require sustained and direct military actions. But the U.S. military is already stretched with ongoing major deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, reducing the feasibility of major military options in Somalia;

- budget constraints. The Obama administration inherited the worst economic crisis in the United States since the Great Depression and is unlikely to be able to muster funds for any major initiative in Somalia;
- the subsidiary nature of the United States' Somalia policy. U.S. Somali policy is rarely considered on its own merits; it is almost always subsidiary to the U.S. policy toward its strategic ally Ethiopia. This further constrains new policy directions on Somalia;
- declining U.S. influence. Experienced observers of U.S. policy in Africa concur that, despite an increase in foreign aid and engagement with Africa by the Bush administration, U.S. influence in Africa has actually declined and is likely to continue to do so.<sup>46</sup> Diplomats in the region all insist that U.S. leadership is still critically important on Somalia, but any new initiatives in Somalia will have to be multilateral, not by preference but out of necessity. Redirection of policy is difficult enough to engineer within a single government; it is much slower when done as a multilateral policy rethink.

## U.S. SOMALIA POLICY INTO THE FUTURE

Despite the recent record of policy stasis, impending crises inside and outside Somalia could well force the hand of U.S. policy makers and prompt more substantial policy changes in coming years. The most immediate issue as of this publication is the expiration of the Transitional Federal Government's mandate in August 2011. The TFG has accomplished almost no transitional tasks in seven years, and the arrival of August 2011 will force an international decision on how and whether to handle another extension of its rule. The likelihood of a major humanitarian crisis will test current U.S. policies suspending humanitarian aid into areas controlled by the jihadist group shabaab. The possibility of a shabaab takeover of additional territory could force the administration into hard choices about whether to ramp-up military countermeasures or learn to live with a radical Islamist movement in control of most of Somalia.

Actions taken by regional governments could also alter the political and security environment in Somalia in sudden and unexpected

ways. Ethiopia remains much attuned to security threats posed by shabaab and could engage in short but powerful military incursions in conjunction with AMISOM forces and Kenya. Ethiopia will likely continue a policy of building up local Somali allies in its border areas and in Puntland in the northeast of Somalia. Kenya has begun to take more active steps in building up alliances with local Somali clan militias in its border area and could be drawn into operations in the southern Jubba regions. A major shabaab-inspired terrorist attack in Kenya or another regional state would have the potential to provoke a large-scale regional response.

A worst-case development would be a successful, major shabaab terrorist attack in the United States or on an American target abroad. That would likely elicit a substantial U.S. military response that could draw the United States much deeper into the Somali crisis than it is at present and result in a new and much more assertive military strategy.

All these scenarios have one thing in common—they anticipate that any major change in U.S. Somali policy will likely be reactive, not proactive. Policy options in Somalia are too risky and unpalatable to generate the kind of internal momentum needed in the U.S. government to catalyze a major course correction on Somalia.

## NOTES

1. William Mark Bellamy, "Making Better Sense of US Security Engagement in Africa," in *US Africa Policy beyond the Bush Years: Critical Challenges for the Obama Administration*, ed. Jennifer Cooke and J. Stephen Morrison (Washington, DC: CSIS Press, 2009), 10.
2. Christopher Thompson, "US/Africa: A Militarised Diplomacy," *Africa Report*, March 27, 2010, [www.theafricareport.com/archives2/frontlines/3288673-usafrica-a-militarised-diplomacy.html](http://www.theafricareport.com/archives2/frontlines/3288673-usafrica-a-militarised-diplomacy.html). (Accessed on October 14, 2010).
3. Princeton Lyman, "The War on Terrorism in Africa," in *Africa in World Politics*, 4th ed. John Harbeson and Donald Rothchild (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2010), 279.
4. Barack Obama, as quoted in Charles Kupkhan, "Enemies into Friends: How the United States Can Court Its Adversaries," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 2 (March–April 2010): 120.
5. Elizabeth Schmidt, "Introduction: ASR Forum, Africa in the Age of Obama," *African Studies Review* 53, no. 2 (September 2010): 3.
6. "No Change on Obama's Policy toward State Says Former Envoy," *All-Africa.com*, April 10, 2010, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201004121153.html>. (Accessed on April 15, 2010).

7. See, for instance, Nick Van der Walle, "US Policy towards Africa: The Bush Legacy and the Obama Administration," *African Affairs* 109, no. 434 (2009): 1–21.
8. Special Briefing, "Remarks to the Press from UNGA," U.S. Department of State, Under-Secretary for Public Affairs, September 24, 2010, [www.state.gov/p/af/rls/spbr/2010/147922.htm](http://www.state.gov/p/af/rls/spbr/2010/147922.htm). (Accessed on October 3, 2010).
9. David Rawson, *The Somali State and Foreign Aid* (Washington, DC: Foreign Service Institute, 1993), 111–115; and Ken Menkhous and Lou Ortmyer, "Somalia: Misread Crises and Missed Opportunities," in *Opportunities Missed, Opportunities Seized: Preventive Diplomacy in the Post-Cold War World*, ed. Bruce Jentleson (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 223–225.
10. As quoted in Terrence Lyons and Ahmed Samatar, *Somalia: State Collapse, Multilateral Intervention, and Strategies for Political Reconstruction* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1995), 28.
11. Ken Menkhous and Lou Ortmyer, *Key Decision in the Somali Intervention* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Pew Case Studies, 1995).
12. As quoted in Combating Terrorism Center, *Al Qaeda's (Mid)Adventures in the Horn of Africa* (West Point CTC, 2007), 39.
13. Quoted in James Traub, "Surge Incapacity," *Foreign Policy*, March 8, 2010, [www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/03/08/surge\\_incapacity](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/03/08/surge_incapacity). (Accessed on April 15, 2010).
14. See Theresa Whelan, "Africa's Ungoverned Space—A New Threat Paradigm," paper delivered at the conference *Rethinking the Future Nature of Competitions and Conflict*, December 19, 2005, 2.
15. Robert Rotberg, "The Horn of Africa and Yemen: Diminishing the Threat of Terrorism," in *Battling Terrorism in the Horn of Africa*, ed. Robert Rotberg, 1–22 (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2005).
16. Combating Terrorism Center, *Al Qaeda's (Mis)Adventures*, 29–46; and Ken Menkhous and Jacob Shapiro, "Non-State Actors and Failed States: Lessons from al-Qa'ida's Experiences in the Horn of Africa," in *Ungoverned Spaces? Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty*, ed. Anne L. Clunan and Harold Trinkunas, 77–94 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).
17. Johnnie Carson, "The Struggle Against Terrorism," in Rotberg, *Battling Terrorism*, 173–192.
18. International Crisis Group, "Counter-Terrorism in Somalia: Losing Hearts and Minds?" Africa Report no. 95 (Brussels/Nairobi: ICG, July 11, 2005).
19. Interview by author, Washington DC, April 2009.
20. Ken Menkhous, "The Crisis in Somalia: Tragedy in Five Acts," *African Affairs* 106 (Summer 2007): 357–390.

21. As quoted in Menkhaus, "Crisis in Somalia," 378.
22. Mark Mazzetti, "Pentagon Sees Move in Somalia as Blueprint," *New York Times*, January 13, 2007; and International Crisis Group, *Somalia: To Move beyond the Failed State*, Africa Report no. 147 (Brussels/Nairobi: ICG, December 23, 2008), 1.
23. Menkhaus, "Crisis in Somalia," 381; and Human Rights Watch, *People Fleeing Somalia War Secretly Detained* (New York: HRW, March 30, 2007).
24. Ken Menkhaus, "Somalia: A Country in Peril, A Policy Nightmare," Enough strategy paper, Washington, DC, September 2008, [www.enoughproject.org/somalia\\_report\\_090308](http://www.enoughproject.org/somalia_report_090308). (Accessed on September 30, 2008).
25. Menkhaus, "Crisis in Somalia."
26. Menkhaus, "Somalia."
27. U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism, "Designation of al-Shabaab as a Foreign Terrorist Organization," Federal Registry, 73, 53 Public Notice 6136 (February 26, 2008), [www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/other/des/102446.htm](http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/other/des/102446.htm). (Accessed on April 15, 2010).
28. International Crisis Group, *Somalia's Divided Islamists*, Africa Policy Briefing 74 (Brussels/Nairobi: ICG, May 18, 2010).
29. See, for instance, Aran Roston, "Talking to the Taliban," *Foreign Policy*, Dispatch, October 8, 2009, [www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/10/08/talking\\_to\\_the\\_taliban](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/10/08/talking_to_the_taliban). (Accessed on April 15, 2010). ; Richard Haas, "We're Not Winning; It's Not Worth It," *Newsweek*, July 18, 2010; Gen. David Petraeus, interview, *Meet the Press*, August 15, 2010; Richard Barrett, "Time to Talk to the Taliban," *New York Times*, October 18, 2010.
30. Ken Menkhaus, "Dangerous Waters," *Survival* 51, no. 1 (February–March 2009): 21–25.
31. "Somalia: Warships Alone Will Not Deter Piracy off Somali Coast, Security Council Told," UN News Service, November 9, 2010.
32. "Somalia after the Ethiopian Occupation: First Steps to End the Conflict and Combat Extremism," Enough strategy paper, Washington, DC, February 9, 2009, [www.enoughproject.org/publications/somalia-after-ethiopian-occupation-first-steps-end-conflict-and-combat-extremism](http://www.enoughproject.org/publications/somalia-after-ethiopian-occupation-first-steps-end-conflict-and-combat-extremism). (Accessed on February 9, 2009).
33. U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesman, "Remarks by Secretary Clinton and Somali President Sharif," August 6, 2009, [www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/August/20090807102930eafas0.9761774.html](http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/August/20090807102930eafas0.9761774.html). (Accessed on April 15, 2010).
34. "Transcript: US Policy in Somalia," press conference with Ambassadors Johnnie Carson and Ertharin Cousin, Washington, DC, March 12, 2010, [www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=4154&lang=0](http://www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=4154&lang=0). (Accessed on April 15, 2010).

35. As quoted in Jeffrey Gettleman, "Somali Airport is Attacked with UN Team on Premises," *New York Times*, September 9, 2010.
36. "Al Qaeda Somalia Suspect Killed," BBC News, September 15, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8254957.stm>. (Accessed on April 15, 2010).
37. Robert McFadden and Scot Shane, "In Rescue of Captain, Navy Kills Three Pirates," *New York Times*, April 12, 2009.
38. J. Stephen Morrison, "Secretary Clinton's Africa Trip: The Broader Context of US Policy," *CSIS Commentaries*, August 5, 2009, [www.smartglobalhealth.org/blog/entry/secretary-clintons-africa-trip-the-broader-context-of-u.s.-policy/](http://www.smartglobalhealth.org/blog/entry/secretary-clintons-africa-trip-the-broader-context-of-u.s.-policy/). (Accessed on September 3, 2010).
39. Author's phone interview, February 2011.
40. Jeffrey Gettleman, "U.S. Delays Somalia Aid, Fearing It Is Feeding Terrorists," *New York Times*, October 1, 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/10/02/world/africa/02somalia.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/02/world/africa/02somalia.html). (Accessed on October 2, 2009).
41. Jeffrey Gettleman, "U.N. Criticizes U.S. Restrictions on Food Aid," *New York Times*, February 17, 2010, [www.nytimes.com/2010/02/18/world/africa/18somalia.html?\\_r=1&ref=jeffrey\\_gettleman](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/18/world/africa/18somalia.html?_r=1&ref=jeffrey_gettleman). (Accessed on February 18, 2010).
42. Author's interviews, Washington DC, April 2010, June 2010.
43. It is impossible to know with accuracy the actual number of Somalis living in the United States or other countries, as a percentage are in the country illegally and do not present themselves in ways that facilitate enumeration. The figure of 150,000 is an estimate from Ken Menkhaus, "The Role and Impact of the Somali Diaspora in Peace-Building, Governance and Development," in *Africa's Finances: The Role of Remittances*, ed. Raj Bardouille, Muna Ndulo, and Margeret Grieco, 187–202 (Newcastle, UK: Oxford Scholars Publications, 2009).
44. Van der Walle, "US Policy towards Africa," 1.
45. Bellamy, "Making Better Sense," 26.
46. See, for instance, Van der Walle, "US Policy toward Africa"; and Jennifer Cooke and J. Stephen Morrison, "A Smarter U.S. Approach to Africa," in Cooke and Morrison, *US Africa Policy*, 2.





## IRAN: FROM ENGAGEMENT TO CONTAINMENT

*Shahram Akbarzadeh*

President Barack Obama faces a tough challenge to his efforts to steer away from the policies of his predecessor in Iran. Obama's diplomatic charm offensive in the Muslim world, and more specifically in relation to Iran, was hoped to breathe new life into the tortured relationship between the United States and Iran. This was a marked departure from the past. Regime change was out. Direct engagement was in. Obama refrained from repeating his predecessor's threats against Iran, instead trying to find a way to influence the behavior of the ruling regime. In a clear effort to draw lessons from past mistakes, the Obama administration moved to address the emotive issues of respect and parity between the United States and Iran and endeavored to chart a path of noninterference. Despite this significant change in the U.S. position, little progress has been made in affecting the behavior of the Islamic regime. Iran continues to defy the international community with its nuclear program, insists on antagonizing Israel, supports Hizbullah, and dismisses international efforts to bring peace to the protracted Palestinian-Israeli dispute. In short, Iran revels in its pariah status. As a result, pressure has been mounting on President Obama to reconsider his policy of engagement and revert back to the pattern of punishment.

This chapter explores the range of issues that have acted to advance or hamper President Obama's push for engagement and considers their implications for U.S. policy on Iran. It begins with an account of Obama's efforts to address the United States' image in the Middle East and proceeds to explore his charm offensive in Iran. Obama was the first U.S. president to reach out to Iran in a personal message, a move that startled the Iranian leadership. This initiative, however,

soon lost its impact following the polarization of the political landscape in June and July 2009. President Obama's intention to stay away from Iran's internal affairs, and his reluctance to publicly criticize the regime, made him a target in the United States. Accused of being weak on Iran, the Obama administration has had the tough task of dealing with a regime that has proven unwilling to work with the international community while fending off the charge of ineffectiveness.

In late 2009, Iran's unwillingness to comply with the reporting and inspection requirements of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in relation to its nuclear program became the catalyst for a discernable toughening of the U.S. position and the imposition of a fresh round of sanctions on Iran. The mobilization of the international community, and the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1929, was only made possible by the shift in U.S. foreign policy in relation to its allies and rivals. The reversal of the unilateralist foreign policymaking that had come to dominate the Bush era was a significant factor in generating international support for fresh sanctions. The challenge faced by the Obama administration is to maintain the possibility of engagement with Iran while enforcing crippling sanctions on the regime.

## GOODWILL GESTURES

President Obama's message of goodwill in March 2009 should be seen as a belated response to former president Khatami's dialogue of civilizations initiative. Soon after coming to office in 1997, Khatami launched a diplomatic campaign to address Iran's image in its neighborhood and in the West. He was fully aware that normalizing U.S.-Iran relations could not be on the short-term agenda. There was simply too much bad blood to allow for immediate rapprochement; the domestic political price for such a move could have been devastating for Khatami's government. Instead, rapprochement served as the unspoken long-term objective in a process that was the dialogue of civilizations. Khatami utilized generic, albeit key, concepts of justice and equality to make the proposition of dialogue attractive to a Western audience, while he was fully aware of the traction these concepts enjoyed in his domestic setting. Khatami argued that dialogue can only take place between equal interlocutors. Equality, he argued, was integral to a feeling of mutual respect to underpin a just international system.<sup>1</sup>

Echoing similar sentiments, Obama's Norouz address focused on the positive contributions of the "great Iranian civilization" to the

world. He talked about the richness of Persian culture, the peace-loving nature of Iranian civilization, and the positive role it can play in the region and the world. This was a measured and respectful address. It acknowledged that Iran had a legitimate place in the family of nations and offered an unconditional hand for bilateral negotiation. Unfortunately for Obama and the world, this gesture of goodwill fell on the deaf ears of the conservative leadership that had wrested the parliament and the office of the presidency away from the reformism camp. The failure of the United States in responding to Khatami's initiatives, especially in the wake of the war in Afghanistan, was a major setback for the reformist camp. The ascendancy of the conservative faction in Iran closed the window of opportunity for movement in the U.S.-Iran deadlock.

Obama's extension of an unclenched hand to negotiate with the Iranian authorities on the vexed nuclear issue was especially significant. This was a departure from the Bush administration's position, which had insisted on the suspension of uranium enrichment as a precondition for talks. The Obama administration showed an acute awareness of the domestic politics in Iran by offering a way out of the power politics impasse. The Iranian authorities had rejected earlier U.S. demands for the suspension of the enrichment process as a bullying tactic, aimed at dictating terms on Iran and hampering its aspiration for what the authorities claimed was a civilian nuclear status. The Iranian leadership, reformist and conservative alike, promoted access to nuclear energy as an inalienable national right. Years of state-orchestrated propaganda had elevated the question of access to nuclear energy as a matter of national pride, to an extent that the creditability of the regime was closely tied to it. Obama's offer of talks without preconditions was a way for the Iranian authorities to discuss their nuclear program without looking weak. This was a rare face-saving option, which the Iranian regime refused to take advantage of.

Obama's initiative was also based on an assumption of shared interests between Iran and the United States on stability in Afghanistan and Iraq. Tehran was elated when the Taliban was pushed out of Kabul. Iran had nearly gone to war with the Taliban in 1998 and saw the inauguration of Hamid Karzai as a new chapter in its relations with its neighboring state. For a short while, the Bush administration also saw the Iranian commitment to the reconstruction of post-Taliban Afghanistan, pledged in the 2001 Bonn Conference, as a positive sign. That view was pushed aside when George W. Bush branded Iran as part of the Axis of Evil and effectively closed the window of opportunity for direct talks on a tangible issue of mutual

concern. The toppling of Saddam Hussein offered yet another opportunity for U.S.-Iran collaboration. The eight-year war between Iran and Iraq—and Saddam’s brutal treatment of the Shia population—had colored the Iranian view of him. Tehran was jubilant to see Saddam deposed. Given extensive links between Iran and the Shia community in Iraq, most notably in the form of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (which gained prominence immediately after the 2003 invasion), there was scope for a degree of cooperation between the United States and Iran. But growing accusations of Iran for its alleged support for anti-U.S. insurgency and the arrest of a number of Iranian diplomats in 2007 closed that option.<sup>2</sup>

Despite these missed opportunities, a vocal cohort of policy analysts in the United States have argued for a reappraisal of Iranian interests in its neighborhood, pointing to the congruence of interests between Iran and the United States. Richard Haass, who served as the director of policy planning for the Department of State between 2001 and 2003, for example, maintained that Afghanistan provided the United States with a “real opportunity to engage more closely with Iran.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, Washington and Tehran both “want a stable, central government in Kabul capable of putting down insurgents and narco-traffickers and wish to avoid the wholesale collapse of the Afghan state.”<sup>4</sup> Direct talks—argued the president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations, Leslie Gelb—are the “only way to get Tehran’s help on Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other regional problems where Tehran also seeks stability and doesn’t want problems spilling into Iran itself.”<sup>5</sup> Similar arguments have been put forth by Suzanne Maloney (Brookings Institute) and Ray Takeyh (Council of Foreign Relations), who insist that Iran’s foreign policy is not devoid of a realistic assessment of the risks posed by regional instability. Involving the Iranian regime in some form of diplomatic relationship, they posit, would go a long way in reversing the history of antagonism:

So long as the Iranian leadership views the U.S. as a determinedly hostile strategic competitor, Tehran will be driven by perverse incentives to continue provoking, harassing, or constraining the U.S., even where those policies contradict Iran’s own interests. The perpetual estrangement and lack of direct communication fosters a vicious cycle of mistrust, antagonism, confrontation, and conflict that ultimately overrides the value of Iran’s selective cooperation and baseline pragmatism.<sup>6</sup>

Two leading foreign policy observers in the United States shared this view. Richard Haass and Martin Indyk, both seasoned foreign

policy agenda setters, stressed the need for a resumption of U.S.-Iranian engagement concerning Iraq as part of a multitrack bilateral negotiation.<sup>7</sup> As far as the Obama administration was concerned in 2008, there were very good reasons to open channels of direct communication with Tehran. This was a shift away from the language of “regime change” and seemed to come at the expense of Washington’s long-standing commitment to democracy.

## HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

Many in Iran greeted President Obama’s coming to office with excitement. The reformist camp saw in Obama the promise of a new start. The aggressive language of the Bush administration toward Iran had facilitated the ascendancy of conservative leadership and seriously limited the political space for those advocating dialogue. It was hoped the Obama administration would change that tune and remove the bogeyman that had sustained the anti-American propaganda machine in Iran. This hope for change and the positive implications of Obama’s presidency for the reformist camp were encapsulated in the slogan of “He is with us” (*O-ba-ma-st*), chanted by Tehran University students as a play on words that rhymes with the president’s name: *O* = he, *ba* = with, *ma* = we/us, *bast* = is.

President Obama’s commitment to democracy promotion, however, was overshadowed by his commitment to challenge the Bush legacy and the image of an imperialist bully that had tarnished the standing of the United States in the Middle East. This was evident in his Cairo speech in June 2009, in which he pledged understanding and respect for Islam and Muslims. This was an extraordinary speech and one of a kind in the history of U.S.-Middle East relations. It was also significant in highlighting priorities at work in the Obama administration. President Obama skirted the contentious issue of political representation and omitted any reference to the divide between the ruled and the rulers in the Muslim Middle East. This approach was in line with his commitment to differentiate his presidency from that of his predecessor, which had become synonymous with a desire to reshape the political landscape of the Middle East. Democracy promotion and commitment to civil society was a significant plank in that strategy; the other was “regime change.” Consequently, mindful of the fact that democracy promotion was seen in Tehran as a direct threat to the Iranian leadership, President Barack Obama enacted a reversal of overt U.S. commitment to civil society promotion in Iran.

One of the early Obama measures was to reformat the Iran Democracy Fund, which the Bush administration had set up in 2006 to boost NGO activity in Iran. This program had started with a \$66 million budget in the 2006–2007 financial year, with a further allocation of \$60 million in the 2007–2008 financial year, but the secretive nature of the program and the reluctance of U.S.-based NGOs to share the personal details of their Iranian beneficiaries with the State Department engulfed it in controversy. In 2009 Obama quietly introduced the Near East Regional Democracy Fund, with a broader scope of activity beyond Iran. More importantly, as noted by J. Scott Carpenter of the Washington Institute, “the new name is less offensive to Tehran and gives the administration more flexibility in how the funds are used.”<sup>8</sup>

Ironically, this policy reversal to tone down democracy promotion initiatives in Iran was predicated on the advice of those closely involved with Iranian civil society. Critics of the Bush policy on supporting Iranian civil society had argued that the policy was counterproductive and highly detrimental to NGOs. In the words of Abbas Milani, “patronizing the democratic movement by throwing money at it will only serve to strengthen the regime’s claims that democrats in Iran are tools of the United States.”<sup>9</sup>

Following the launch of the Iran Democracy Fund in 2006, the Iranian authorities retaliated with an arbitrary, albeit systemic, assault on civil society organizations. Haleh Esfandiari, program director of Middle East studies at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, was caught in that backlash. While visiting Iran in 2007 to see her elderly mother, Esfandiari was arrested and held for eight months on suspicion of treason. Because of her position, Esfandiari was accused of taking part in a clandestine program to support anti-regime NGOs. After her release later that year, Esfandiari published an opinion piece in which she criticized the U.S. democracy promotion program for Iran as misguided and counterproductive. The Bush administration’s financial commitment to an unpublished list of recipients in Iran, she argued, had made the intellectual and scholarly community in Iran wary of accepting invitations to conferences in Europe and/or the United States or of accepting research grants lest they be accused of treason and working for regime change.<sup>10</sup> Even before this financial commitment, the regime accused its opponents of receiving bags of money from the United States. “Now that the U.S. government is openly talking about providing money to Iranian dissidents and opposition groups,” argued a prominent Iranian journalist, “these officials can openly and blatantly make accusations

against any critical voice of being supported and financed by the U.S. government, thus making it even easier for the government to suppress them with little resistance or concern.”<sup>11</sup>

Akbar Ganji, a former prisoner of conscience in Iran and an avid critic of the Islamic regime, lent his voice to this position in a passionate piece in the *Washington Post*. Echoing the previous concern, Ganji argued that “any Iranian who seeks American dollars will not be recognized as a democrat by his or her fellow citizens.”<sup>12</sup> But he went further and raised concerns about the track record of the United States in maintaining undemocratic regimes in power in the Middle East and Central Asia. He questioned the underlying assumption that U.S. aid could indeed be good for democracy promotion:

Governments provide foreign aid...based on their national interests; those who receive aid naturally have to align themselves with the donor’s policies. We understand this with regard to Iranian support for Hezbollah in Lebanon and various Afghan groups. Not surprisingly, the Iranian people do not want their democratic movement to be dependent on or subservient to any foreign government.

His final comments encapsulated the overwhelming feeling among civil society activists in Iran: “dollars cannot produce the bravery or love of freedom.”

President Obama’s attitude toward the reformist camp appeared to be very much influenced by this position. Consequently, he felt constrained by considerations of past U.S.-Iran relations when faced with the fallout of the June 2009 presidential elections in Iran. Whereas the international community was convinced that the election results were fabricated to return the conservative firebrand Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to the presidential office, the Obama administration maintained an uncomfortable silence on the outcome of the elections. Recalling the damage done to the standing of the United States for its role in toppling a democratically elected government in 1953, Obama refrained from challenging the election results. It was clear that the Obama administration was hopeful that the grassroots response to electoral fraud could make a difference to the political dynamics in Iran. But the administration kept its optimism in check, limiting its support for the Green Movement to low-key, yet significant, IT areas. At the height of the power struggle in the streets of Tehran, for example, the administration asked Twitter to postpone a scheduled service interruption to ensure that the Green Movement activists were not deprived of a critical communication and organizational tool.<sup>13</sup> This



was President Obama's response when asked about electoral fraud in Iran:

It is up to Iranians to make decisions about who Iran's leaders will be. We respect Iranian sovereignty and want to avoid the United States being the issue inside Iran . . . . Having said all that, I am deeply troubled by the violence I've been seeing on television. I think the democratic process, free speech, the ability of people to peacefully dissent, all those are universal values and need to be respected.<sup>14</sup>

This was a far cry from the way his predecessor had described the relationship between the Iranian regime and its population. Even when it became clear that staying on the sideline was no longer tenable, President Obama pursued a softly-softly approach in relation to the Green Movement. There were no grand declarations of support. But it was made clear that the United States did not condone the regime's brutal suppression of dissent.

Obama's response to the brazen violation of human rights in the aftermath of the fraudulent election in June 2009, reluctant as he may have been, was interpreted by the Iranian leadership as evidence of yet another case of imperialist bullying and intervention. Any hopes for opening channels of communication between Tehran and Washington were dashed. This was a new low in U.S.-Iran relations and a devastating blow to Obama's policy of engagement with Iran.

## MULTILATERALISM AND THE NUCLEAR IMPASSE

Washington's turn to multilateralism aided the toughening of the U.S. position toward Iran following the failure of earlier initiatives to enforce compliance on Iran's nuclear program. One of the most effective diplomatic tools used by the Obama administration has been its commitment to repair damage to U.S. ties with old allies and potential rivals. In contrast to the neoconservative posturing of righteousness and missionary zeal that colored the Bush administration's attitude in relation to the United Nations and the international community, President Obama made extensive efforts to present the United States as a team player and to reaffirm the commitment of his administration to the international community. This was a discernable shift away from unilateralism toward multilateralism, reflected in his decision to restore the position of the U.S. ambassador to the UN to a cabinet-level rank and in appointing Susan Rice—described by the *Washington Post* as “an unapologetic proponent of multilateralism.”<sup>15</sup>

Ambassador Rice reaffirmed this policy shift, going out of her way to declare the dawn of “a new era of engagement.” Following her first meeting with the UN secretary general Ban Ki-Moon, Rice emphasized the new administration’s commitment to multilateralism:

President Obama’s view is clear, that our security and well-being can best be advanced in cooperation and in partnership with other nations. And there is no more important forum for that effective cooperation than the United Nations.<sup>16</sup>

Ambassador Rice articulated the same message at the UN General Assembly:

We have paid the price of stiff-arming the UN and spurning our international partners. The United States will lead in the 21st century—not with hubris, not by hectoring, but through patient diplomacy and a steadfast resolve to strengthen our security by investing in our common humanity.<sup>17</sup>

The Obama administration views the new security paradigm, the collective security approach, as the most suitable remedy to the rift that had emerged between the United States and its European allies. George W. Bush’s policy of “you are either with us or against us” was countered by Obama’s appeal to common values and interests that bound the United States with Europe.<sup>18</sup> While on his first international tour since becoming vice president, Joe Biden told the European Parliament, “The United States needs Europe. And, I respectfully submit, Europe needs the United States—we need each other more now than we have ever.”<sup>19</sup>

In March 2009, the U.S. secretary of state, Hilary Clinton, took this message a step further and presented the Russian foreign minister a red “reset” button to signify a new start in U.S.-Russia relations. This was followed by an announcement of a major rethink of security arrangements later that year. The Obama administration responded favorably to Russia’s unease about growing military ties between the United States and its former East European allies. Russia had objected to the Bush administration’s decision to station interceptor missiles in Poland and radar facilities in the Czech Republic as part of a missile defense shield to counter Iran.<sup>20</sup> In September 2009, the Obama administration announced its decision to scrap earlier plans to build an antiballistic missile defense shield in Eastern Europe, instead opting for the smaller SM-3 interceptors to be based in Poland.<sup>21</sup>

SM-3 interceptors defend against short-range and medium-range missiles and pose no serious risks to Russia.

This decision was warmly welcomed in Moscow. But critics accused the Obama administration of caving in to Russian pressure, dismissing the decision as a morally abhorrent attempt to buy Russian cooperation on Iran.<sup>22</sup> Despite this criticism, the Obama administration has managed to form an international coalition in dealing with Iran. The coalition may not be as waterproof as Washington desires, but it is nonetheless a working coalition where one did not exist. That is one of Obama's major achievements.

Obama's decidedly multilateral approach has paid dividends in relation to Iran. Despite the failure of earlier attempts to form a consensus among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, the Obama administration managed to secure the support of Russian and China to impose a fresh round of sanctions on Iran. UNSC Resolution 1929, adopted on June 9, 2010, imposes very tough and wide-ranging restrictions on Iran to force its compliance with the international inspection regime. Although Iran has persistently denied its intention to build nuclear weapons, it has been very secretive about its nuclear activities, trying to hide nuclear plants from IAEA observers and restrict access to known sites. The adoption of the June 2010 resolution was only made possible by Iran's rejection of an international offer for a fuel exchange. Under the IAEA-brokered proposal, Iran would send 1,200 kilograms of uranium to Russia to be further enriched and converted into fuel by France before being supplied to the Tehran reactor.

Iran's rejection of this offer was a major factor in the success of the push for new sanctions. The adoption of UNSC 1929 was followed by a significant announcement in Moscow regarding the cancellation of a controversial deal with Iran. Russia cancelled the US\$800 million sale of S-300 air defense missiles to Iran—a sale that had already caused much anxiety in Israel and the United States. Although Russia later agreed to pay Iran US\$166 million in compensation, presumably to maintain friendly ties with Tehran,<sup>23</sup> the decision to withhold the sale of air defense missiles was a definite victory for the Obama administration.

Furthermore, securing China's vote for the UNSC resolution was a significant diplomatic win for the United States. This was only made possible through behind-the-scenes talks between the Obama administration and the Chinese leadership. Concerns have been raised in many diplomatic encounters regarding China's tendency to see the deterioration of relations between Iran and the United States and the

ensuing instability in the Persian Gulf as an opportunity to expand Beijing's influence. It has been argued that tension in the Persian Gulf—exacerbated by an almost-inevitable arms race that would follow if Iran were to proceed to weaponize its nuclear program—would not serve Chinese interests. U.S. actions to pacify Iran and ensure the seamless flow of oil from the Persian Gulf, the argument ran, was good for the global economy and good for the energy-hungry Chinese industry. Beijing's willingness to endorse the UNSC resolution suggests that this message has fallen on receptive ears.

### CHALLENGES

The Obama administration has inherited a very difficult task in Iran. The history of antagonism between Tehran and Washington bears heavily on new initiatives, spoiling goodwill gestures. The very first and obvious challenge facing President Obama and his successor is to convince the Iranian leadership that Washington is genuine about opening lines of communication and talking to Iran on an equal footing. The United States has been accused of acting like an imperialist bully from the early days of the revolution in 1979. Anti-Americanism, encapsulated in the “down with America” chant, has been a constant feature of the Iranian official line. Although the young generation in Iran may not remember the heydays of the revolution and the reformist camp may be seeking normalization of relations with the United States, for President Ahmadinejad and his cohort, anti-Americanism is an article of faith. It is also an emotive mass mobilizer among the conservative support base. Countering entrenched ideas about the United States in order to facilitate direct talks is a long and arduous process. As Suzanne Maloney has argued, “Even during the heydays of the reform movement, Washington found little success in persuading Iran to engage in a direct and ongoing dialogue.”<sup>24</sup>

The second challenge, related to the first, is to have modest expectations of any talks that may eventuate as a result of the United States' persistence. Engaging Iran is unlikely to produce immediate improvements in U.S.-Iran relations. Given the constraints of Iranian politics, the Iranian leadership is unlikely to risk its standing domestically by moving too quickly toward a rapprochement with Washington. Any opening between the United States and Iran, therefore, needs to be treated with care as an opportunity to provide the Iranian side a window into the political thinking and workings of the United States. Formal talks need to be complemented with informal contacts between civil and scientific communities to facilitate exchange

of personnel and ideas and to help generate a ground-up movement for U.S.-Iran rapprochement.

However, such initiatives may only take place after international sanctions have been removed. Removing sanctions in the face of Iran's continued intransigence is a serious challenge for Obama. The June 2010 sanctions are tough, but Iran is likely to live with them, sacrificing social services in order to channel resources to the security forces and bolster its support base. In such conditions, sanctions are unlikely to effect the desired change in Iran's nuclear program.<sup>25</sup> The likely failure of the sanctions' regime puts the Obama administration in a very uncomfortable position. Admitting failure will bolster the Iranian regime and exacerbate domestic criticism leveled against Obama's policies.

The third challenge concerns U.S. expectations. For too long, policy makers in Washington and Iranian opposition movements based in the United States and Europe have been expecting the imminent fall of the Islamic regime. Policies have been designed with a view to accelerating that fall. The Bush administration placed that objective at the top of its Middle East agenda. Although the Obama administration has made a significant shift away from advocating regime change, focusing instead on behavior change, breaking out of that mindset may be difficult. Nonetheless, for engagement initiatives to be taken seriously, Washington needs to be clear about its own intentions and convince the Iranian regime of its genuineness.

The domestic scene highlights the fourth challenge for the Obama administration. The policy of engagement and Obama's charm offensive led many neoconservative critics to dismiss the new policy as misguided and naive. Emphasizing the repressive and ideological pillars of power in the Islamic regime, Obama's critics have argued that engagement with Iran will do nothing short of betraying American ideals and sully the United States. By the same token, they criticized attempts at international coalition building for putting American interests at the mercy of other powers. Keeping the neoconservative challenge at bay has been made more difficult by the lack of progress in pursuing engagement. The unwillingness of the Iranian authorities to reciprocate goodwill gestures seriously undermined the engagement approach and Obama's ability to maintain credibility and momentum for his change of tack. The toughening of policy on Iran is a direct consequence of this challenge.

The fifth challenge is to maintain the international coalition on Iran. Convincing Russia and China to vote with the United States at

the UN Security Council was a significant achievement. It reflected a tacit acknowledgement in Moscow and Beijing that their relationship with Washington was more important than anything they could get from Tehran. But this strategic assessment needs careful monitoring and encouragement as the political thinking in Russia and China remains fluid.

## CONCLUSION

President Obama's approach to Iran evolved markedly in the first year of his presidency. His charm offensive on Iran unraveled against the backdrop of the June 2009 crackdown in Tehran. Obama's offer of direct talks with the conservative government of Ahmadinejad coincided with the surge of the Green Movement in Iran and calls for international pressure on the regime. In the wake of a widely criticized Iranian presidential election in June 2009, the Obama administration tried to maintain an untenable position and not criticize the regime. But it was inevitable that Washington would express dissatisfaction with widespread fraud and the subsequent brutality of the religious militia against protesters. This served as a pretext for Ahmadinejad's government to dismiss Obama as nothing different from George W. Bush and to effectively shut the door to engagement.

Obama's initiatives received harsh rebuke in the neoconservative circles of the United States. Right-leaning critics dismissed the idea that Iran could act rationally as a regional power. The Islamic regime in Iran, it has been argued, is driven by an ideological zeal that resembles that of Osama bin Laden. Cost and benefit calculations that govern the behavior of other states do not apply to Iran. As a result, efforts to open channels of communication on assumed "common ground" in Iraq and Afghanistan were seen as futile and counterproductive, only offering an air of legitimacy to the clerical regime.

Iran's behavior gave ample fodder to this position. Tehran's rejection of the IAEA's efforts to oversee the enrichment process, the dismissal of the Russian offer to handle the enriched uranium, and Ahmadinejad's provocative declarations have undermined the Obama administration's engagement policy.

## NOTES

I wish to thank Natalie Meltic and Gordon Wilcock for their contribution to this research.



17. Susan Rice, "A New Course in the World, a New Approach at the U.N.," August 12, 2009, [www.law.nyu.edu/news/Rice\\_UN\\_Speech](http://www.law.nyu.edu/news/Rice_UN_Speech) (Accessed on November 1, 2010).
18. Barack Obama, speech in Prague, April 5, 2009, [www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-by-president-Barack-Obama-in-Prague-As-delivered/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-president-Barack-Obama-in-Prague-As-delivered/). (Accessed on November 2, 2010).
19. Joe Biden, remarks to European parliament, May 6, 2010, [www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-vice-president-biden-european-parliament/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-vice-president-biden-european-parliament/) (Accessed on November 1, 2010).
20. Peter Baker and Clifford J. Levy, "Russia's Reaction on Missile Plan Leaves Iran Issue Hanging," *New York Times*, September 18, 2009.
21. Peter Baker, "White House Scraps Bush's Approach to Missile Shield," *New York Times*, September 17, 2009.
22. Sally McNamara, "President Obama Must Not Concede to Russian Demands over NATO," *Heritage Foundation*, May 8, 2009, [www.heritage.org/research/russiaandeurasia/wm2431.cfm..](http://www.heritage.org/research/russiaandeurasia/wm2431.cfm..) (Accessed on November 2, 2010).
23. BBC, "Russia to Repay Iran for Cancelled Missile Order," October 7, 2010, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11495172](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11495172), (Accessed on November 1, 2010).
24. Suzanne Maloney, *Iran's Long Reach: Iran as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2008), 126.
25. For an insightful study, see Suzanne Maloney, "Sanctioning Iran: If Only It Were So Simple," *Washington Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (January 2010): 131–147.





## PAKISTAN: A NEW BEGINNING?

*Touqir Hussain*

The U.S. foreign policy is facing serious challenges in South Asia. Some of them are old, such as the threat from Al Qaeda, whereas others are a consequence of the U.S. response to the 9/11 tragedy, especially the invasion of Afghanistan. None of the war's declared aims—to capture Osama bin Laden, destroy Al Qaeda, and eliminate the Taliban—have been achieved. But new crises have been created that threaten the internal security and political stability of Pakistan, a nuclear weapon state and a key U.S. ally in the region, diminishing its capacity as an ally and raising its potential to become a threat itself.

Whether as an ally, a partner, or an errant friend, Pakistan has always been an enigma for American foreign policy. And the puzzle continues as Pakistan is now the focus of a major U.S. engagement yet a possible source of danger: not only a crucial partner in the war on terror but also a likely target. In fact, Pakistan has become a daunting foreign policy challenge for Washington and not least because of the suspected presence of Al Qaeda in Pakistan's tribal areas, the home the region has provided to the Taliban insurgency, and the fear of another 9/11 originating there. The importance of Pakistan transcends these concerns, critical as they are.

A troubled Pakistan does more than undermine its role in the war on terror (or war on terrorism or war against Al Qaeda, whatever one may call it). It fosters militancy, raises the potential for conflict with India over Kashmir, threatens its own internal cohesion, and endangers its nuclear assets, affecting America's broader interests in the region and beyond.

Indeed, Pakistan is at the crossroads<sup>1</sup> of many U.S. nightmares—terrorism, nuclear proliferation, the danger of nuclear war, dictatorship, poverty, and drugs. Is President Obama addressing this challenge

any better than his predecessor? Yes, but success remains as elusive as before.

### THE WEIGHT OF THE BUSH LEGACY

To be fair to the Obama administration, it is dealing with a difficult Bush legacy of three ongoing wars: the Afghanistan and Iraq wars and the war on terror. It is a policy nightmare to be simultaneously handling international commitments of such scale and magnitude without an overarching grand design. That is not to mention the challenges of meeting competing demands for resources, of mobilizing domestic consensus, and of enlisting allied support. This no doubt limited the Bush administration's ability to achieve the desired objectives in each of these undertakings, which also ended up harming many other critical U.S. interests. Of these, the Afghanistan war has been particularly consequential for Pakistan and U.S.-Pakistan relations.

Not only did the military campaign in Afghanistan lack a political strategy, but also, in the rush to war, there was little effort at comprehending the nature of the threat or the enemy. The lack of strategic context of the war, incoherent war aims, insufficient resources, and poor execution soon undermined the war effort, especially as attention and resources shifted to the Iraq war.

In the final analysis, the two controversial wars and the ill-defined war on terrorism—which portrayed the enemy in abstract terms and the conflict as a war of ideas—ended up magnifying the enemy and enlarging the scope and meaning of the conflict. This sharpened the tensions between Islam and the West, boosting the agenda and popularity of the Islamic radicals, the very forces the United States had set out to defeat.

In many ways, the Afghanistan and Iraq wars suffered from common flaws. It was perhaps thought that the military success would be so total, quick, and decisive that it would subsume all political issues that may arise in its aftermath as both the countries would be so utterly compliant to the new U.S. order there. The reality turned out to be quite complicated.

The Islamic world saw its religion under siege from the three wars, and enemies of the West came to be looked up to as friends of Islam. It became easy to demonize the West as intent on humiliating Muslims and occupying their lands and resources, the very claims the radicals had made for decades but with dubious success. They emerged from the shadows of history to become leading publicists for Islam. First

Iraq, then Afghanistan, and finally Pakistan became their hotbed, making them a deadly danger to Islam and the world.

## U.S.-PAKISTAN RELATIONS

### Brief Historical Background

U.S.-Pakistan relations have over the last six decades served some vital interests of the two countries. Yet much has also gone wrong, given that Pakistan and the United States never had a shared view on what brought them together and why. They have both remained very relevant to each other, but the relationship lacked a sense of common purpose and continuity. Each was trying to use the other for the advancement of its own interests—some of which ran counter to those of the other. The relationship has thus not been without a cost for each side. There was a mismatch not only of interests but also of perceptions and policies. Dennis Kux in his landmark history of U.S.-Pakistan relations<sup>2</sup> has documented in detail the ups and down of the relationship. His concluding chapter gives us useful insights to the lack of strategic consensus between the two countries and to the false expectations that led to the disenchantment in the relationship forming the bedrock of the present-day anti-Americanism.

This is so even though, unlike in the past, the United States and Pakistan are addressing common challenges equally critical for both, which neither can solve alone. In fact, at stake are not only their own interests but also global peace and security. Pressures and incentives for cooperation have thus never been greater. Yet ironically, the two countries have remained at odds with each other. The relationship has never been so unpopular, at least at the level of the public, in Pakistan, which has been experiencing the worst anti-Americanism in its history.

At the heart of the relationship crisis is the crisis within Pakistan, including its foreign policy and problems with the U.S. foreign policy itself. Understanding the two is essential to understanding the relationship and the broader challenges the United States faces in the region.

### The Crisis within Pakistan

Pakistan has been in search of a national identity and political stability ever since its creation. Pakistanis defined their identity in opposition to India and in favor of Islam but paid a heavy price by strengthening

the army and the Islamists. For security and economic support, they turned to the United States, but it went on to use the country for its own strategic purposes, compounding Pakistan's problems.

Though the majority of people remain religiously moderate, they became vulnerable to radical thought and propaganda as a consequence of the Islamic surge that began in the 1970s. The surge was part of a global Islamic revival but was given a big push by Zia ul Haq's Islamization drive,<sup>3</sup> the Iranian revolution, and the Saudi-Iranian rivalry that followed, injecting virulent sectarianism and Wahabi Islam into Pakistan. Later, the Afghan jihad of the 1980s—which came to define Islam largely in terms of jihad and Pakistan in terms of Islam—did its own damage, spreading religiosity and igniting divisive, intolerant, and militant trends in the society.

By the advent of the 1990s, during the so-called decade of democracy, Islam became populist, providing a surrogate sense of national purpose and bringing further harm. Pakistan was losing a sense of national direction and becoming fractious and ungovernable.<sup>4</sup>

This national vision, formed by years of authoritarian rule and deformed democracy, led to weak institutional architecture. The state lacked political will, moral authority, and effective instruments of law and order. The worst affected were the weak and vulnerable strata of society lacking both physical and economic security, which could do no more than despair and contemplate extreme and illusionary avenues to empowerment. And they were becoming easy prey to forces of extremism.<sup>5</sup>

## POST-9/11 U.S. REENGAGEMENT

### The Bush/Musharaf Years

It was with this troubled and conflicted Pakistan that an unpopular America reengaged after 9/11. In Pakistani public perceptions, Washington had been party to these conflicts for decades, for its “bipartisan support of successive dictatorships”<sup>6</sup> had contributed to the wave of radicalization in the country and ill treated Pakistan after its services were no longer needed. It was an America that had lost the trust of Pakistanis that reengaged with the country to fight the war on terrorism, a war that was unpopular even before it began.

The spillover of the Afghanistan war on Pakistan made things even worse for the country. It came to threaten Pakistan's stability, on one hand with suicide bombings across the country and on the other by spreading anti-Americanism among the wider population, making it

vulnerable to radical influences and sabotaging its understanding of terrorism and the underlying forces of extremism.

The Pakistani army had its own unhappiness about the Afghanistan war, which ended up creating an Afghanistan that was not consistent with Pakistan's strategic interests. The army saw the Indian threat doubled as it relocated to Afghanistan, where, thanks to the war and the U.S. policies, India came to increase its influence and presence. This raised fears of encirclement in Pakistan.

India's growing relationship with the United States, especially the nuclear agreement<sup>7</sup> and Washington's refusal to give Pakistan the same deal, fostered perceptions (not just in the army but among the general public also) that the United States and India were opposed to its nuclear program. As these apprehensions merged with the traditional India-focused insecurities, conspiracy theories abounded—especially in the media—that the United States and India were in fact busy destabilizing Pakistan, including by aiding the Taliban, so as to plunge the country into a chaos in which taking out the country's nuclear facilities might become both feasible and legitimate.

The media and the think tank community in the United States stoked these fears by focusing the debate about the U.S.-Pakistan relations far too much on their own fixation on Pakistan's nukes falling into the hands of radicals. Implicit in these warnings was the advice that the United States should get hold of these weapons before the radicals did. Pakistan was being referred to as the most dangerous country in the world. This damaged the relationship on both ends. In Pakistan, it intensified anti-Americanism, and in Washington, it obscured the enormity of the challenges Pakistan faces and presents. Both sides ended up adding to the trust deficit and hurting the relationship.

The administration and the media also turned up the heat on Pakistan for not doing enough in the war on terrorism—a charge both the Pakistani public and the government found insensitive. Pakistan maintained that its intelligence and military cooperation with the United States had been critical in diminishing the operational capability of Al Qaeda. And in this war, Pakistan had lost more troops than all the coalition forces in Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup>

The United States did commit billions of dollars to Pakistan, but most of the money went to the Pakistani army as the Coalition Support Fund with little oversight.<sup>9</sup> Only about 10 percent of the more than \$10 billion in aid up to 2007 went to development and

humanitarian assistance, with little visible impact on socioeconomic change.

Tensions arose within Pakistan, against both the army and the United States. The Pakistani public increasingly came to feel that they and the country as a whole had paid a huge cost for the relationship, yet only the ruling elite (especially the army) benefited from it. They saw a repeat of the historical pattern of the strong connection between the army rule and the relationship with the United States that undermined the prospects of democracy<sup>10</sup> as highlighted by Dennis Kux.

In the end, Bush's global war on terrorism—along with the Musharaf-led army rule—ironically became the unlikeliest stimulus to provoke not only an aggrieved and indignant Islam but also a surge for democracy, as seen in the lawyers movement and the newfound activism of other segments of the civil society beginning in 2007 following the dismissal of the chief justice of the Supreme Court. As the continued spillover of the Afghanistan war and the emerging threat from the Pakistani Taliban (TTP)<sup>11</sup> spread fear and anxiety in the country, it intensified anti-Americanism among the wider population. Indeed, by inciting nationalism, the democracy movement also began adding to anti-Americanism.

Though the religious and democratic surges were not reconciling, they both converged to exaggerate nationalism, which turned into ultranationalism as the U.S. drone attacks stepped up, adding to public alienation and distrust toward the U.S. policies. Whereas Pakistanis vastly exaggerated the contribution made by America to their travails, past and present, the United States either did not acknowledge or grossly underestimated it. This was the state of affairs in Pakistan and in the U.S.-Pakistan relations when the new president took office in the United States. Both countries were profoundly unhappy with the relationship.

## BARACK OBAMA—A ROUGH BEGINNING

As President Obama came into office, there was a general agreement in his administration that Pakistan was a major national security and foreign policy challenge but no clear idea of what this challenge was about and how best to meet it. The relationship started on a wrong footing with the appointment of a special envoy, Richard Holbrooke, who was to be assigned a new strategy for the region called Af-Pak—an expression Pakistanis did not like.

While the Obama administration got down to developing its strategy toward Pakistan and the Afghanistan war, it decided to continue

the Bush policies in the interim. In some cases, it came to adopt an even harder line, causing further backlash in Pakistan. The administration stepped up the drone strikes in the FATA.<sup>12</sup> According to a study by the New America Foundation, President Obama authorized more drone attacks in his first nine months in office—with a rate of approximately one bombing a week—than George W. Bush did in his last three years combined.<sup>13</sup>

This led to an unprecedented increase in the retaliation by the TTP against both the army and civilian targets. The year 2009 went down as the deadliest in Pakistan's history. A record number of bombings shook the country. Casualties among civilians and security personnel shot to a new high, as did IED explosions and suicide attacks. That year saw one-third of all terrorist-related violence recorded since 2001. This took the number of people killed in terrorist-related violence in the past decade to an estimated 25,000<sup>14</sup>—the Taliban and their allied groups carried out 87 suicide attacks inside Pakistan, killing at least 1,300 people, mostly civilians.

By the end of 2009, President Obama had begun discerning the complexities of the Pakistan challenge and the Afghanistan war. President Bush had treated Pakistan essentially as an underling in his war on terrorism and in the Afghanistan war, a war he defined largely in military terms aimed at defeating the Taliban and Al Qaeda who had sanctuaries in Pakistan. Obama shared Bush's assessment of the terrorist threat but seemingly had a much differentiated view of the sources of this threat. The key player was Al Qaeda, helped by the supporting cast of the old leadership of the Afghan Taliban, such as Mullah Omar (but not including the rank and file of the non-Taliban elements of the Afghan resistance), and by the TTP<sup>15</sup> and the Pakistani jihadist, sectarian, and other militant organizations.

It was Pakistan he found to be the epicenter of the terrorist threat. He saw the country as being led by a weak, ineffectual, and self-serving civilian government and saw an efficient and ambitious army that was also self-centered but could be the best hope for Pakistan to fight its internal and external security challenges, as well as being a useful partner to the U.S. policies in the region, including the war on terror.<sup>16</sup>

As for Afghanistan, he was beginning to regard it more as a political challenge with a military dimension. He was convinced that the war needed a new counterinsurgency strategy resting on a total effort, civil and military, as it involved largely a governance and state-building issue.

Obama revealed part of his new approach on December 1, 2009, at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point. He set a precise date,



July 2011, for the U.S. troop withdrawal to begin and meanwhile called for the deployment of 30,000 additional troops, supported by 7,000–10,000 NATO forces. He also raised pressure on Pakistan, “warning that if it does not act more aggressively the United States will use considerably more force on the Pakistani side of the border to shut down Taliban attacks on American forces in Afghanistan.” Later, Obama and his national security team let the Zardari government know their blank check days were over.<sup>17</sup>

### **Kerry Lugar Bill**

Through the Kerry Lugar Bill, signed into law in October 2009 as the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act, the United States had offered Pakistan long-term bilateral assistance focused on expanded economic development aid, increased trade, improved intelligence sharing, and upgraded military equipment. The act tripled nonmilitary aid to Pakistan to \$1.5 billion per annum for the next five years. But it did little to assuage anti-Americanism; on the contrary, it raised the sentiment to higher levels. As is customary in Congress, the aid was made available conditional on Pakistan’s compliance on a host of issues of concern to the United States: nonproliferation, nonuse of Pakistan’s territory for export of terrorism, banning of militant organizations, and forbidding of military coups.

Though the act required no more than that Pakistan abide by its own constitution and international commitments, it triggered widespread public feeling (gripped by anti-Americanism) that such conditions were humiliating and further degraded Pakistan’s sovereignty, which was already under assault from the drone attacks. Partly it was an overreaction orchestrated by an army stung by the provision stressing civilian control over appointments and promotions in the military, and partly it reflected the worsening trust deficit between the two countries at all levels.

The fact is that the Kerry Lugar conditions affect only the security-related portion of the bill and not the economic assistance; and furthermore, they are not an imposition on Pakistan but on the administration. They identify what Congress views as problem areas in Pakistan’s “behavior” and prescribe periodic reports by the administration on Pakistan’s compliance to meet congressional concerns. Indeed, if the administration felt it was in the United States’ national interest to continue aid to Pakistan despite its failure to meet the conditionalities, the president was free to waive these conditions.

In sum, although many Pakistanis saw the act as gratuitous meddling in their internal affairs and as an infringement of national sovereignty, it left Pakistan facing the predicament of maintaining stable ties with the United States while preserving its vital interests.<sup>18</sup>

This is how the year 2010 began for the U.S.-Pakistan relationship and the Afghanistan war. There was a surge at all levels (not only at the level of the troops) and in the inclination to seek a political solution to the Afghanistan crisis—an idea that gained further momentum after the January 2010 London conference on Afghanistan—but also in putting pressure on Pakistan and broadening the strategic relationship with it as well as enhancing the U.S. diplomatic engagement in the region.

### WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Strategic challenges cannot be addressed by transactional relationships, which become a source of recurring tensions. They need a strategic framework. But the question is does the conceptual framework of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship remain what it has always been—transactional and contractual—or has it truly become strategic, as the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act implies?

The war on terror (or against Al Qaeda, as the Obama administration would like to call it) that is the centerpiece of this strategic relationship is, of course, critically important to the United States and global security. But only a stable and reformed Pakistan can be an effective partner in this war and in helping broader U.S. interests in the region and beyond. However, the fact remains that Pakistan is a troubled country in search of identity, national purpose, a reformed vision, and stability. This search is complicating—and complicated by—this war and indeed by the post-9/11 events in the region.

And in another paradox, the institutions that are hindering the emergence of a moderate, democratic, and progressive Pakistan are also serving some national purpose, either advancing ideology, national identity, national security, or social stability or responding to moral dilemmas. They are, therefore, not without their constituencies, such as the army and the Islamists. They all have their place in the national makeup. The nation needs a single unified vision to stand up against extremism, but such a vision is contradicted by its ideological and security paradigm that is prone to extremism. Also at play are the divisions, tensions, and conflicts within the country and rivalry and power struggles among the politicians and between the army and the civilians.

“Pakistan has remained a national-security state since its inception. Hence, it is not surprising that the army has its own worldview and strategic thinking, not necessarily the same as that of the civilians.”<sup>19</sup> Indeed, two governments—the civilian and the army—have existed in a Pakistan that has been ruled by the army for half of its history. As democratic institutions are weak and military rule has been the norm, an awkward relationship exists between the civilians and the military.

That is the essence of the crisis in Pakistan—conflicts within. The task of fighting extremism thus remains daunting. And so does the challenge of governance and genuine democratization.

### A NEW U.S. APPROACH?

As the year 2010 set in, the Obama administration’s thinking about these challenges began unfolding further to reflect a surer grasp of the issues involved. Has it also discovered the public policy adequate to address them? It might finally be moving in that direction, but tentatively.

The administration seems to have realized that Pakistan is a crisis by itself and should be handled as such and not as an auxiliary to the Afghanistan war.<sup>20</sup> The administration may also be coming around to recognize that, unlike the past when the relationship was only with the civil and military elite, there is an added dimension now—the people of Pakistan. And Pakistan does have some important national interests. Ignoring them will have no lasting place in the U.S.-Pakistan relationship. It only gives Pakistan an alibi to start acting contrary to Washington’s own interests, making the relationship expedient and mutually deceptive.

The essence of the administration’s new thinking seems to be that an effective U.S. approach to Pakistan must recognize Pakistan’s security interests and be people oriented, helping them and, indeed, Pakistan through an improved aid strategy. And it must include a new approach to the Afghanistan war. An unstable Afghanistan is affected by the stability of Pakistan and vice versa.<sup>21</sup>

### Emerging New Perceptions on the Afghanistan War

There is a discernable perception now that the mission in Afghanistan cannot be all encompassing and open-ended, as the domestic public support for this is waning. By the time of the congressional midterm elections in 2010, the American people had to be made to feel that

the Afghanistan war would not last forever. And by the end of 2011, before the start of the presidential election year, they must clearly be able to see the beginning of the end and some semblance of success. That is why Obama's West Point speech has set a clear date for the withdrawal of U.S. forces to begin.

To that end, the mission will have to be narrowly defined and the enemy identified more clearly so as to make the task doable and the success measurable. In a wide-ranging interview to the ABC television channel, on April 9, 2010, President Obama said that dismantling and destroying militants' bases in the Pakistan-Afghanistan region was the central concern of the U.S. administration and the main objective of its Afghan strategy.<sup>22</sup>

"We've got to work both in Afghanistan and in Pakistan to create an environment in which these extremist organizations are further and further isolated," he noted. But defeating these terrorists "means having a stable Afghanistan that has a trained security force, that is not allowing the Taliban to take over huge sections of the country, and potentially allow another platform for Al Qaeda to operate," he added.

Notably, he did not talk of defeating the Taliban, thus leaving two impressions. First, Al Qaeda was the enemy and the Taliban was only the accessory. Treating them both as enemies only brought them together. Second, defeating the Taliban was perhaps not an achievable objective and the troop surge may have been meant only to strengthen Washington's negotiating hand. The idea may just be to weaken them to a lesser force by the U.S. and NATO forces and contain them through a political deal and military pressure with the help of the Afghans and the regional players, especially after the Western presence has faded. Of course, of these countries, Pakistan's role will be central.

The United States has been impressed that

in the last two years with the change...in military leadership, the country's policy of counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism has undergone a qualitative change. It was very well planned and remarkably well executed operation that blew away the myth about the invincibility of these rebellious tribes.<sup>23</sup>

### WASHINGTON'S CHANGE OF TONE TOWARD PAKISTAN

This emerging approach to Pakistan is already visible through a change in language and tone. Instead of blaming Pakistan incessantly,

Washington has started highlighting its contribution and acknowledging its interests. On the sensitive issue of the safety of Pakistan's nukes, President Obama said in an interview with the *New York Times*, "I feel confident that Pakistan has secured its nuclear weapons."<sup>24</sup>

General Petraeus expressed an appreciation of Pakistan's counter-insurgency efforts in two television interviews in early March 2010.<sup>25</sup> He told CNN, "we just have to appreciate that . . . the Pakistani army, the Frontier Corps, the security forces have put a lot of short sticks into a lot of hornets' nests over the course of that last 10 months," and they needed to consolidate their gains in those areas before taking up new operations. He told PBS television, "Pakistan has a reason to be concerned about its lack of strategic depth . . . their strategic depth is and always has been (important) for a country that's very narrow and has its historic enemy to its east." And Defense Secretary Robert Gates acknowledged that "2000 Pak army soldiers have died in the last 3 years."<sup>26</sup> The statements show understanding of, if not support for, Pakistan's stance that it has genuine interests in Afghanistan that need to be safeguarded and that Pakistan cannot fight terrorists on every front simultaneously. In fact, Pakistan cannot be pressured to do so.

Yet in this new strategy, not only Pakistan's interests but those of other countries in the region are being recognized in the same breath by Washington, which has implications for Pakistan's future Afghanistan strategy.<sup>27</sup> "The Indians have a legitimate series of security interests in that region, as do a number of other countries including, of course, Pakistan, China, and all the other countries that neighbor on Afghanistan," said Richard Holbrooke in a briefing in Washington.<sup>28</sup>

## CHANGING PAKISTANI PERCEPTIONS

On Pakistan's part, one can also see a change in perceptions and possibly policies reflecting both a degree of optimism and sense of realism, responding in part to the emerging policy trends in Washington. The feeling probably is that the United States will definitely exit from Afghanistan, and if it fails, it will leave behind a strife-torn country at the mercy of multiple local and regional players, who will start advancing their strategic purposes by aggressively intervening in Afghanistan. The fact is that now there are so many new stakeholders in and around Afghanistan, including a rejuvenated non-Pashtun population and the anti-Taliban warlords. It is an Afghanistan no more malleable to Pakistan's wishes than it was in the 1990s when the field was clear and the Inter Services Intelligence

Directorate (ISI) could set up a client regime. Now even the Taliban may not be as compliant to ISI interests as before.

Pakistan might thus be saddled with a war it may not win but that will have to be in its arena whether it likes it or not. And it could also once again be host to a humanitarian crisis of horrendous proportions.<sup>29</sup> The last thing that Pakistan would like to see is a chaotic Afghanistan.

And if the Americans leave behind a success in the making, it will be an Afghanistan under the planned 250,000-strong army, possibly led by Tajiks, which will be hostile to Pakistan.

Pakistan thus needs American help to strengthen its position in the post-U.S. Afghanistan. Ideally, Pakistan would like the Americans to stay long enough to stabilize Afghanistan but perhaps not so long as to leave behind an Afghanistan that has a strong army, is under the Indian and Iranian influence, and has no place for Pakistan's surrogates. Yet it would also not like to see a Taliban success, however unlikely it may be. "Taliban will create a reverse ideological and strategic depth in Pakistan."<sup>30</sup>

Pakistan has to walk a thin line between, on one hand, supporting the United States fully to be part of its success but at the expense of its own future interests and, on the other, not causing an American failure that will also be detrimental to its interests. The Taliban may be a strategic asset, but Pakistan has to make sure it is not devalued by the changing strategic landscape in, around, and about Afghanistan and ensure that Pakistan does not end up as a loser. For this reason, it is not surprising that arrests of such a large number of the Afghan Taliban are taking place in Pakistan. This is apparently a move designed to prevent the Taliban leadership from switching sides or striking an independent bargain with Karzai or Washington at the expense of Pakistan's interests.

A major indication of the changing U.S.-Pakistan perceptions of their relationship and their interests and strategies came at their strategic dialogue in March 2010 in Washington, where the Pakistani side was led by the foreign minister and the army chief. The United States was very forthcoming in its support for Pakistan. And on issues on which it could not accommodate Pakistan's wishes—such as Pakistan's requests for a similar nuclear deal as with India, a free-trade agreement, and use of Washington's influence over India to have a more substantive India-Pakistan dialogue and moderate its presence in Afghanistan—Washington changed its tone from negative to noncommittal. On the whole, the United States gave ample evidence that whatever its future plans for Afghanistan, its new

strategy was contingent on an enhanced role for Pakistan's military and the ISI.<sup>31</sup>

The emerging trends in the relationship were reiterated in the second strategic dialogue at the foreign ministers level, which took place in Islamabad on July 19, 2010, followed by the international conference on Afghanistan on July 20. Both confirmed that the United States and its NATO allies were looking for a "managed withdrawal" from the Afghanistan war and that it could only be facilitated by a new relationship with Pakistan, "whose role and attitude would have the greatest impact on U.S. policy in Afghanistan."<sup>32</sup>

Since then, two important meetings—the third U.S.-Pakistan strategic dialogue on October 21, 2010, in Washington and the NATO summit in Lisbon November 19–20—have indicated a slight change of plans. At the strategic dialogue, Pakistanis resisted U.S. demands to go after the Afghan Taliban, prompting a U.S. rethink that its Afghanistan strategy may after all need more time, something that General Petraeus had also wanted. This was proven at the NATO summit with the announcement that the U.S. combat mission would last till the end of 2014. With this, President Obama seems to have bought more time, but the results, and indeed Afghanistan's future, look no clearer than before.

## CONCLUSION

A strong U.S.-Pakistan relationship is important to the interests of the two countries. By helping Pakistan's political stability, economic development, and democratization, the United States can enhance its effectiveness as a partner to defeat Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations and to fight extremism. A Pakistan headed toward moderation and strongly committed against militancy will, in turn, advance its own stability and is unlikely to go against America's core interests.

Both countries need short- and long-term strategies for this purpose that would require an enduring and mutually beneficial relationship. The prospects for this are hopeful, but the hope depends on many assumptions:<sup>33</sup> that Afghanistan will be stabilized, which will help Pakistan's stability; that by denying this exploitable cause for the Islamists to whip up anti-Americanism, it will help the U.S.-Pakistan relations; that the surge will be able to weaken the Afghan Taliban and force them to the negotiating table; and that there will be support not just among the Taliban but also among their opponents to a possible power-sharing deal, one that can be enforced by a legitimate

authority in Kabul satisfying basic governance and security needs and will be supported by the United States and regional players, especially Pakistan.

Finally, there must be the assumption that Pakistan will be coming to terms with its inner conflicts and contradictions. Yes, Pakistanis are finally owning the war on terrorism since the army operations in Swat last year, but the ownership is only partial and lacks deeper understanding of the underlying issues that give rise to terrorism. Pakistanis may now oppose terrorism but still live with extremism fostered by continued religiosity and national security concepts that support a jihadist mindset. So the battle begun after Swat is only half the battle. And the performance of the civilian leadership continues to be shoddy and faltering. The army alone cannot stabilize or moderate Pakistan, even with the best of intentions. The civilian leadership also has to get its act together.

The U.S.-Pakistan relationship of course remains critical to Pakistan's reform effort. Although neither side should demand 100 percent from the other, a true relationship will only develop if both sides' core interests are being served or at least not being neglected.

For its part, Washington should change the aid strategy and reconfigure the focus of its economic help. This is not an exhaustive list, but one may suggest here a major investment in human resources and a free-trade agreement aimed at helping Pakistan create a dynamic economy that will generate jobs and mitigate unemployment, offering the youth an alternative to extremism. Besides being a visible token of U.S. help, it must bring material benefits to people to raise their confidence in the U.S. partnership and its policies. In this regard, the United States needs to reinvigorate its public diplomacy to help explain its policies better, especially at the high levels of leadership as it is beginning to do.<sup>34</sup>

Washington should not shy away from the use of the full range of its diplomatic assets, economic influence, political engagement, strategic weight, and moral force to encourage both Pakistan and India to seek a friendly and cooperative bilateral relationship as it impacts the principal challenges and opportunities for the United States in the region.

As for India, it too has to understand that it cannot rise under threat of destabilization by Pakistan. And it is as much in her interest as in the interests of Pakistan to help ease Pakistan's endemic security concerns, especially as tensions will only benefit the hardliners there. This will continue to nourish anti-India sentiments and



anti-Americanism (which have now merged), keeping Pakistan vulnerable to radical propaganda and jihadist concepts that fuel extremism, providing an enabling environment for terrorism. This will hinder Pakistan's efforts to become a normal state, without which Pakistan will never become truly democratic.

Pakistan is not a lost cause. Though it has suffered from poor leadership for much of its history, the nation seems to have a great resilience, a strong will to survive, and a faith-based sense of optimism and exceptionalism. Given the enormity of the self-inflicted damage to the country, even survival has been a great achievement.

## NOTES

1. Bruce Riedel, *The Search for Al Qaeda: Its Leadership, Ideology and Future* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 12.
2. Dennis Kux, *United States and Pakistan, 1947–2000: Disenchanted Allies* (Washington, DC: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).
3. Touqir Hussain, "Islam and Pakistan," in *Islam and Democratization in Asia*, ed. Shipping Hua, 97–126 (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2009).
4. Touqir Hussain, "Post 1979 Pakistan: What Went Wrong," in *The Islamization of Pakistan 1979–2009, Viewpoints* special edition (Washington, DC: Middle East Institute, 2009), 8–11.
5. Hussain, "Post 1979 Pakistan," 8–11.
6. Bruce Riedel, discussion at the Brookings Institution, "The State of Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan," August 6, 2008.
7. Indo-U.S. civilian nuclear agreement, signed into law by President Bush on October 8, 2008, and signed between the two countries on October 10, 2008.
8. See various official statements.
9. Craig Cohen and Derek Chollet, "When \$10 Billion Is Not Enough: Rethinking U.S. Strategy toward Pakistan," *Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (2007): 7–19.
10. Kux, *United States and Pakistan*.
11. Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The TTP was set up in 2007 under the leadership of Baituallah Mehsud, who claimed to have brought together various militant groups based in the tribal areas under one organization (i.e., the TTP). He established a 40-member *shura*. The TTP made three demands on the government of Pakistan at the time of its formation: (a) cease operations in Swat and vacate the territory, (b) close its checkpoints in North and South Waziristan and Swat, and (c) release the *khateeb* (head cleric) of the Red Mosque in Islamabad and other prisoners. The TTP spokesman claimed that it was engaged in "defensive Jihad" in Pakistan because Pakistan was supporting the United States. In August 2008, the government of Pakistan banned the

TTP, but it continued to function in South Waziristan and other tribal areas. The basic target of the TTP is Pakistan, and it comprises mainly Pakistan militants based in the tribal areas of Pakistan and in Southern Punjab. They regard Mullah Omar, leader of the Afghan Taliban, as their leader.

12. Federally Administrated Tribal Areas of Pakistan.
13. Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, "Revenge of the Drones," *New America Foundation*, October 19, 2009.
14. Maleeha Lodhi, "A Year of Living on the Edge," *News (Pakistan)*, December 31, 2009.
15. The TTP operates autonomously of the Afghan Taliban. Both are said to be maintaining contacts, but they operate separately. The Afghan Taliban includes Afghan militants and operates primarily in Afghanistan. The TTP may assist the Afghan Taliban, but it is limited mainly to Pakistani territory. Some of the TTP activists cross over to the Afghan side to save themselves from the operations of the Pakistan army. A large number of them took refuge in Afghanistan and other Pakistani tribal areas after the TTP was dislodged from South Waziristan by the Pakistan army in December 2009. Now its leadership is said to be based in North Waziristan.
16. President Barack Obama, in private conversations with present and former administration officials.
17. David Sanger and Eric Schmit, "Pakistan Told to Ratchet Up Taliban Fight," *New York Times*, December 7, 2009.
18. Lodhi, "Year of Living," 2009.
19. Arif Nizami, "The Military and Politics," *News (Pakistan)*, January 16, 2010.
20. President Barack Obama, in private conversations with present and former Pakistani civil and military officials.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Anwar Iqbal, "Safe Pakistan, Afghanistan Is US Aim: Obama," *Dawn (Pakistan)*, April 10, 2010.
23. Talat Masood, "Defeating Militancy," *News (Pakistan)*, February 15, 2010.
24. Anwar Iqbal and Masood Haider, "N-terrorism Biggest Threat, Says Obama," *Dawn (Pakistan)*, April 7, 2010.
25. Anwar Iqbal, "Islamabad Stand Gets Tacit US Endorsement," *Dawn (Pakistan)*, March 9, 2010.
26. Robert M. Gates, "Our Commitment to Pakistan," *Dawn (Pakistan)*, January 21, 2010.
27. Anwar Iqbal, "India-Pakistan Conflict a Dilemma for US," *Dawn (Pakistan)*, February 5, 2010.
28. Richard Holbrooke, in private conversations with present and former Pakistani civil and military officials.
29. Talat Masood, "On an Upward Curve," *News (Pakistan)*, February 22, 2010.

30. Imtiaz Alam, "Terrorists and Their Apologists," *Daily Times* (Pakistan), July 4, 2010.
31. According to media reports toward the end of June 2010 (especially Al Jazeera), the chief of the army staff, General Kayani, assisted by the ISI chief, is facilitating a deal between President Karzai and the Haqqani network. President Obama has termed the talks "a useful step."
32. Tariq Fatemi, "Washington Observations," *Dawn* (Pakistan), July 29, 2010.
33. In two excellent pieces in Pakistan's *News* ("Troubled Mission," June 22, 2010, and "Rifts or Policy Drift?," June 29, 2010), Maleeha Lodhi suggests that the recent developments do not lend confidence. In Afghanistan, the change of command after the McChrystal interview with *Rolling Stone* in June 2010 shows "that nine years into the war the US-led mission (in Afghanistan) is mired in confusion and uncertainty. The unresolved tensions in American strategy have now caught up."
34. Statements of Secretary Clinton, Admiral Michael G. Mullen (chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff), and General Petraeus in recent months are a case in point.

## AFGHANISTAN: GRIM PROSPECTS?

*William Maley*

The pellet with the poison's in the chalice from the palace.

—The Witch Griselda in *The Court Jester* (1956)

When Barack Obama was inaugurated as U.S. president in January 2009, he inherited a poisoned chalice from the Bush administration in the form of Afghanistan. The high hopes that had accompanied the overthrow of the Taliban regime through Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001, and the installation of a new Afghan interim administration under Hamid Karzai in December of that year, had almost totally dissipated. Instead, President Obama was faced with mounting casualties in the U.S. force deployed to Afghanistan, an Afghan president whose behavior was becoming increasingly erratic, and a domestic debate in which parallels with America's Vietnam quagmire were increasingly and worryingly being drawn. Unhappily, the Bush administration's legacy also left the new U.S. administration with a limited range of options by which to reverse the situation. Transition processes tend to have their own logics and dynamics, and once things begin to go astray, resetting the course is as difficult as executing a sudden turn in a huge ocean liner. The situation in Afghanistan is not beyond recovery, but the challenges that confront the Obama administration are nonetheless very substantial.

The aim of this chapter is to identify those challenges and to assess the steps that the Obama administration has taken, or might take, to address them. It argues that progress in Afghanistan depends not simply on troop numbers—an exceptionally crude metric—but on a recognition of the complicated interconnections between Afghan politics and society and the politics of Afghanistan's wider region. Specifically, it argues that U.S. policy can succeed only to the extent that it grasps the psychology of the situation in Afghanistan and

recognizes that a successful “hearts and minds” strategy cannot be built on the supply of “trinkets for the natives” but instead depends on creating a credible sense that the Taliban movement will fail in its strategic aims. This requires both an abandonment of the idea of “reconciling with the Taliban” (which makes the Taliban look like winners) and the greatly enhanced use of diplomatic and other tools to pressure Pakistan to close the sanctuaries that the Afghan Taliban continue to use.

### THE U.S. POLICY CONTEXT

For many decades, Afghanistan was a country that Washington found easy to ignore. In the period of the cold war, the United States mainly aligned with Pakistan and Iran as principal allies in Southwest Asia, and in the early 1950s, it responded to requests for help from a pro-Western Afghan government in a fashion that one scholar has labeled “indifferent and niggardly.”<sup>1</sup> Aid, when it was delivered, came in fits and starts, and the commitment of Pushtun leaders in Afghanistan to the hopeless but symbolically potent cause of a distinct territory of “Pushtunistan” put them directly at odds with Washington’s Pakistani friends. Growing Soviet influence in Afghanistan resulted,<sup>2</sup> but successive U.S. administrations proved slow to respond. All this changed with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, following a Marxist coup in Kabul in April of the previous year. The Soviet invasion had not been foreseen by the U.S. intelligence community, and it came as a dreadful shock to the Carter administration (1977–1981).<sup>3</sup> Both it and the Reagan administration (1981–1989) committed themselves to supporting the Afghan resistance forces (*Mujahideen*), by whom the Soviets soon found themselves confronted. Pakistan, ironically, became the frontline state in supporting this endeavor, not only hosting millions of Afghan refugees<sup>4</sup> but also accommodating seven Afghan resistance parties—although one, the *Hezb-e Islami* led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, informally acquired a “most favored party” status.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, the United States was greatly preoccupied with the dramatic changes in the politics of the Soviet Union following the selection of Mikhail Gorbachev as general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in March 1985,<sup>6</sup> and this led to significant U.S. diplomatic interest in the crafting of what came to be the April 1988 Geneva Accords on Afghanistan, which then led to the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan by February 1989.<sup>7</sup> The accords themselves were flawed and did not provide for a

comprehensive solution to the Afghanistan problem,<sup>8</sup> but they were good enough for Washington at the time. They provided scope for significant U.S. disengagement from the Afghanistan situation, which no longer carried the “cold war” coloring that had earlier been the case. The U.S. Embassy in Kabul was closed in 1989, and it did not reopen until 2001, in very different circumstances. In the intervening years, and especially following the collapse of the communist regime in Kabul in April 1992, Afghanistan remained a low-level priority, with the Clinton administration (1993–2001) failing to recognize the danger that Afghanistan could pose<sup>9</sup> and even responding calmly to the Taliban seizure of Kabul in September 1996.<sup>10</sup> A cameo of what went wrong with U.S. policy toward the Taliban was the observation of a senior U.S. official that “you get to know them and you find they really have a great sense of humour.”<sup>11</sup>

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York and Washington changed all this. Afghanistan, the country from whose territory Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda terrorist network had orchestrated the attacks, suddenly became absolutely central to Washington’s reaction. The response of the Bush administration came in several forms. First, the administration applied pressure on Pakistan to cut its ties to the Taliban, of which its Inter-Service Intelligence directorate (ISI) had been the “primary patron.”<sup>12</sup> Second, the United States assembled a substantial force to back the anti-Taliban elements within Afghanistan, whose charismatic military leader, Ahmad Shah Massoud, had been assassinated by Al Qaeda two days before the U.S. attacks; on October 7, 2001, this force went into action, leading to the fall of Kabul on November 13 and to the obliteration of the Taliban regime. Third, the United States supported the UN in the holding of a conference in Bonn in November–December 2001 that produced an agreement providing a pathway for state building in Afghanistan.<sup>13</sup> Finally, the Bush administration threw its weight behind the new interim and then transitional administrations headed by Hamid Karzai, who in October 2004 finally won a popular mandate when he was elected president of Afghanistan with 55.4 percent of the vote. Karzai was in regular contact with President George W. Bush, was supported from 2003 to 2005 by an Afghan-born U.S. ambassador (Dr. Zalmay Khalilzad), and was undoubtedly helped at the 2004 election by the perception that he was the favored candidate of the United States, which continued to be Afghanistan’s strongest backer in terms of both deployed military forces and flows of aid for reconstruction and development purposes.

## THE LIMITATIONS OF U.S. POLICY

Unfortunately, the policies of the Bush administration were premised on a number of overly optimistic assumptions, and with the passage of time, it became clear that the challenges that remained in Afghanistan were substantially greater than the United States appreciated. Although it was undoubtedly the case that the bulk of the Afghan population welcomed the appearance of international forces in 2001 as a way of freeing them from the domination of the Pakistan-backed Taliban, they remained skeptical of the Western commitment to support them in the longer term. The foolish decision of the Bush administration in March 2002 to block the expansion beyond Kabul of the International Security Assistance Force,<sup>14</sup> for which the Bonn Agreement had provided, deprived Afghanistan's transition of critical momentum at a crucial moment. The Bush administration's March 2003 invasion of Iraq then compounded this problem, sucking oxygen out of the Afghan theater of operations in vast quantities. As Admiral Michael G. Mullen (chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff) put it in 2007, "In Afghanistan we do what we can. In Iraq we do what we must."<sup>15</sup> When a country has experienced the traumas to which Afghanistan had been exposed, it needs to be nursed back to health with the utmost care. Instead, it rapidly became marginalized as a focus of U.S. attention.

This drift of focus saw the Taliban threat come back to life, together with radical groups such as the *Hezb-e Islami* and the so-called Haqqani network. There is no doubt that this revival was nurtured by Pakistan; indeed, one source has quoted the Pakistan army chief, General Ashfaq Kayani, describing one of the most prominent members of the Haqqani network, Jalaluddin Haqqani, as a "strategic asset."<sup>16</sup> Whereas the Taliban *regime* had been wiped out in late 2001, the Taliban *leadership* had not; on the contrary, its key members had escaped to Pakistan, where they soon found a welcoming embrace. From the second half of 2002, attacks in Kabul and other Afghan cities resumed, and the Iraq distraction provided additional impetus for circles in Pakistan to conclude that the Taliban had not lost their value as an instrument of asymmetric warfare. At the same time, the memory of Washington's stark *démarche* to Islamabad in late 2001 was allowed to fade, and it was replaced with a policy of "positive" incentives for Pakistan that saw billions of U.S. dollars supplied to Islamabad, even though Taliban operations from sanctuaries in Pakistan were escalating.<sup>17</sup> Astoundingly, this continued even after the Pakistani president Musharraf candidly stated in

Kabul in August 2007, "There is no doubt Afghan militants are supported from Pakistan soil. The problem that you have in your region is because support is provided from our side."<sup>18</sup> Abundant evidence surfaced of this support,<sup>19</sup> and a June 2010 report based on interviews with Taliban commanders made it clear that Pakistan's ISI was itself heavily involved in backing the Afghan Taliban.<sup>20</sup>

President Bush seems to have placed undue reliance on his personal relationship with Musharraf as a means of controlling Pakistan's behavior and to have severely underestimated the capacity for duplicity in the Pakistani leadership. Earlier Republican presidents had been more alert to these dangers. Indeed, in his memoirs, the former U.S. secretary of state George Shultz told an illuminating story about a conversation between President Reagan and the Pakistani president Zia ul-Haq at the time of the 1988 Geneva Accords: "I heard the president ask Zia how he would handle the fact that they would be violating their agreement. Zia replied that they would 'just lie about it. We've been denying our activities there for eight years.'"<sup>21</sup> There are lessons here for any U.S. president seeking to deal with the Pakistan military.

There were two additional areas in which the Bush approach was to prove defective. One related to the issue of reconstruction. Although aid projects may have desirable developmental outcomes, there is very little evidence that aid since 2001 has generated positive political benefits for the Afghan government.<sup>22</sup> On the whole, the Bush administration supported a top-down approach to aid, which privileged the central state at the expense of local communities and set the scene for legitimacy problems if the state failed to deliver.<sup>23</sup> Yet it also looked for quick results, which militated against an inclusive process of indigenous capacity building. This had extremely detrimental long-term consequences. Monies flooded into Afghanistan with less-than-adequate financial control mechanisms in place and much of the time bypassed the state altogether, going to private commercial contractors charging exorbitant fees and to Afghan "fixers," often connected by lineage ties to figures in the Kabul elite, who positioned themselves to get a piece of the action. Given the weakness of the rule of law, there could hardly have been a better recipe for the emergence of corruption and the abuse of power.<sup>24</sup> In the minds of many Afghans, these negative features of the transition tended to overshadow its achievements, and this was strikingly demonstrated in poll data: whereas 64 percent of Afghans surveyed by the Asia Foundation in 2004 felt that the country was moving in the right direction, by 2009 this had fallen to 42 percent.<sup>25</sup>



The other area related to the personalization of politics under President Karzai. The Bush administration—much taken with Karzai's initial popularity—backed the establishment of a strong presidential system, which offered an obvious point of access for U.S. influence. The merits of a parliamentary system attracted little attention, and when the Constitution of 2004 was adopted, it was not so much a constitution for Afghanistan as a “constitution for Karzai.”<sup>26</sup> At the time of the 2004 presidential election, a view that one often heard was that a victory for Karzai would empower him to dispense with the “warlords” whom he had had to accept as part of the Bonn Agreement and instead assemble a cabinet of expert technocrats who could increasingly take over the responsibility for administering the country. But things did not work out in quite that way. One of Karzai's first steps was to dispense with the outstanding technocrat in his government, the finance minister Dr. Ashraf Ghani, and he followed this up by removing the respected foreign minister Dr. Abdullah Abdullah. This was not out of respect for the new parliament, elected in September 2005, but rather a reflection of a patrimonial political style that saw increasing power exercised by cronies of the president rather than holders of cabinet office. The failings of the presidential system were by no means all Karzai's fault, but as time went by, Karzai's strengths were of decreasing relevance to Afghanistan's problems, and his weaknesses in the areas of policy development and implementation were more relevant. This set the scene for a plunge in his popularity and for a range of political maneuverings that then resulted. This was to prove one of the most toxic poisons in the chalice that President Obama inherited.

As a junior senator from Illinois, Barack Obama made his reputation as a staunch critic of the Bush administration's decision to invade Iraq. By contrast, he strongly supported the 2001 operation to overthrow the Taliban. “With justice at our backs and the world by our side,” he later wrote, “we drove the Taliban government out of Kabul in just over a month.”<sup>27</sup> His critique of the Iraq war was multidimensional, but one element was that “the war in Afghanistan was far from complete.”<sup>28</sup> This did not, however, mean that he claimed specific expertise about Afghanistan's complexities. His meeting during a summer 2008 visit to Afghanistan with Gul Agha Sherzai, one of the most deeply suspect figures with whom Karzai and his U.S. patrons were associated,<sup>29</sup> suggested that he was still coming to terms with Afghanistan's political terrain. Nonetheless, upon his inauguration, he brought an openness to new ways of viewing the

Afghanistan situation and a willingness to engage in a fundamental review of how the situation in Afghanistan might be improved.<sup>30</sup> This set the agenda for most of his first year in office.

## INNOVATION UNDER OBAMA

U.S. presidents often inherit difficult situations that they played little or no direct role in creating, and the situations can prove to be intractable. President Nixon in 1969 inherited challenges in Vietnam that were substantially the creation of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations,<sup>31</sup> and they blighted much of his presidency, especially after the deaths of student protesters killed by National Guardsmen on the campus of Ohio's Kent State University in May 1970 during an antiwar protest. When Barack Obama became the president in January 2009, he faced such a situation in Afghanistan but responded steadily and with caution, avoiding a rush either to adopt new policy settings or affirm old ones. Instead, he embarked on a number of related endeavors. Inevitably, this involved creating a new team of relevant actors to support America's Afghanistan policy. Like any incoming president, Mr. Obama had a number of key positions to fill. Robert Gates, who had served as secretary of defense under President George W. Bush, was invited to continue in the position. This was a wise appointment, given that Secretary Gates had earlier shown considerable sensitivity to the complexities of the Afghan situation. The new secretary of state, Hillary Rodham Clinton, had much less claim to personal knowledge of Afghanistan; instead, she owed her appointment to the politics of the Democratic Party, having been Obama's main competitor for the Democratic nomination in 2007–2008.<sup>32</sup> Conversely, Obama's new appointee as the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, the retired lieutenant-general Karl W. Eikenberry, knew Afghanistan very well, having been the U.S. force commander there from 2005 to 2007. But Eikenberry was not the only on-the-ground diplomatic representative of the United States; a very experienced official, Richard C. Holbrooke, was appointed as special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan on January 22, 2009. Holbrooke had earlier been intimately involved in the negotiation of the Dayton Accords on Bosnia and Herzegovina,<sup>33</sup> and he was widely viewed as a forceful advocate of U.S. policy, more than capable of applying pressure to foreign actors to accept Washington's position. Beneath all these individuals were large numbers of further officials with different concerns, responsibilities, and roles. Coordinating

these different actors and agencies was a major task for the new president and his national security advisor, James Jones. As well, Obama initiated changes in U.S. military leadership in Afghanistan, moving in May 2009 to replace General David D. McKiernan with General Stanley A. McChrystal.

The administration also embarked on a lengthy policy review process. This involved, crucially, an internal review carried out by the former CIA official Bruce Riedel, who had very realistic views about Pakistan's role in nurturing the Taliban.<sup>34</sup> Underpinning this revisiting of U.S. policy was a sense that it was important to move away from simply hunting the enemy to an approach that was focused on "population security"<sup>35</sup> and "legitimacy,"<sup>36</sup> values on which much recent thinking about counterinsurgency had focused.<sup>37</sup> The entire process culminated in a major policy announcement made by President Obama in a speech at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point on December 1, 2009. He took as his starting point the view that "the status quo is not sustainable" and stated that "it is in our vital national interest to send an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan." He identified three specific objectives for U.S. policy:

We must deny Al Qaeda a safe haven. We must reverse the Taliban's momentum and deny it the ability to overthrow the government. And we must strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan's security forces and government so that they can take lead responsibility for Afghanistan's future.

He also outlined "three core elements" of U.S. strategy: "a military effort to create the conditions for a transition; a civilian surge that reinforces positive action; and an effective partnership with Pakistan." However, as well as all these points, he explicitly stated, "After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home."<sup>38</sup> As a piece of rhetoric, this speech was immensely powerful, and in its recognition of complexity, it went far beyond the banalities that so often passed for "analysis" in President Bush's speeches about Afghanistan. But speeches alone rarely deliver outcomes. The test for President Obama was to find ways of ensuring that his policy could be implemented in practice. And here he faced the practical problem that "success" in Afghanistan is not simply a matter of American policy but depends upon a whole range of variables that lie beyond Washington's direct control. It is no wonder that the period since Obama's West Point speech has proved a taxing one.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE OBAMA APPROACH

Some of the problems confronting the Obama administration arise from the intrinsic difficulties of the Afghan situation, but at least one can be traced to the mixed signaling contained in Obama's December 1 speech. The president's commitment that after 18 months, U.S. troops would begin to come home had some unintended consequences. At one level, the wording was quite clever, creating an obligation merely to *commence* a withdrawal rather than to carry it very far. In this way, the president may have intended to avoid an open-ended, "blank check" commitment while at the same time preserving his freedom of action in the light of future circumstances. He may also have hoped to focus President Karzai's mind on the future and galvanize him to begin to address Afghanistan's severe governance problems. Unfortunately, it soon became clear that it was the Taliban and their ISI backers who had been galvanized by a perception that the United States was looking for ways to leave and that President Karzai, rather than working to improve governance, was instead interested in hedging against a future U.S. departure by seeking ways of compromising with the Taliban and the *Hezb-e Islami*.

President Obama, in addition, faced the problem of confusion and conflict in his own ranks. General McChrystal had prepared a lengthy submission outlining the case for a significant increase in troop numbers, and reports of what he was requesting found their way into the press, creating the impression that he was seeking to limit what his president and commander in chief could do as part of the wider policy review. This was followed by the leaking of a series of cables sent in November 2009 to Secretary of State Clinton by Ambassador Eikenberry, setting out a cogent case for caution in the light of the weaknesses of the Karzai government. There may have been personality issues involved, but at the heart lay a deep philosophical divergence over strategy. At the level of personalities, the matter was resolved in June 2010, with the most spectacular dismissal of a serving U.S. commander since President Truman's removal of General Douglas MacArthur during the Korean War.<sup>39</sup> General McChrystal was removed from his position and replaced by General David H. Petraeus under the circumstances of the publication by a popular magazine of a story that revealed extraordinarily ill-judged and indiscreet comments by McChrystal and his staff about the president and his advisers.<sup>40</sup> However, there is no reason to doubt that divergent views of how Afghanistan should be handled persist within Obama's team.<sup>41</sup>

It is also the case that some significant problems continue to haunt America's practical approach to the situation on the ground. Even after years in Afghanistan, the quality of U.S. intelligence is reportedly poor. According to one study,

Ignorant of local economics and landowners, hazy about who the powerbrokers are and how they might be influenced, incurious about the correlations between various development projects and the levels of cooperation among villagers, and disengaged from people in the best position to find answers—whether aid workers or Afghan soldiers—U.S. intelligence officers and analysts can do little but shrug in response to high level decision-makers seeking the knowledge, analysis and information they need to wage a successful counterinsurgency.<sup>42</sup>

It is also the case that rapid personnel turnover works against the acquisition of local knowledge and ties, which are so important in a deinstitutionalized political environment.<sup>43</sup> The most serious paradox in U.S. policy, however, is that of Faustian bargains, and the area where this matters most is logistics. In June 2010, a report to the U.S. Congress raised grave concerns about the unintended consequences of the use of logistics subcontractors in Afghanistan, arguing that protection payments for safe passage were a significant potential source of funding for the Taliban and that unaccountable supply-chain security contractors undermined the U.S. counterinsurgency strategy.<sup>44</sup> But an even greater dilemma relates to dependence on Pakistan as a transport route. The United States finds itself in the bizarre situation of depending, for the supply of materiel to the Afghan theater of operations, on the goodwill of a country that has been pursuing a “two-track” policy toward Afghanistan that involves, *inter alia*, nurturing the very militants that the United States is trying to confront.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the whole problem of sanctuaries remains the Achilles heel of U.S. strategy for Afghanistan. This was something on which Ambassador Eikenberry rightly focused in one of his cables to Washington. “More troops won’t end the insurgency,” he wrote,

as long as Pakistan sanctuaries remain. Pakistan will remain the single greatest source of Afghan instability so long as the border sanctuaries remain, and Pakistan regards its strategic interests as best served by a weak neighbor. . . . Until this sanctuary problem is fully addressed, the gains from sending additional forces may be fleeting.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, the new Obama policies offered little in the way of leverage in dealing with Afghanistan's internal governance problems, which have done much to blight the reputation of the Karzai government and its backers. Afghanistan is a uniquely awkward state with which to deal. At one level, it is heavily dependent on international support, and it is extremely doubtful whether the Karzai government would survive for long at all if international support were to be withdrawn. Yet Karzai knows that the interests of Western actors in avoiding instability in West Asia are so strong that he need not fear complete withdrawal, and his dependence therefore offers his patrons less leverage than one might have thought. This provides him scope to exercise the formal sovereignty of Afghanistan, especially in areas relating to the appointment of public officials and relations between different Afghan institutions. The result, however, has been a translation to the Afghan state structure of patrimonial forms of politics in which corruption, nepotism, and abuse of power have flourished,<sup>47</sup> often hand in hand with drug barons.<sup>48</sup> These are significant factors, although not the only ones, that have undermined the position of the state. They have been exacerbated by President Karzai's increasingly perverse or quixotic behavior, doubtless itself a product in part of the isolated, "hothouse" environment in which he works, surrounded by manipulative associates with agendas of their own.<sup>49</sup> It is little wonder that Ambassador Eikenberry was minded to write,

President Karzai is not an adequate strategic partner. . . . Karzai continues to shun responsibility for any sovereign burden, whether defense, governance, or development. . . . It strains credulity to expect Karzai to change fundamentally this late in his life and in our relationship.<sup>50</sup>

The parallels with South Vietnamese politicians such as Ngo Dinh Diem and Nguyen Van Thieu could hardly have been lost on the author of the cable.

One opportunity to draw a red line did arise during President Obama's first year in office, in the light of the Afghan presidential election held on August 20, 2009. The election proved to be a disaster. Turnout was poor, and fewer than 5.7 million votes were allegedly cast. But of these, over 1.3 million ended up being invalidated on the grounds of fraud, with over 75 percent of the invalidated votes having favored Karzai. The exposure of the fraud took Karzai's share of the vote to below 50 percent and thus triggered the need for a runoff against his closest competitor, the former foreign minister Dr. Abdullah. Karzai's response took the form of a tantrum, and a

range of international officials, including U.S. Democratic senator John Kerry, sought to draw him back to the process. Unfortunately, what Washington should have seen as a moment of truth was instead treated as just another local political crisis to be managed on the ground in Kabul. Eventually, Karzai agreed to accept the runoff, and on October 20, 2009, Kerry publicly praised him as a “statesman.” This effectively signaled to Karzai that the international community could be taken for granted. Thereafter, he refused to take any steps to clean up the contaminated processes that had led to the first-round fraud, let alone to replace the blatantly partisan chair of the inappropriately titled Independent Election Commission (*Komision-e mustaqel-e entakhabat*).<sup>51</sup> It was by no means clear that Karzai would have won a runoff vote conducted freely and fairly, but he was not put to the test: Dr. Abdullah, realizing that the process had become a farce, withdrew from the race with considerable dignity. The ultimate willingness of the United States to accept the election—President Obama at West Point claimed that it “produced a government that is consistent with Afghanistan’s laws and constitution”<sup>52</sup>—arguably constituted a very dangerous turn for the worse in the relationship with Afghanistan. It also raised grave questions about Afghan democracy and about the reliability of the system that seemed to be emerging in its place.

Here, the Obama administration suffers from seriously constrained options, but the issues involved are extremely important. It is all too easy to slip into a mode of thinking that says that Afghanistan has never known democracy, that Afghans do not understand it, and that the effort to establish a democratic system was flawed from the outset. The weaknesses in this line of argument derive in part from the multiple senses in which the word *democracy* can be used. It would certainly be foolish in the extreme to contemplate the simple transplantation of the specific features of the political system of one country to another. A whole range of political and cultural factors militate against any such endeavor, even if there is significant international support for the exercise.<sup>53</sup> However, if one conceives of a democratic system simply as one that provides periodic opportunities for changing rulers without bloodshed,<sup>54</sup> its virtues do not seem quite so remote. There are good reasons why such a system would appeal to ordinary Afghans. But there are equally good reasons why it would not necessarily appeal to an incumbent elite. The Obama administration is faced in Afghanistan with counterparts who do not want to relinquish power and so far have proved adept in denying it to other actors. This is something that ordinary Afghans understand very well. In the Asia Foundation’s 2009 survey, 78 percent agreed,

“Democracy may have its problems, but it is better than any other form of government”; however, 75 percent also agreed that “politicians seek power for their own benefit and don’t worry about helping people.”<sup>55</sup>

These structural and political weaknesses in Afghanistan have eaten away at the counterinsurgency approach of President Obama’s generals. In 2010 the unfortunate metaphor of “government in a box” was coined to describe the way in which initial military efforts to clear an area would be followed by the importation of governance tools that could rapidly win the loyalty of disgruntled locals. This was quite incredibly naive, and it overlooked the need to build generalized normative support, or legitimacy, for key institutions. But in the context of what is formally a highly centralized state, it is difficult to win legitimacy through local initiatives alone, for the legitimacy of the central state is also important. And it is here that the burden of the electoral fraud in 2009 comes into play. Governments can survive on the basis of nonlegitimate forms of domination, but it is a difficult challenge unless the coercive agencies of the state are already strong. In Afghanistan, a central part of the exit strategy for the United States and its allies is to build up the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police as bulwarks of the state. Alas, life in each of these institutions is perilous, and few people really want to risk their lives for the sake of a government that they do not respect. The damning conclusions about President Karzai in a recent work by an eminent scholar of Afghan history and culture are worth quoting at length:

Fearing any possibility of rejection at the polls, he committed such blatant fraud to ensure his reelection that his victory proved truly pyrrhic. At the end of the process, he was a ruler who met neither Afghan nor international standards of legitimacy. Afghan history portents an unhappy end for such a ruler, whether at the hands of his foreign patrons or his own people. A tree whose roots are rotten may still stand, but it is only a matter of time before it crashes under its own weight or is blown over by a windstorm.<sup>56</sup>

## CHALLENGES AHEAD

The Bush administration’s approach to foreign policy was that of a revisionist rather than status quo power, and like many revisionist powers, it veered toward unilateralism in its behavior.<sup>57</sup> This was most dramatically manifested in the invasion of Iraq, but unfortunately, it had the effect of implanting skepticism in many populations



about other missions in which the Bush administration was involved, including Afghanistan.<sup>58</sup> Even if the United States remains firmly committed to Afghanistan, there is a real risk that domestic political pressures will undermine the commitment of key Western allies, deepening the complexity of the choices that America confronts. Already Canada is slated to draw down its Kandahar mission by 2011; the Dutch coalition government led by Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende fell apart over the Afghanistan issue in February 2010, and Dutch forces in Uruzgan are to be replaced by U.S. forces in a lead role;<sup>59</sup> and at the June 2010 G20 meeting in Canada, the new British prime minister, David Cameron, voiced a desire to see Britain's involvement finished by 2015.<sup>60</sup> Even in Australia, the largest non-NATO contributor of forces to Afghanistan, increasing casualties and declining popular support for the mission have begun to raise questions about its sustainability.<sup>61</sup> The blatant fraud in the August 2009 election has made it rather more difficult to defend the Afghan mission, given that members of the public, told in the past that troops were required to support a young democracy, can easily query whether Afghanistan anymore deserves such a label. And although the geopolitical case for involvement in Afghanistan remains strong, it is not one that will necessarily seem compelling to voters with little interest in international affairs and the stability of seemingly remote parts of the globe. It is unfortunately the case that perceptions of success and failure are not simply based on "score-keeping"; as Johnson and Tierney have put it, "Perceptions favoring victory or defeat can become fixed by mind-sets, salient events, and social pressures so that people are bound to see one side as the winner, regardless of what happens on the ground."<sup>62</sup>

A temptation in a daunting situation such as that in Afghanistan is to lower one's aims very considerably. With hindsight, one can certainly argue that the objectives of state building pursued by the Bush administration were massively overambitious and that it would have been far preferable to attempt to accomplish a small number of tasks in an efficient and expeditious manner.<sup>63</sup> Some even warned of this at the outset.<sup>64</sup> But once one has embarked on a particular path, it may be no easy thing to change course dramatically. The danger is that one may end up accidentally triggering a rout through the bandwagon mechanism.<sup>65</sup> It does not pay to be on a losing side in Afghanistan. Afghans are watching all the time for indications as to the direction in which the wind is blowing, and what outside actors might see as a modest shift in direction might be locally read as an approaching hurricane and may precipitate an unexpectedly dramatic

shift of loyalties, on purely prudential grounds, away from the Afghan government and in favor of the insurgents.

The dispiriting prospects in Afghanistan, and growing international exhaustion, have led to a mounting enthusiasm for “reconciliation” with the Taliban as a solution for Afghanistan’s problems, a philosophy much on display in the so-called Peace Jirga that was held in Kabul in June 2010 (and rocketed by Taliban attackers). Karzai, whose embrace of this approach can be seen as part of his hedging strategy, has taken to referring to the Taliban as “angry brothers.” Many other Afghans would use sharper language. So far, the Obama administration has been very cautious about such an approach, and rightly so.<sup>66</sup> First, it is a strategy driven by Pakistan, whose motives are almost certainly to secure dominance in Afghanistan.<sup>67</sup> Second, the notion that the Taliban would feel honor-bound by commitments they might have made is extremely innocent: as Sarah Chayes has put it, “Promises that the Taliban might make in the process of gaining a deal would not be worth the paper they were written on.”<sup>68</sup> Third, the notion that a commitment to “respect the constitution” would be of much significance is especially naive, given that even international actors were prepared in 2009 to go along with a prolongation of President Karzai’s term that was profoundly dubious in the light of the wording of Article 61 of the Afghan Constitution. Fourth, talk of *future* negotiation with the Taliban discourages *present* cooperation with the Afghan government and the United States and other NATO and other international forces: why would an Afghan risk being seen as a strong supporter of anti-Taliban forces if the Taliban seem likely to come back? But fifth, given how many Afghans despise the Taliban, the proponents of negotiation risk overlook the possibility that a return of the Taliban—far from bringing “peace”—could ultimately reignite a ferocious internal conflict, fueled by neighboring countries. Sixth, there is no reason to think that the Taliban are any more appetizing in this century than they were in the last. They “oppose democracy on principle.”<sup>69</sup> The Taliban movement is not a collection of wayward children; as O’Hanlon and Sherjan have put it,

It is in equal parts a narcoterrorist organization willing to use drug smuggling to finance its operations, an extremist Islamist movement with an intolerant view of nonbelievers and a backward view of the role of women in society, and a ruthless organization willing to use brutal violence against innocent, law-abiding citizens to impose its version of Islam.<sup>70</sup>

Realistically, allowing the Taliban back would involve throwing away most of the positive achievements of the post-2001 period. But most importantly of all, the discussion of negotiation distracts attention from the need to deal with the issue of Pakistani sponsorship of the Taliban. The response of the Bush administration to Pakistani provocations was essentially to try to constrain Afghan responses and use “quiet diplomacy” to produce an appearance of harmony.<sup>71</sup> This verged on the supine and did nothing to arrest the slide. Ultimately, a policy to deal with Pakistan requires a willingness to threaten sticks as well as dangle carrots.<sup>72</sup> It will be easier to threaten sticks if the reliance on Pakistan as a source of logistical support is significantly reduced, but the stark lesson of decades of constructive engagement with Pakistan is that it simply does not work.

## CONCLUSION

Despite all the problems that I have outlined in this chapter, it is far from clear that ordinary Afghans would like to see the back of the United States and its allies. The Asia Foundation’s 2009 opinion survey found that when those who felt things were moving in the wrong direction were asked why they held that view, only 7 percent mentioned that too many foreigners were getting involved (compared with 42 percent for “insecurity,” 25 percent for “bad government,” 17 percent for “corruption,” and 15 percent for “unemployment”).<sup>73</sup> Afghans have learned a bitter lesson in recent decades: that the absence of broad international interest in their country facilitates its becoming a brutal battleground for influence on the part of actors from the immediate region and beyond. Afghanistan was left as a bleeding wound after 1989, and the ultimate result was the September 11 attacks. This is a danger that understandably haunts all U.S. presidents. It is easy to point to the limits of long-term U.S. influence in Southwest Asia, but it is equally important to recognize that there are some credible scenarios for what might follow a Western disengagement from Afghanistan that are very alarming indeed. It is hard to think of any outcome that could offer more symbolic inspiration to radical groups in Pakistan, and with seeds of radicalism already planted in the Pakistan military, the longer-run consequences could be simply abominable.<sup>74</sup>

No two political situations are ever exactly alike, but the parallels between the challenges that President Obama faces in Afghanistan and those that President Johnson faced in Vietnam are enough to unsettle any observer with a sense of history. The U.S. efforts in

Vietnam were undermined by the weakness and corruption of its South Vietnamese partner, which never really regained much legitimacy after the fraudulent elections of 1967,<sup>75</sup> and ultimately by the inability of President Ford's administration (1974–1977) to persuade Congress or the American people that the task in Vietnam was worth the cost. However, there is one key point of distinction between the two cases that also is worth mentioning. In Vietnam, the United States came face to face with a strong manifestation of Asian nationalism and was not equipped to meet it. In Afghanistan, by contrast, the principal threat that the United States and its allies face is not that of resurgent Afghan nationalism but rather of what is virtually a “creeping invasion” of Afghanistan by one of its neighbors.<sup>76</sup> If this threat can be confronted at its source, Afghanistan might find a stable path more quickly than many observers anticipate. If it cannot, the prospects for Afghanistan will be grim indeed. It remains to be seen whether the Obama administration is prepared to bite this particular bullet.

## NOTES

1. Leon B. Poullada, “Afghanistan and the United States: The Crucial Years,” *Middle East Journal* 35, no. 2 (1981): 182.
2. See Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985).
3. See Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Penguin, 2007), 365–367.
4. See Susanne Schmeidl and William Maley, “The Case of the Afghan Refugee Population: Finding Durable Solutions in Contested Transitions,” in *Protracted Displacement in Asia: No Place to Call Home*, ed. Howard Adelman, 131–179 (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008).
5. See Marvin G. Weinbaum, *Pakistan and Afghanistan: Resistance and Reconstruction* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 34. For further detail on Pakistan's relations with the resistance, see Rizwan Hussain, *Pakistan and the Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2005).
6. See Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); and Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
7. See Barnett R. Rubin, *The Search for Peace in Afghanistan: From Buffer State to Failed State* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).
8. See William Maley, “The Geneva Accords of April 1988,” in *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, ed. Amin Saikal and William Maley, 12–28 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989).

9. For two outstanding appraisals of this period, see Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (London: Penguin, 2005), and Roy Gutman, *How We Missed the Story: Osama Bin Laden, the Taliban, and the Hijacking of Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2008).
10. See William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars* (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 189–191.
11. Richard Mackenzie, “The United States and the Taliban,” in *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, ed. William Maley (London: Hurst & Co., 1998), 97.
12. *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 123.
13. James Dobbins, *After the Taliban: Nation-Building in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2008).
14. See Alan Sipress, “Peacekeepers Won’t Go beyond Kabul, Cheney Says,” *Washington Post*, March 20, 2002.
15. Robert Burns, “Mullen: Afghanistan Isn’t Top Priority,” *Washington Post*, December 11, 2007.
16. David E. Sanger, *The Inheritance: The World Obama Confronts and the Challenges to American Power* (New York: Harmony Books, 2009), 248.
17. See Craig Cohen and Derek Chollet, “When \$10 Billion Is Not Enough: Rethinking U.S. Strategy toward Pakistan,” *Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (2007): 7–19.
18. Taimoor Shah and Carlotta Gall, “Afghan Rebels Find Aid in Pakistan, Musharraf Admits,” *New York Times*, August 13, 2007.
19. See Shaun Gregory, “The ISI and the War on Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no. 12 (2007): 1013–1031; Seth G. Jones, “Pakistan’s Dangerous Game,” *Survival* 49, no. 1 (2007): 15–32; Seth G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2008); Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America’s War in Afghanistan* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009); and outstandingly, Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Viking Press, 2008).
20. Matt Waldman, *The Sun in the Sky: The Relationship between Pakistan’s ISI and Afghan Insurgents*, Discussion Paper no. 18, Crisis States Research Unit (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, June 2010).
21. George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Scribner’s, 1993), 1091.
22. See Andrew Wilder, “A ‘Weapons System’ Based on Wishful Thinking,” *Boston Globe*, September 16, 2009.

23. See Astri Suhrke, "Reconstruction as Modernisation: The 'Post-Conflict' Project in Afghanistan," *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 7 (2007): 1291–1308.
24. See Eric M. Uslander, *Corruption, Inequality, and the Rule of Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
25. *Democracy in Afghanistan 2004: A Survey of the Afghan Electorate* (Kabul and San Francisco: Asia Foundation, 2004), 21; *Afghanistan in 2009: A Survey of the Afghan People* (Kabul and San Francisco: Asia Foundation, 2009), 3.
26. William Maley, *Rescuing Afghanistan* (London: Hurst & Co., 2006), 46.
27. Barack Obama, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2006), 292.
28. *Ibid.*, 294.
29. On Sherzai, see Peter Maass, "Gul Agha Gets His Province Back," *New York Times Magazine*, January 6, 2002; and Sarah Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue: Inside Afghanistan after the Taliban* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006).
30. This writer's advice, part of a series of papers published by the Carnegie Endowment under the title "Foreign Policy for the Next President," can be found in William Maley, *Stabilizing Afghanistan: Threats and Challenges* (Washington, DC: Policy Brief no. 68, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008).
31. See David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992); Townsend Hoopes, *The Limits of Intervention* (New York: David McKay Co., 1969); Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), 113–222.
32. See Dan Balz and Haynes Johnson, *The Battle for America 2008: The Story of an Extraordinary Election* (New York: Viking, 2009).
33. See Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War* (New York: Random House, 1998).
34. Bruce Riedel, *The Search for Al Qaeda: Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 64–65.
35. *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Report to Congress in accordance with section 1230 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 [Public Law 110–181], as amended, Department of Defense, April 2010), 6.
36. On legitimacy in counterinsurgency, see *The U.S. Army Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3–24, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3–33.5 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 37–39.
37. See David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); and David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

38. Barack Obama, *Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan* (Washington, DC: The White House, December 1, 2009).
39. See David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War* (New York: Hyperion, 2007), 591–606.
40. Michael Hastings, “The Runaway General,” *Rolling Stone* 1108–1109, July 8–22, 2010. It probably did not help McChrystal that one of his public backers was President Karzai’s Kandahar-based brother, Ahmad Wali Karzai: see Alissa J. Rubin, “Afghan Leaders Defend McChrystal,” *New York Times*, June 23, 2010. Wali Karzai has long had a poor reputation in many Western circles: Dexter Filkins, “Despite Doubt, Karzai Brother Retains Power,” *New York Times*, March 30, 2010.
41. See Helene Cooper and David E. Sanger, “Obama Says Afghan Policy Won’t Change after Dismissal,” *New York Times*, June 23, 2010.
42. *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, January 2010), 7.
43. See Daoud Yaqub and William Maley, “NATO and Afghanistan: Saving the State-Building Enterprise,” in *The Bucharest Papers*, ed. Robin Shepherd (Washington, DC: German Marshall Fund of the United States, and London: Chatham House, 2008), 9–10.
44. Rep. John F. Tierney (chair), *Warlord, Inc.: Extortion and Corruption along the U.S. Supply Chain in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Report of the Majority Staff, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, U.S. House of Representatives, June 2010), 34, 44.
45. Marvin G. Weinbaum and Jonathan B. Harder, “Pakistan’s Afghan Policies and Their Consequences,” *Contemporary South Asia* 16, no. 1 (2008): 27.
46. Ambassador Karl W. Eikenberry, *COIN Strategy: Civilian Concerns* (Kabul: U.S. Department of State, Cable no. Kabul 03572, November 2009).
47. See *Corruption in Afghanistan: Bribery as Reported by the Victims* (Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, January 2010).
48. Gretchen Peters, *Seeds of Terror: How Heroin is Bankrolling the Taliban and Al Qaeda* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2009).
49. See Elizabeth Rubin, “Karzai in His Labyrinth,” *New York Times*, August 9, 2009.
50. Eikenberry, *COIN Strategy*.
51. Jerome Starkey, “UN Fears for Second Afghan Vote after Commission Refuses to Tackle Fraud,” *The Times* (London), October 30, 2009. The UNDP/ELECT team that was tasked with assisting the Independent Election Commission subsequently noted “the low capacity of the IEC, the political bias of the IEC commissioners and senior managers and the blatant political stance taken by Afghan ministries and the security

- forces” and referred to the IEC as “an inexperienced and—in the end—deeply flawed institution whose leadership felt no compunction about changing results, ignoring fraud and perpetrating wrong conduct”: see *Response of UNDP/ELECT Team to Mid-Term Evaluation* (Kabul: UNDP/ELECT, November–December 2009), 1, 16.
52. Barack Obama, *Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan*, December 1, 2009, [www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan). (Accessed on June 1, 2010).
  53. See Michael Maley, “Transplanting Election Regulation,” *Election Law Journal* 2, no. 4 (2003): 479–497; William Maley, “Democratic Governance and Post-Conflict Transitions,” *Chicago Journal of International Law* 6, no. 2 (2006): 683–701.
  54. See William Maley, “Democracy and Legitimation: Challenges in the Reconstitution of Political Processes in Afghanistan,” in *The Role of International Law in Rebuilding Societies after Conflict: Great Expectations*, ed. Brett Bowden, Hilary Charlesworth, and Jeremy Farrall, 111–133 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
  55. *Afghanistan in 2009*, 101.
  56. Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 342.
  57. See Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 195–197; Robert Jervis, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 86–89.
  58. Thom Shanker, “Gates Says Anger over Iraq Hurts Afghan Effort,” *New York Times*, February 9, 2008.
  59. Nicholas Kulish, “Dutch Pull-Out from War Expected after Government Collapse,” *New York Times*, February 22, 2010.
  60. Rob Hastings, “British Afghan Mission ‘Should Be over by 2015,’” *Independent* (UK), June 26, 2010.
  61. A June 2010 opinion poll conducted by Essential Media Communications found that 61 percent of respondents thought Australia should withdraw its troops from Afghanistan: see Dan Oakes, “Afghan Toll Mounts,” *Age* (Melbourne), June 22, 2010.
  62. Dominic D. P. Johnson and Dominic Tierney, *Failing to Win: Perceptions of Victory and Defeat in International Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 39.
  63. Astri Suhrke, *When More Is Less: Aiding Statebuilding in Afghanistan* (Madrid: Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior, 2006).
  64. See Marina Ottaway and Anatol Lieven, *Rebuilding Afghanistan: Fantasy versus Reality*, Policy Brief no. 12 (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002).



65. On bandwagons, see Timur Kuran, *Private Truths, Public Lies: The Social Consequences of Preference Falsification* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 71–73.
66. For critical perspectives on negotiation with the Taliban, see William Maley, “Talking to the Taliban,” *World Today* 63, no. 11 (2007): 4–6; Ashley J. Tellis, *Reconciling with the Taliban? Toward an Alternative Grand Strategy in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009).
67. See Jane Perlez, Eric Schmitt, and Carlotta Gall, “Pakistan Is Said to Pursue a Foothold in Afghanistan,” *New York Times*, June 24, 2010.
68. Sarah Chayes, “‘Lower Your Sights’ Is the Wrong Vision for Afghanistan,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 2009.
69. Stephen Biddle, Fotini Christia, and J. Alexander Thier, “Defining Success in Afghanistan: What Can the United States Accept?” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 4 (2010): 53.
70. Michael E. O’Hanlon and Hassina Sherjan, *Toughing It Out in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2010), 9.
71. For an example, see Ronald E. Neumann, *The Other War: Winning and Losing in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2009), 185–186.
72. See Seth G. Jones and C. Christine Fair, *Counterinsurgency in Pakistan* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND National Security Research Division, 2010), xvii.
73. *Afghanistan in 2009*, 173.
74. For an excellent discussion of the dangers of failure in Afghanistan, see O’Hanlon and Sherjan, *Toughing It Out*, 4–8.
75. See Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1972), 337.
76. This, of course, has been a long-standing problem. See William Maley, “Confronting Creeping Invasions: Afghanistan, the UN and the World Community,” in *The Afghanistan Crisis: Issues and Perspectives*, ed. K. Warikoo, 256–274 (New Delhi: Bhavana Books, 2002).

CENTRAL ASIA:  
PRAGMATISM IN ACTION

*Luca Anceschi and Shahram Akbarzadeh*

The Obama administration has inherited a difficult case in Central Asia. Once shunned by successive U.S. administrations for its poor record on human rights and its geostrategic position that was assumed to be peripheral to U.S. interests, Central Asia was thrust on the U.S. foreign policy radar in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. Security concerns, followed closely by establishing access routes to the region's fossil fuels, have dominated the minds of policy makers ever since. In between these concerns has been the nagging question of political reform, something the Central Asian leadership has been disinclined to adopt. The Bush administration tried to find a balance between competing objectives in relation to Central Asia. Generally emphasizing the security aspect of the relationship, the Bush administration peppered its public statements on Central Asia with the occasional reference to the normative concepts of good governance and rule of law. The latter may have been mere window dressing, but such reference was a reminder of an inherent tension between pragmatism and idealism in the foreign policy of the United States. This chapter traces the ebbs and flows of these competing goals and examines the responses formulated by the Obama administration. It is argued that the Obama administration has continued to regard security and access to fossil fuels as Washington's primary objectives while pushing concerns with normative aspects of foreign policy further to the background.

AN AMBIVALENT LEGACY: U.S. FOREIGN POLICY  
IN CENTRAL ASIA IN THE BUSH YEARS

The Bush era witnessed a parabolic evolution in the relationship between the United States and the post-Soviet republics of Central

Asia. The eruption of the War on Terror and the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom allowed U.S. foreign policy in Central Asia to overcome the strategic impasse of the Clinton years<sup>1</sup> and helped shift the regional geopolitical balance in Washington's favor. The U.S. reentry in the regional geopolitical arena was sealed by a series of marriages of convenience between the White House and the Central Asian elites,<sup>2</sup> as the Bush administration viewed strategic partnerships with local regimes as indispensable tools to facilitate the achievement of military objectives in Afghanistan.

The U.S. involvement in Central Asia was not based on a deliberate reorientation of U.S. foreign policy away from Russia. Instead, engagement with Central Asia was a necessity of the "war on terror." The absence of a clear policy, barring the security imperatives, made U.S.–Central Asian relations fraught with contradictions. The lack of a comprehensive conception of the U.S. role in Central Asia proved too costly for Washington. The inherent tension between the normative and pragmatic facets of U.S. foreign policy disrupted relations between the United States and the region.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the late Bush years witnessed a slow yet inexorable decline in Washington's influence in Central Asia. Such policy contradictions—to be explored later—made G. W. Bush's foreign policy legacy in Central Asia ambivalent. On the one hand, the Obama administration, at its very onset, seemed to enjoy a more stable position of regional influence than its predecessor did in 2001. On the other, a series of fundamental ambiguities—which the Bush administration failed to tackle because of short-term security objectives—has continued to impact on the relationship between the United States and the post-Soviet republics of Central Asia.

The underlying tension between good governance promotion and the pursuit of strategic interests represents perhaps the defining feature of U.S. policies in Central Asia during the Bush years. In 2003 A. Elizabeth Jones, then the U.S. assistant secretary of state, listed the U.S. interests in the region as follows:

- *Security*, including our fights against terrorism, proliferation, and narcotics trafficking;
- *Energy*, involving reliable and economically sound transit of Caspian oil and gas to global markets and the use of energy revenues to foster sustained and balanced economic growth;
- *Internal reform*, encompassing democratic and market economic transformations in these countries that can support human rights and expand freedom, tolerance, and prosperity in these countries.<sup>4</sup>

Virtually identical lists can be drawn from the remarks made by other high-ranking U.S. officials during successive congressional hearings<sup>5</sup> to indicate that no policy revision as regards U.S. involvement in Central Asia had been carried out by the White House or any other branch of the administration in the latter part of the Bush years. It might be suggested, therefore, that a rather static policy framework did oversee the interaction between the United States and the Central Asian regimes under G. W. Bush. Declaratory emphasis on good governance represented a potentially destabilizing factor in Washington's relationships with the regimes, as the Central Asian leaderships—to very similar extents—understood impermeability from external pressures for political liberalization as an essential component of their regimes' survival mechanisms. Operational foreign policy had to adapt to this scenario, and, in the Bush years, the negotiation of the tension between normative policies and strategic interests became a crucial dynamics for U.S. foreign policy in Central Asia. The G. W. Bush administration negotiated this tension with different degrees of success at different junctures.

In the first phase of the post–September 11 era (late 2001–early 2005), an increasingly pragmatic disposition characterized the U.S. initiative in Central Asia. As the backing of the regional states was deemed “critical”<sup>6</sup> to the success of the Afghan campaign, top U.S. officials toned down rhetorical emphasis on good governance promotion in their dealings with the Central Asian elites. This strategy was received positively by the regional leaders, who decided to support Operation Enduring Freedom. Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan signed strategic partnerships with the White House and granted the concession of military bases located respectively in Manas (north Kyrgyzstan) and Karshi-Khanabad (southeastern Uzbekistan), while the governments of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan opened their airspaces to U.S. humanitarian operations in Afghanistan.

The Central Asian regimes—and particularly those that adopted unambiguously pro-U.S. policy postures—benefited from the strengthening of their partnerships with Washington in three main areas. To begin with, substantial financial benefits were extended in exchange for support to U.S. military operations in Afghanistan: between 2001 and 2002, total U.S. assistance to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan doubled in size, while the volume of U.S. aid targeting Uzbekistan—Washington's most crucial ally in the region—increased by approximately 463 percent.<sup>7</sup> Secondly, the U.S. government offered logistical support to the Central Asian states in the formulation of responses to transnational security threats,<sup>8</sup> particularly

those connected with the alleged resurgence of Islamic militancy in the region. The local elites soon used the emergence of a common front against international terrorism<sup>9</sup> as a pretext to intensify their repression of internal dissent.<sup>10</sup> Thirdly, the reentry of Washington in the regional arena indirectly presented the local elites with an unprecedented chance to achieve policy ends closely connected with the diversification of their respective foreign policy courses and the consequent dilution of the hegemonic influence then exerted by the Russian Federation on Central Asia.

A marked increase in local authoritarian stability represented, therefore, a key unintended consequence of the policies the United States implemented in Central Asia between late 2001 and early 2005. In addition to the evident benefits of increasing U.S. aid, rapprochement with Washington supported the regimes in their drives to (a) increase their international legitimacy—through participation in the War on Terror, (b) reinforce their control over internal politics—through the obliteration of residual forms of dissent, and (c) reduce their dependence on Russia without incurring a “corresponding increase in their international isolation.”<sup>11</sup>

The pragmatic inclination of U.S. policy not only resulted in the progressive abandonment of the attachment of conditionality to cooperation initiatives extended to different republics, but it also led to a substantial moderation of rhetorical pressures for political liberalization in Central Asia. Further weight to the latter proposition can be added by analyzing the speeches that top U.S. officials delivered to regional audiences between late 2001 and 2005. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, in stark contrast with the practice established by his predecessors, failed to raise the issue of human rights while visiting Uzbekistan in November 2001.<sup>12</sup> Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, in late 2005, went as far as praising the efforts of the “committed leaders” of Kazakhstan for breaking with the “undemocratic” past.<sup>13</sup>

The Andijon events (May 2005), during which the Uzbek security forces opened fire on protestors and killed at least 300 people, had a profound effect on U.S. relations with Central Asia and shaped most decisively G. W. Bush’s policy legacy in the region. Issues that had characterized the U.S.–Central Asian interactive framework since 9/11 were overtaken by the Andijon experience. To some extent, Washington’s official reaction to the brutal response orchestrated by the Karimov regime to the unrest in eastern Uzbekistan restored the promotion of good governance as a key pillar for U.S. policy in the region. To be fully understood, U.S. criticism<sup>14</sup> of the Andijon events must be related

to a wider policy context: systematic tolerance for the actions of an increasingly unrepresentable ally—the Karimov regime—had become an unsustainable attitude for an administration that identified democracy promotion in the greater Middle East as one of the cornerstones of its foreign policy. After its marginalization in the early post-9/11 era, the tension between strategic interests and good governance promotion in Central Asia had therefore reemerged as a central force in U.S. decision making *vis-à-vis* Central Asia, to ultimately unmask the “intrinsically illusory nature”<sup>15</sup> of the relationships that the Bush administration had established with the region’s authoritarian governments.

The Uzbek government’s decision to withdraw the lease of the Karshi-Khanabad airbase (June 2005) came at the zenith of U.S.–Central Asian relationship and set in motion a process of quantitative decline in U.S. engagement in Central Asia while provoking a comprehensive reshuffle of regional geopolitics. With the expulsion of U.S. troops from Uzbekistan, Washington’s options in Central Asia had decreased drastically. Turkmenistan’s foreign policy—both prior and subsequent to the death of Saparmurat A. Niyazov (in December 2006)—had remained firmly situated within Russia’s sphere of influence, and the government of Kazakhstan did not adopt a more pro-Western posture. As Tajikistan did not (and perhaps was never in a position to) strengthen its ties with Washington, the role of Kyrgyzstan became crucial for post-Andijon U.S. foreign policy in Central Asia, especially as evolutions in the U.S.–Kyrgyzstani relationship impacted directly on the status of the Manas airbase—Washington’s only military facility in the region. With the termination of the lease agreement of the Karshi-Khanabad airbase, Manas became virtually irreplaceable in the conduct of operations against the Taliban, as it constituted the “premier point of access to and from Afghanistan for most U.S. military and contract personnel.”<sup>16</sup> As widespread instability had continued to characterize the Kyrgyzstani political landscape in the late Bush years, the concession of the military facilities underwent repeated negotiations, which generally resulted in an increase in the rent paid by the U.S. government.

By the end of the Bush years, the U.S.–Central Asian relationship was experiencing a steady decline. Direct U.S. presence in the region was limited to Kyrgyzstan, while Washington’s indirect influence over the other regional capitals was rapidly shrinking. This was despite the fact that the Central Asian states, especially Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, remained weary of Russia’s hegemonic drive. This complex policy scenario offered opportunities and constraints to the incoming Obama administration.

A comprehensive evaluation of G. W. Bush's foreign policy legacy in Central Asia cannot fail to take into consideration the Great Powers' interaction in the region. In the Bush years, clashing interests and competitive postures became the most defining features of the deteriorating relationships between the United States, Russia, and the People's Republic of China. Washington's systematic reluctance to define the chronological boundaries of its military commitment in the region was at the basis of worsening Great Powers' relationships in Central Asia. Moscow and Beijing—in spite of their reiterated support for the War on Terror—appeared increasingly uncomfortable with U.S. open-ended military presence in the region.<sup>17</sup> The post-Andijon scenario—in which U.S. direct presence on the Central Asian territory substantially decreased—did not witness any substantial modification of Russian and Chinese diffidence toward U.S. policies in Central Asia. Great Power relationships in the region continued to deteriorate steadily in the late Bush years, presenting the Obama administration with a clear challenge: the urgent need for a relaxation in Great Power interaction in post-Soviet Central Asia.

### OBAMA AT THE HELM

Two very distinct crises have impacted on the U.S.–Central Asian relationship in 2009 and 2010. On the one hand, the future of U.S. policy in Central Asia is closely linked to military developments in neighboring Afghanistan. On the other, the impact of the global financial crisis upon the Central Asian economies favored the emergence of new dynamics in the interaction between the regional states and the external powers involved in the region.

The limited success of the U.S.-led military operations against the Taliban has made an effective exit strategy from Afghanistan one of Obama's key foreign policy challenges. As withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops could start as early as July 2011,<sup>18</sup> the Central Asian leaderships will have to assess the impact of the conclusion of Operation Enduring Freedom on regional security dynamics. Such considerations appear to be playing a critical role in Central Asian decision making.

The global financial crisis impacted rather severely upon Central Asia's economic landscape, notwithstanding the different levels of global integration experienced by the regional economies. In Kazakhstan—Central Asia's most globalized economic system—the crisis's effects were particularly felt in the country's banking and construction sectors. The Kazakhstani economy, after years of

booming expansion, experienced a negative growth of 2 percent in 2009.<sup>19</sup> The impact of the crisis was equally felt in less integrated economic systems, as a sharp deceleration in remittance flows hit the economies of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan,<sup>20</sup> whose GDPs are in significant shares (27 percent, 49 percent, and 13 percent respectively)<sup>21</sup> made by migrant remittances. New pressures have been imposed, therefore, on the already struggling Central Asian economies.

The economic crisis in Central Asia has set new policy challenges for the regional elites. The national leaderships must further integrate their economies in order to counter the effects of the global economic downturn while preparing to negotiate the security vacuum that might originate from the withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan. In this context, the Obama administration seems to be presented with a wider array of policy options in Central Asia. In some sense, the emerging geopolitical and geostrategic scenarios could offer unexpected avenues to shed the Bush legacy in the region. Yet again, it is the way in which the Obama administration will negotiate the tension between pragmatism and good governance promotion in Central Asia that will determine the degree of success such policies will encounter. An analysis of the postures that the United States has adopted in Central Asia during 2009–2010 seems to indicate that the Obama administration has yet to handle this tension in an effective way.

### COMING TO GRIPS WITH CENTRAL ASIA

In the first 12 months of its mandate, the Obama administration reportedly concluded a comprehensive process of reevaluation of its policies in Central Asia, with the ultimate view to reprioritize its interests in the region. This revision process dovetailed the administration's sustained commitment, through institutional restyling and targeted allocation of funds, to the promotion of the project of greater Central Asia—a deeply integrated (and firmly pro-U.S.) macroregion, formed by the post-Soviet republics, Afghanistan, and the rest of the Indian subcontinent. According to George A. Krol, Washington's objectives in Central Asia are reevaluated to achieve the following:

- Expand cooperation with Central Asian states to assist coalition efforts to defeat extremists in Afghanistan and Pakistan;
- Increase development and diversification of the region's energy resources and supply routes;



- Encourage political liberalization and respect for human rights;
- Foster competitive market economies and encourage economic reform;
- Prevent state failure.<sup>22</sup>

The Obama administration appears, therefore, to have shaped its priorities in Central Asia around three issues, namely security, energy, and internal reforms. Obama's key concerns in the region essentially coincide with those identified by the U.S. government in the early Bush years. There is hence a significant degree of continuity<sup>23</sup> with the preceding administration. On the other hand, change is introduced within Washington's views of regional security by increased rhetorical emphasis on state failure, through which the U.S. government expressed its increasing concern for sociopolitical and socioeconomic sources of instability in Central Asia. In a sharp departure from the practices of the Bush era, the Obama administration decreased emphasis on Islamic militancy when assessing the potential for regional and state instability.<sup>24</sup> Upon assuming office, the Obama administration noted human security, state capture, and civil strife<sup>25</sup> as presenting a growing threat to the viability of the Central Asian states. Not surprisingly, this assessment attracted much criticism,<sup>26</sup> especially from the governments of those states—namely Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan—that key U.S. officials identified as being at risk.<sup>27</sup>

Despite this perceptive assessment of risk factors, which suggests a welcome degree of evidence-based political analysis, past concerns that governed the Bush administration's Central Asia policy persist. Two key concerns ensure continuity in the Bush and Obama administrations' policies in the region. Firstly, the Obama administration has continued to locate U.S. policymaking *vis-à-vis* Central Asia at the intersection of strategic interests and good governance promotion. Obama's Central Asia policy, at least in its declaratory segment, intends to appeal to both the regional governments—which Washington expects to be pursuing pragmatic relations with the United States—and their opponents, who seemed to have in turn interpreted Obama's message of change as a signal for the imminent return of good governance promotion at the core of U.S. policy in Central Asia.<sup>28</sup> As operational foreign policy in the region is now facing the virtually insurmountable task of reconciling these two positions, there is no doubt that the interest/values tension will retain its centrality in Washington's initiative in Central Asia. Secondly, U.S. policy makers have continued to place Central Asia within the

wider context of the Afghan campaign. In this sense, the stability of the Central Asian region is tied closely to the security concerns in Afghanistan.<sup>29</sup> Decision makers in the United States have opted for a regional approach to U.S. interests in Central Asia. Although this approach has obvious merits in addressing the “big picture,” it tends to be monodimensional and to lose sight of the peculiarities that affect different states in the region.

More importantly, the tension between pragmatism and the promotion of good governance continues to characterize U.S. foreign policy in Central Asia. This tension has gained greater visibility in relation to three key regional actors: Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan.

The U.S.-Kyrgyzstani relationship, in 2009–2010, has proven to be particularly tumultuous, as vital U.S. interests had to be advanced in a rapidly deteriorating political landscape. Since its very onset, the Obama administration faced an increasing number of challenges in Kyrgyzstan. On February 3, 2009—merely two weeks after Barack Obama’s presidential inauguration—the then-president of Kyrgyzstan, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, announced the termination of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that, since 2001, had regulated the lease of the Manas airbase. Although several factors played into the decision to close the airbase, external forces were crucial. In terminating the SOFA, Bakiyev appeared to have finally succumbed to the combination of pressure and substantial aid packages offered by the Russian Federation.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, tension between U.S. troops and the local population around Manas had led to a number of incidents.<sup>31</sup> This tension played into Bakiyev’s decision, although it was far from being a critical factor.

The Obama administration decided to respond to the withdrawal of the concession in a way that echoed policy strategies consolidated throughout the Bush years. After intensive negotiations with the Bakiyev regime, the United States announced on June 24, 2009, the finalization of a new agreement regulating the status of the airbase. This annually renewable deal stipulated that the Kyrgyzstani government would receive a considerably significant economic package paid by the U.S. administration in exchange for the continuation of the airbase lease.<sup>32</sup> The increasingly authoritarian Bakiyev regime had thus become Obama’s key partner in Central Asia.<sup>33</sup> In a striking parallel with policy praxes consolidated in the Bush years, the Obama administration opted to relegate good governance promotion to a very marginal role in the context of U.S.-Kyrgyzstani relations,<sup>34</sup> with a view to preserving the lease of the Manas Transit Centre.

The problematic nature of the U.S.-Kyrgyzstani relationship was fully exposed in April 2010, when widespread sociopolitical unrest led to the overthrow of the Bakiyev regime and the establishment of an interim administration headed by Roza Otunbayeva. The United States did not articulate prompt responses to the events in Kyrgyzstan; the U.S. hesitation in recognizing the Otunbayeva government was widely interpreted as a lost opportunity to put distance between the Obama administration and the Bakiyev regime.<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, Washington's inaction did not put the U.S. military presence in Kyrgyzstan at risk, as the Otunbayeva government (shortly after its assumption of power) reiterated Kyrgyzstan's commitment to long-term relations with Washington through the automatic extension of the agreement regulating the lease of the Manas base.<sup>36</sup> Once the status of the Manas Transit Centre had been settled, the Obama administration devised a short-term strategy to deal with leadership transition in Kyrgyzstan. The U.S. assistant secretaries of state Robert Blake and Martin McFaul repeatedly visited Bishkek in the aftermath of the coup, to establish a working relationship with the Otunbayeva administration, while an installment of US\$15 million for future lease payments of the Manas airbase was made in early May 2010.<sup>37</sup>

An observation of the U.S. policy behavior in the Kyrgyzstani crisis of April 2010 seems to suggest that the Obama administration has not discontinued the implementation of a well-consolidated strategy, namely that which makes use of financial means to advance U.S. strategic interests in Central Asia while maintaining a low profile in relation to good governance promotion. The Kyrgyzstani interim leader Roza Otunbayeva highlighted Washington's scarce attention to human rights, observing that, when it comes to Kyrgyzstan, "the base is the most important agenda of the U.S., not our political development, and the suffering of the opposition, and the closing of the papers, and the beating of journalists."<sup>38</sup>

A similar dynamic also influenced the U.S.-Kazakhstani relationship, which in the early Obama years has been overwhelmingly dominated by the pragmatic interests of the two leaderships. Washington's security priorities shaped the U.S. partnership with Astana, as nonproliferation,<sup>39</sup> military cooperation,<sup>40</sup> and energy represented the main pillars of U.S.-Kazakhstani bilateralism. At the same time, maintaining an active partnership with the United States helped the Nazarbaev regime to increase its international legitimacy. To this end, Astana incessantly sought Washington's support in its successful bid for the chairmanship of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe OSCE and, most recently, selected the

U.S. government as a key partner in its attempt to access the World Trade Organization (WTO).<sup>41</sup>

In 2009–2010 the visible dilution of U.S. rhetorical emphasis on good governance facilitated the intensification of U.S.-Kazakhstani bilateralism.<sup>42</sup> Official U.S. declarations on Kazakhstan's internal politics are especially revealing as less and less emphasis is being placed on democratic reform. Commenting on the assumption of the OSCE chairmanship by Kazakhstan, Robert Blake praised Astana's economic progress and its key role in the regional security framework while pointedly omitting any reference to human rights issues.<sup>43</sup> A similar approach governed statements by the deputy secretary of state James Steinberg at the July 2010 OSCE ministerial meeting in Almaty.<sup>44</sup> The U.S. Department of State labeled "very credible"<sup>45</sup> Kazakhstan's performance as OSCE chair, in spite of regular reports denouncing the regime's lack of progress in relation to the human dimension.<sup>46</sup> For all intents and purposes, the Obama administration opted to downplay the emphasis on good governance promotion in order to expand its energy cooperation with Kazakhstan.

Washington's Eurasian energy strategy, as indicated by Richard L. Morningstar—the special envoy of the U.S. secretary of state for Eurasian energy—has been designed to achieve three main objectives:

- Develop new oil and gas resources;
- Support Europe in its quest for energy security;
- Help Caucasus and Central Asian producer countries find new routes to market for their oil and gas.<sup>47</sup>

Cooperation with Kazakhstan—one of Eurasia's major oil producers—is seen by the Obama administration as an essential step toward the achievement of U.S. energy priorities in the region. The inauguration (December 2009) of the Central Asia–China Pipeline appeared to have temporarily met Astana's needs in relation to diversification of its own export routes. U.S. energy interests in Kazakhstan are therefore essentially connected with increasing the participation of U.S. firms in the extraction and refining of Kazakhstani oil. The global economic downturn negatively affected the United States' capacity to invest in Kazakhstan,<sup>48</sup> limiting the total of U.S. investments directed toward the Kazakhstani energy sector and, consequently, the influence that U.S. companies are able to exert over Kazakhstani oil.

The U.S.-Kazakhstani energy partnership is indispensable to expanding Washington's influence over the Central Asian oil market. That partnership is complemented by energy cooperation between the United States and Turkmenistan—Central Asia's principal producer of natural gas.<sup>49</sup> This cooperation is essential if the United States is to exercise any leverage over the Eurasian gas transit. The Obama administration has expressed strong support for the Nabucco pipeline project to provide Europe with gas from Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan via Turkey. This is widely regarded as critical to the strengthening of Europe's energy security and reducing its reliance on Russian state-controlled *Gazprom*. Turkmenistani gas reserves will supply a significant portion of the gas pumped through the pipeline, and this makes Turkmenistan's participation in the project indispensable to the overall success of Nabucco.

In order to induce a more pro-Western attitude in Turkmenistan's foreign policy and facilitate a rapprochement with Ashgabat, the Obama administration downplayed its criticism of the (abysmal) human rights record of the regime headed by Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov. The absence of the human rights dimension from the agenda of the 2009 meeting between Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and President Berdymukhammedov was justified by time constraints and, paradoxically, its limited relevance for the Turkmenistani political landscape.<sup>50</sup> Further, the 2010 *Nawruz* address delivered by Secretary Clinton on behalf of President Obama lacked even a minimal reference to the human rights issue.<sup>51</sup>

But such gestures appear to have made no difference to bilateral relations. In spite of the more conciliatory attitude in the White House, the U.S.-Turkmenistani relationship has shown no sign of improvement. Two interconnected factors seem to have prevented the rapprochement between Ashgabat and Washington. Firstly, the European Union has assumed a leadership position in the interaction between the West and Turkmenistan. The timid pro-Western shift that Turkmenistan's foreign policy completed in 2008–2009 was therefore predominantly oriented toward increased cooperation with Brussels. Secondly, strengthening ties with the Obama administration—and hence assuming a visibly pro-Western policy posture—would have almost certainly led to a deterioration in Turkmenistan's relations with Russia, which remain to date a vital source of international support for the Berdymukhammedov regime. *Gazprom* regards Nabucco as a serious threat to its monopoly over gas shipment to Europe. Although the Obama administration has consistently attempted to tone down the rivalry, Moscow remains unhappy about the project.

Ashgabat's involvement in Nabucco is causing a rift between Russia and Turkmenistan, one that the Turkmenistani leadership is not eager to widen by getting too close to Washington.<sup>52</sup>

Obama's energy ambitions have, therefore, emerged as a new obstacle to the normalization of Great Powers relations in Central Asia, while the presence of U.S. troops in Kyrgyzstan continues to represent a long-term hindrance to the improvement of the U.S.-Sino-Russian interaction in the region.

In striking continuity with the policy praxes of the cold war era, the White House and the Kremlin continue to perceive their interaction with the Central Asian states as a zero-sum game. The relevance of such policy thinking is confirmed by the repeated (and to date unsuccessful) U.S. attempts to break *Gazprom's* monopoly over the Eurasian energy market and the significant pressures exerted by Russia on successive Kyrgyzstani governments to discontinue the lease of the Manas Transit Centre.

The influence that the United States and Russia are able to exert over the Central Asian states, as Martha Brill Olcott observed,<sup>53</sup> is experiencing a steady decline. The rapid rise of China as the emerging power in the region—particularly in relation to Beijing's role in the geopolitics of Central Asian energy—seems to have revolutionized local perceptions of regional hierarchy. At the same time, it does raise questions about the future viability of a number of strategies—including the use of financial means to establish fruitful relations with the regional states—that the Obama administration has put into place to advance its interests in Central Asia. In this sense, much of the future success of Obama's foreign policy in the region will depend on the response that the United States will formulate to the challenges set by China's emerging regional status.

## CONCLUSION

President Obama does not appear to have managed to break away from the dichotomy of the U.S. policy on Central Asia. The legacy of the Bush era casts a long shadow on the Obama administration. Access to the energy reserves of Central Asia and countering terrorist insurgency, specifically the anti-Taliban drive in Afghanistan, have dominated the U.S. agenda, whereas human rights concerns and improving the rule of law have been delegated to the periphery of U.S. interests. The new administration appears to be making an effort to break free of the dichotomy that characterized U.S. policy toward Central Asia. Promoting good governance and bolstering security

were the dual objectives of the United States in the region. The post-Soviet experience saw the articulation and advocacy of these objectives. These were often competing agendas, as the local leadership in Central Asia saw the promotion of good governance as opening a Pandora's box and releasing social and political forces that could ultimately undermine the ability of the incumbent regimes to rule. Good governance, the rule of law, and democratic reforms, therefore, were viewed with suspicion and distrust by the local regimes. This did not deter Washington from embarrassing the Central Asian leadership by releasing regular reports on the human rights abuses and serious shortcomings in the system of government in Central Asia. Washington's critical approach placed obvious constraints on U.S.–Central Asian relations and limited its influence over security and energy spheres of interest. In the 1990s, this seemed to be an acceptable price because Central Asia was not regarded as an area of primary significance. Against the background of U.S. relations with Russia, Central Asia was of secondary importance. Events following September 11 changed that balance of priorities and elevated the security agenda in the hierarchy of U.S. interests in the region. The logic of the U.S. military operation in Afghanistan and the anti-Taliban campaign made closer U.S.–Central Asia ties of utmost significance. Washington's security agreements with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan were critical to the U.S. operation in Afghanistan. Earlier concerns with democratic reforms lost their significance against the backdrop of the war on terror.

It was perhaps ironic that, despite the reorientation of U.S. policy toward Central Asia, the Bush administration did not give up on the idea of political reform. This was clearly no longer a priority. But it was still a policy concern that the United States raised with its Central Asian allies. In fact, the Bush administration, especially the State Department under Condoleezza Rice, was articulating the notion that fighting terrorism could best be achieved by pursuing democratic reform and political openness. Delivering an address in Kazakhstan, Rice noted that “fears of extremism cannot be a reason not to have free and fair elections. You have to have democracy because democracy is, in fact, the answer to terrorism and to extremism.”<sup>54</sup> Enlightened as this view may have been, it did not resolve the dichotomous tension in the U.S. policy toward Central Asia. Following the closure of the Karshi-Khanabad base in Uzbekistan in 2005, U.S. officials were eager to find ways of repairing relations and to avoid a similar rift with Kyrgyzstan, which had become the only

U.S. foothold in the region. High-level visits aimed at repairing the damage to U.S.-Uzbek relations deliberately steered clear of the topic of democracy. This legacy has informed the approach of the Obama administration.

The policy approach the new administration adopted has to date emphasized security imperatives, even more forcefully than it did in the Bush years, at the expense of social, political, and legal reform. This emphasis led the U.S. administration to take a backseat in relation to the political upheaval in Kyrgyzstan in 2010, doing as little as possible lest Washington's involvement put the Manas base at risk. This is the slippery slope of justifying authoritarian regimes for short-sighted self-interests, which could have devastating consequences for the region and the United States in the long run. The Obama administration is trying to resolve the inherent tension between idealism and pragmatism in the U.S. foreign policy in relation to Central Asia by quietly sidetracking the normative approach. This is not a radical departure from the Bush years, but it is a bold move to accentuate an existing strand of foreign policy thinking in Washington. The implications of this shift could be far-reaching. By downgrading its concerns with good governance, the Obama administration risks blurring a key policy difference between the United States, Russia, and China. The United States is at risk of losing its moral appeal in Central Asia.

## NOTES

1. Stephen Blank, "The United States and Central Asia," in *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*, ed. Roy Allison and Lena Jonson, 140–145 (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, and Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001). See also Fiona Hill, "Une Stratégie Incertaine: La Politique des États-Unis dans le Caucase et en Asie Centrale Depuis 1991," *Politique Étrangère* 66, no. 1 (2001): 96–108.
2. Pauline Jones Luong and Erika Weinthal, "New Friends, New Fears in Central Asia," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 2 (2002): 69.
3. Annette Bohr, "Central Asia: Responding to the Multi-vectoring Game," in *America and a Changed World: A Question of Leadership*, ed. Robin Niblett (London: Wiley-Blackwell/Chatham House, 2010), 109.
4. U.S. House Committee on International Relations, "Central Asia: Terrorism, Religious Extremism, and Regional Stability" (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, October 29, 2003, Serial no. 108–71), 10 (emphasis in original).



5. U.S. House Committee on International Relations, "US Security Policy in Central Asia (Part 1)" (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, October 27, 2005, Serial no. 109–132), 9; U.S. House Committee on International Relations, "Assessing Energy and Security Issues in Central Asia" (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, July 25, 2006, Serial no. 109–219), 9.
6. B. Lynn Pascoe's testimony in U.S. House Committee on International Relations, "Uzbekistan: The Key to Success in Central Asia?" (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2004, Serial no. 108–126), 16.
7. Data calculated on figures available from Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, "U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia: Fact Sheets 2009," [www.state.gov/p/eur/acc/c11609.htm](http://www.state.gov/p/eur/acc/c11609.htm). (Accessed on September 18, 2010).
8. On this note, see the full text of the 2002 "Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework" between the United States and Uzbekistan [www.fas.org/terrorism/at/docs/2002/US-UzbekPartnership.htm](http://www.fas.org/terrorism/at/docs/2002/US-UzbekPartnership.htm). (Accessed September 18, 2010).
9. Shahrām Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States: Authoritarianism, Islamism and Washington's Security Agenda* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2005), 82.
10. On this note, see Martha Brill Olcott's testimony in U.S. House Committee on International Relations, "Central Asia," 36–37.
11. Luca Anceschi, "Integrating Domestic Factors and Foreign Policy Making: The Cases of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan," *Central Asian Survey* 29, no. 2 (2010): 151.
12. Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States*, 74.
13. Condoleezza Rice, "Remarks at Eurasian National University," October 13, 2005 <http://merln.ndu.edu/archivepdf/centasia/State/54913.pdf>. (Accessed September 18, 2010).
14. It is worth noting that official U.S. criticism of the conduct of the Karimov regime in Andijon was expressed in rather mild tones, hence in line with the wider U.S. strategy of mitigating pressures for political liberalization in Central Asia. Its weak connotation notwithstanding, Washington's negative assessment of the government's role in the Andijon events was considered unacceptable by the Karimov regime, which—mostly in response to mounting criticism coming from the U.S. nongovernmental sector—was becoming increasingly worried about the price tag attached to its strategic alliance with the United States.
15. John Heathershaw, "Worlds Apart: The Making and Remaking of Geopolitical Space in the US-Uzbekistan Strategic Partnership," *Central Asian Survey* 26, no. 1 (2007): 137.
16. Jim Nichol, "Kyrgyzstan and the Status of the US Manas Airbase: Context and Implications," (U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, CRS Report R46054, 2009), 9.
17. Interestingly, such discontent was often channeled through multilateral forums, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. See, for

- instance, “Declaration of Heads of Member States of SCO, Astana 5 July 2005,” [http://english.scosummit2006.org/en\\_bjzl/2006-04/21/content\\_145.htm](http://english.scosummit2006.org/en_bjzl/2006-04/21/content_145.htm). (Accessed September 18, 2010).
18. Reuters, “Obama Confident July 2011 Start for Afghanistan Pullout,” May 12, 2010 [www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE64B4BV20100512](http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE64B4BV20100512). (Accessed on September 18, 2010).
  19. International Crisis Group (ICG), *Central Asia: Migrants and the Economic Crisis*, Asia Report no. 183, January 5, 2010, p. 2.
  20. World Bank, *The Crisis Hits Home—Stress-Testings Households in Europe and Central Asia* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2010), 13.
  21. ICG, *Central Asia*, 3.
  22. George A. Krol’s testimony in U.S. House Committee on International Relations, “Reevaluating US Policy in Central Asia” (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, December 15, 2009, Serial no. 111–433), 14–15.
  23. See Martha Brill Olcott’s testimony in U.S. House Committee on International Relations, “Reevaluating US Policy,” 35.
  24. Joshua Kucera, “Obama Administration Adopting New Views on Possible Security Threats in Central Asia and the Caucasus,” *Eurasianet*, February 16, 2009.
  25. George A. Krol’s testimony in U.S. House Committee on International Relations, “Reevaluating US Policy,” 15.
  26. Marat Shaikhutdinov, “Central Asia in the Foreign Policy Strategy of Barack Obama’s Administration: Results and Prospects,” *American Foreign Policy Interests* 32, no. 2 (2010): 90.
  27. “U.S. Policy towards Central Asia: A Conversation with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Robert O. Blake, Jr.,” [www.carnegieendowment.org/files/Amb.\\_Blake%2007-30-10.pdf](http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/Amb._Blake%2007-30-10.pdf). (Accessed on September 18, 2010). See also George A. Krol’s testimony in U.S. House Committee on International Relations, “Reevaluating US Policy,” 15.
  28. See Merhat Sharipzan, “Obama Victory Sparks Hops for Change in U.S. Policy in Central Asia,” *RFE/RL Feature Article*, November 7, 2008.
  29. On this note, see Roman Muzalevsky, “US–Central Asian Relations: Going beyond Afghanistan,” *Central Asian Caucasus Institute Analyst*, January 20, 2010.
  30. Perhaps not coincidentally, Bakiyev announced his decision to withdraw the concession of the basis in Moscow during a bilateral summit with Dmitri Medvedev.
  31. “U.S. Soldier Kills Civilian Employee at Kyrgyz Base,” *RFE/RL Newsline*, December 7, 2006.
  32. As the yearly rent payment increased by 344 percent, the U.S. government promised total investments of US\$66 million to upgrade the base’s air control system and other infrastructures. A further \$31 million package was offered to the Kyrgyzstani government in support of its counternarcotics and countersecurity efforts, while \$20 million was allocated for the establishment of a Joint US-Kyrgyz Development

- Fund. See Jim Nichol, “Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for US Interests” (U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, CRS Report RL33458, 2010), 25.
33. For a comprehensive account of the evolution of authoritarianism in Bakiyev’s Kyrgyzstan, see ICG, *Kyrgyzstan: A Hollow Regime Collapses* (Asia Briefing 102, April 2010), 2–4.
  34. On this note, see the minimal attention devoted by the assistant secretary of state Robert O. Blake to human rights in “Broadening Cooperation between the United States and Kyrgyzstan,” [www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rmks/2009/129459.htm](http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rmks/2009/129459.htm). (Accessed on September 18, 2010).
  35. Ariel Cohen, “What’s at Stake in Kyrgyzstan? Russia is Rolling Back George W. Bush’s Eurasian Advances,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 14, 2010.
  36. On this note, see the transcript of the roundtable with Roza Otunbayeva organized by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Transcript10.pdf>. (Accessed on September 18, 2010).
  37. Jim Nichol, “The April 2010 Coup in Kyrgyzstan and Its Aftermath: Context and Implications for US Interests” (U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, CRS Report R41178, 2010), 11.
  38. Roza Otunbayeva, quoted in “What the Obama Administration Can Learn from Kyrgyzstan,” *Washington Post*, April 17, 2010, p. A12.
  39. Nonproliferation issues occupied a central role in the bilateral agenda of the Obama-Nazarbaev summit of April 2010. (See “Joint Statement on the Meeting between President Obama and Kazakhstan President Nazarbayev,” [www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/joint-statement-meeting-between-president-obama-and-kazakhstan-president-nazarbayev](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/joint-statement-meeting-between-president-obama-and-kazakhstan-president-nazarbayev). (Accessed on September 18, 2010).
  40. Erica Marat, *The Military and the State in Central Asia—From Red Army to Independence* (Abingdon, England, and New York: Routledge, 2010), 108–110.
  41. Stephen J. Blank, *Challenges and Opportunities for the Obama Administration in Central Asia* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009), 16. Issues surrounding Obama’s support for Kazakhstan’s accession to the WTO were also treated in “Joint Statement on the Meeting between President Obama and Kazakhstan President Nazarbayev.”
  42. For an exhaustive account of recent developments in the US-Kazakhstani relationship, see Shaikhutdinov, “Central Asia,” 87–88.
  43. Robert O. Blake Jr., “Remarks on the Occasion of Commencement of Kazakhstan’s OSCE Chairmanship, January 20, 2010,” [www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rmks/2010/135492.htm](http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rmks/2010/135492.htm). (Accessed on September 18, 2010).
  44. James B. Steinberg, “Remarks with Kazakh Foreign Minister Saudabayev, July 16, 2010,” [www.state.gov/s/d/2010/145051.htm](http://www.state.gov/s/d/2010/145051.htm). (Accessed on September 18, 2010).

45. "U.S. Policy towards Central Asia: A Conversation with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Robert O. Blake, Jr.," [www.carnegicendowment.org/files/Amb.\\_Blake%2007-30-10.pdf](http://www.carnegicendowment.org/files/Amb._Blake%2007-30-10.pdf).
46. On this note, see Nichol, "Central Asia," 29.
47. Richard L. Morningstar, "Remarks at the Center for American Progress: 2010 Outlook for Eurasian Energy, January 28, 2010," [www.americanprogress.org/events/2010/01/av/morningstar\\_remarks.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/events/2010/01/av/morningstar_remarks.pdf). (Accessed on September 18, 2010).
48. International Monetary Fund, "Republic of Kazakhstan—Staff Report for the 2010 Article IV Consultation," July 29, 2010, p. 23; Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, "U.S.-Kazakhstan Trade Facts," [www.ustr.gov/countries-regions/south-central-asia/kazakhstan](http://www.ustr.gov/countries-regions/south-central-asia/kazakhstan); *Kazakhstan Oil and Gas Report*, Third Quarter 2010.
49. For updated data on Turkmenistan's total gas reserves, see *Turkmenistan Oil and Gas Report*, Third Quarter 2010.
50. See "Turkmenistan Bilateral Meeting, September 21, 2009," [www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/remarks/129450.htm](http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/remarks/129450.htm). (Accessed on September 18, 2010).
51. "Bahar Bayramy Greeting to the People of Turkmenistan," <http://turkmenistan.usembassy.gov/statement20100319.html>; Accessed on September 18, 2010).
52. Joshua Kucera, "Caspian Energy: Washington Trying New Tack on Nabucco Project," *Eurasianet Business & Economics*, February 1, 2010.
53. See Martha Brill Olcott's testimony in U.S. House Committee on International Relations, "Reevaluating US Policy in Central Asia," 36.
54. Rice, "Remarks at Eurasian National University."



## TURKEY: A NEGLECTED PARTNER

*Paul A. Williams*

With the main focus of Barack H. Obama's first foreign tour on multinational summitry (including the G20 summit in London and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO] meeting in Strasbourg), capping his itinerary with a visit to Turkey seemed incongruous. After affirming in his April speech before Turkey's parliament, known as the Grand National Assembly, that he had chosen Turkey "to send a message to the world" and then enumerating key global issues, Obama remarked, "No one nation can confront these challenges alone, and all nations have a stake in overcoming them. . . . We are stronger when we act together."<sup>1</sup> Yet this speech did not serve merely to differentiate Obama's approach from the preceding administration's reputation for unilateralism and "bring-it-on" confrontationalism. Although this renown was largely earned by U.S.-led interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, Obama could have demonstrated his opposing policy sensibility anywhere other than in a Muslim-majority country.

Significantly, he selected a country—the site of one of the longest-running and most successful national experiments (albeit periodically fraught with illiberal reversals) in the often-unstable alchemy of secularism, democracy, and Islam—in which he could highlight a wider range of policy departures and personal attributes with particular relevance to the Middle East. His speech alluded to the perceived failure of Bush's Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) democracy-promotion initiative: "Turkey's democracy is your own achievement. It was not forced upon you by any outside power, nor did it come without struggle and sacrifice."<sup>2</sup> However, the signature impact of Obama's speech probably derives from the following statement:

The United States is not . . . at war with Islam. . . . America's relationship with . . . the Muslim world, cannot . . . just be based upon opposition

to terrorism. We seek broader engagement based on mutual interest and mutual respect.... We will convey our deep appreciation for the Islamic faith, which has done so much over the centuries to shape the world—including in my own country. The United States has been enriched by Muslim Americans. Many other Americans have Muslims in their families or have lived in a Muslim-majority country—I know, because I am one of them.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the prescient assertion by a former U.S. ambassador to Turkey that the “next U.S. President will get a bounce in terms of Turkish public opinion just by not being George W. Bush,”<sup>4</sup> this *beau geste* did not obviate Obama’s need to tread carefully on specific issues that have vexed Turco-U.S. relations, independently of whoever occupies the White House and however America may stand in terms of broader Muslim public opinion. The 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq was never popular in Turkey, as manifested in a final-hour failure of its newly elected ruling majority Justice and Development Party (JDP) to muster a sufficient parliamentary majority on March 1 of that year to permit 62,000 U.S. forces to cross Turkey. Opposition stemmed as much from aversion in Turkey to the war’s potentially negative consequences on its direct interests as from widespread revulsion at an attack by a non-Muslim country on a predominantly Muslim one (after all, Turkish forces have participated in and even headed NATO’s International Security Assistance Force in post-2001 Afghanistan).<sup>5</sup> Turkey had already borne heavy economic losses stemming from post-Gulf War UN sanctions on Saddam Hussein’s regime and anticipated more to come. Turks also feared that the occupation would confer autonomy on the predominantly Kurdish population of northern Iraq and hinder Turkey’s fight against armed separatists of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), which had established bases in that part of Iraq to launch terror attacks in Turkey.

Another major issue has perturbed U.S. policy toward Turkey. Groups claiming to represent the Armenian diaspora—most notably descendants of people who fled the so-called 1915 “genocide” by Ottoman forces against Armenian inhabitants of lands in modern-day Turkey—have waged a steady campaign since the 1970s to secure formal U.S. congressional recognition (already granted by some European governmental bodies) that up to 1.5 million Armenians were systematically killed by Ottoman forces. Turkey fears that recognition would open the floodgates to claims for compensation and territorial restitution.<sup>6</sup> Thus, to the extent that they need Turkey’s cooperation, U.S. presidents have hewed to a pro-Turkey line on these issues, dovetailing with their efforts to limit the intrusion of human

rights agendas (a prioritization that often distances the United States from the EU).

Indeed, U.S. presidents have continued to oppose congressional “Armenian genocide” resolutions, with this recurring decision having become undergirded as much by concurrent efforts of the “Jewish lobby” to cultivate a Turco-Israeli alliance (under severe strain in 2009–2010) as by Turkey’s general geostrategic significance. Despite post-cold war U.S. presidential backing for Turkey’s anti-PKK struggle, its “alliance” with Israel, a larger trans-Turkish corridor for Caspian and Middle East energy supplies, and Turkey’s EU membership bid, the United States remained highly unpopular in Turkish public opinion during the first decade of the third millennium. Turkey’s ingrained anti-Americanism has been compounded by declining EU popularity there (over partial suspension of accession talks that had opened only in late 2005) and tension between the JDP government and Israel over the latter’s embargo on Gaza that escalated after the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) killed eight Turks on a flotilla ship that sought to breach the embargo in late May 2010. Already working within certain parameters on its Turkey policies set by the cumulative effect of past U.S. legislative and executive decisions, the Obama administration may—despite its overtures toward Turkey as a “model partner”<sup>7</sup>—become less conciliatory on issues of concern to Turkey. After surveying the cold war tableau of this bilateral relationship, this chapter turns to the post-cold war fixtures of U.S. policy toward Turkey with which Obama has had to work, as well as to the broader changes in Turkish domestic and foreign policy with which he has had to reckon.

## COLD WAR TURCO-U.S. RELATIONS

From a distance, the luster of the postwar Turco-U.S. relationship—one indelibly shaped by the 1947 Truman Doctrine proclamation, Turkish troops’ decorated combat service in the Korean War, and Turkey’s landmark 1952 NATO admission—appears undiminished, although closer scrutiny of the tableau reveals inherent tensions between its various elements, rends in the fabric, and some hasty restorations to highlight the two parties’ “alliance” scenery. This tapestry forms a background for understanding subsequent U.S. policy toward Turkey.

U.S. power was at its most hegemonic from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. This coincides with an aptly named “honeymoon period” of Turco-U.S. relations.<sup>8</sup> This era began with the 1947 Truman Doctrine address, which called for \$400 million in aid, as



well as deployment of U.S. civilian and military personnel, to defend Greece and Turkey (which received one quarter of that assistance) from Soviet-backed incursions. The period continued with the 1948 European Recovery Act (i.e., Marshall Plan), which included an Economic Assistance Program for Turkey. By the late 1950s, the U.S. “domination role”<sup>9</sup> had been attenuated by the development of a Soviet nuclear retaliatory capacity and by West Europe’s economic recovery, symbolized by the 1957 founding of the European Economic Community (EEC).

Turkey was highly dependant on U.S. foreign aid in this period. During 1946–1965, it received \$4.315 billion in official U.S. grants and credits.<sup>10</sup> This suggests a profoundly asymmetrical relationship favoring U.S. interests, one that accords with neorealist International Relations (IR) theory’s expectation of the ties between a superpower and its allies in a bipolar world.<sup>11</sup> However, the practical workings of the postwar Turco-U.S. relationship were circumscribed at the outset by salient regard for Turkey’s sovereignty and national pride. Early on, the U.S. ambassador was designated “chief of mission” in lieu of “administrator” (of Marshall Plan aid), and military branch heads designated “directors,” in deference to “bitter memories of the history of capitulations in Turkey.”<sup>12</sup> Within the respective frameworks of the 1949 and 1951 treaties creating NATO and its Status of Forces arrangements (SOFA), U.S. military bases, personnel, and operations in Turkey fell under concurrent jurisdiction according to the 1954 SOFA. Even the 1959 arrangement providing Turkey with 15 Jupiter intermediate range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) was a “cumbersome” mix involving Turkish ownership of the missiles, U.S. ownership and custody of their nuclear warheads, and joint launch authority.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, these missiles became contentious three years later, partly out of U.S. concern that trading them off for Soviet missiles in Cuba would offend Ankara.<sup>14</sup> The 1964 Soviet disclosure of a U.S.-Soviet bargain over the Jupiters became grist for Turkish leftist opposition to the U.S. military presence and later for official resistance to joining NATO’s Multilateral Nuclear Strike Force (which Turkey had agreed to do in 1963).<sup>15</sup>

The security-oriented nature and elitist conduct of Turco-U.S. relations unsurprisingly made the U.S. military in Turkey a target of protest and violence starting in the 1960s. Even the “honeymoon” featured disputes over U.S. use of Turkish bases, namely during the 1957 Lebanon crisis and the May 1960 crisis over the downing of Gary Powers’s U2 spy plane.<sup>16</sup> However, rising intercommunal tensions in 1963–1964 between the Greek and Turkish communities

on Cyprus (a crisis that flared up again in 1974 and resulted in congressional imposition of the 1975–1978 U.S. arms embargo against Turkey) and President Lyndon B. Johnson’s June 1964 “letter” admonishing Turkey not to use U.S. weapons in defense of Turkish Cypriots nor to expect NATO backing in the event of Soviet counterintervention marked the start of a 16-year souring of relations that has been termed “years of digression.”<sup>17</sup> As Nur Bilge Criss states, “The Johnson letter was a turning point in the Turkish shift toward a multidimensional foreign policy,”<sup>18</sup> which the foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu turned into an explicit operating principle of the JDP government’s foreign policy.<sup>19</sup>

During this time, U.S. presidents tried to preserve the relationship. U.S. aid to Turkey did fall from \$3.020 billion, over the 1956–1965 heyday of Turkish participation in the U.S.-backed Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), to \$2.703 billion during the 1966–1974 period.<sup>20</sup> The 1975–1978 congressional ban on arms transfers to Turkey severely curtailed military aid (to about \$134 million per annum during those years, nearly the same as during the Truman years).<sup>21</sup> Even before the embargo, which provoked Turkey’s abrogation of the 1969 Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement and seizure of control over all joint military installations, Ankara had already begun to demonstrate a greater proclivity to object to perceived U.S. SOFA infringements and to distance itself from U.S. positions.<sup>22</sup> This deviation in Turkish foreign policy interacted both with U.S. policy changes (stemming not only from Cyprus-related events but also from Nixon’s pressure on Turkey to eradicate its poppy production) and the flourishing of radical extremists (mirrored by their counterparts in the tenuous multiparty parliamentary coalitions), who battled each other and terrorized foreign diplomatic and military personnel.<sup>23</sup> Political violence and the widening gulf between respective foreign-policy priorities slowed considerably after the September 1980 coup and the consequent sweeping changes that were implemented in the Turkish political and economic systems.

### POST-COLD WAR U.S. POLICY TOWARD TURKEY

Pre-1964 postwar relations proceeded, relatively speaking, down easy street, whereas the post-1964 relationship lurched onto a rocky road that was partially repaired in 1980. However, as the cold war defined a common enemy to be contained, the greater uncertainty and mismatch of interests of the post-cold war era propelled Turco-U.S.

relations into uncharted territory. Four U.S. presidents have had to navigate a realm of U.S. foreign policy that has been shaped as much by changes in Turkish public opinion as by the cumulative impact of their own and their predecessors' decisions.

### **“Multilateral Father”: George H. W. Bush’s Landmark-Event Turkey Policy**

One issue that began to preoccupy Turco-U.S. relations started just before the formal end of the cold war (as the Soviet Union was still officially in business at this time) and centered on Iraq. Perhaps no Turkish leader other than Turkish Republic founder Mustafa Kemal Ataturk or 1960 coup-deposed Adnan Menderes garnered as much U.S. acclaim as President Turgut Ozal. Ozal bucked the strongly negative tide of Turkish public opinion and agreed to throw material support behind Operations Desert Shield (late 1990) and Desert Storm (early 1991), two halves of a campaign spearheaded by President George H. W. Bush to oust Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. These included the economic pinch (for Turkey as well as Iraq) of UN sanctions that continued to be imposed in some form or another until the full-scale March 2003 invasion of that country and deposing of the latter leader.<sup>24</sup> Under Ozal,

Ankara granted access and overflight rights to US combat aircraft operating from Incirlik Air Base and elsewhere in Turkey; deployed more than 100,000 troops along the Iraqi border to pin down substantial Iraqi forces; shut down its pipelines, cutting off Iraqi oil exports; and, after the conclusion of the war, allowed allied aircraft to fly sorties out of Incirlik to monitor the no-fly zone over northern Iraq. This signaled a dramatic shift in Turkish foreign policy, characterized until then by regional noninterference and minimization of foreign tensions for the sake of domestic stability.<sup>25</sup>

Turgut Ozal's risk taking did not occur in an international vacuum. If George W. Bush's decision to launch a near-unilateral invasion and occupation of Iraq in March 2003 represents a notable departure from the prevailing post-cold war pattern of U.S. presidencies adopting multilateral approaches to matters of coercive diplomacy and war, cultivation of Ozal's support by his own father's administration embodies the latter pattern. As one former U.S. ambassador to Turkey has written, “If diplomacy counts, it should be noted that before the [Gulf] war began Secretary of State James Baker visited

Turkey three times to win Turkish support—three times more than any cabinet official prior to the ‘second’ Iraq war.”<sup>26</sup>

### **Bill Clinton and the “Enhanced Partnership”**

The 42nd presidency of William J. Clinton inherited the “enhanced partnership” established by the mutually effective and timely exercise of personal leadership by his predecessor and Turgut Ozal. Clinton perpetuated two unpopular policies in Turkey: UN sanctions against Saddam Hussein’s regime (the costs of which fell disproportionately on both Iraq and Turkey) and the use of Incirlik Airbase—contingent on the Turkish parliament’s biannual renewal of permission—to enforce the U.S./U.K. no-fly zone in northern Iraq. UN sanctions loosened over Clinton’s two terms in office. The first phase of relaxation, which conceded to the reality of truck-borne oil smuggling via Jordan and Turkey, saw the December 1996 reopening of Iraq’s Persian Gulf oil terminals and the Kirkuk-Yumurtalik (Iraq-Turkey) pipeline, mandated by UN Resolution 986 to transport the larger bulk of Iraq’s oil exports.<sup>27</sup>

Although Turks chafed at the costs associated with UN sanctions, their larger security fears revolved around the existence of the no-fly zones. With new bases created in the northern zone, the PKK (later KADEK and, in its post-Iraq War incarnation, Kongra-Gel) continued attacks against Turkish targets in a campaign originally launched in 1984 from Lebanon’s then Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley. That campaign was backed by the Hafez al-Assad regime to try to stop construction on the major Euphrates River dams and irrigation schemes in Turkey’s Southeast Anatolia Project.<sup>28</sup> By the late 1990s, Syrian support for the PKK had almost single-handedly catalyzed a Turco-Israeli military alliance, put both Syria and the PKK on the State Department’s new terrorism watch list, led Turkey to the brink of invading Syria in 1998, and prompted U.S. and Israeli intelligence to assist in capturing PKK head Abdullah “Apo” Ocalan in 1999.

In a preview of Obama’s style, Bill Clinton endeavored to impart new substance to the “enhanced partnership.” Harnessing an “initial wave” of post-cold war activism in Turkish foreign policy,<sup>29</sup> Clinton sought Ankara’s assistance for humanitarian operations in Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo.<sup>30</sup> Responding to the poor economic circumstances in which he took office, Clinton also emphasized stronger trade ties. Although Clinton-era figures are dwarfed by percentage increases in bilateral trade between the respective final years in office

of Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan and reflect an overall expansion of U.S. trade (which also applies for U.S. foreign direct investment [FDI]), total dollar volume of bilateral trade between 1992 and 2000 rose by nearly three quarters, with the volume of Turkish exports to the United States nearly trebling in value.<sup>31</sup> Following his well-received visit to Turkey after the 1999 earthquakes in Izmit and Duzce, Clinton—who mingled with inhabitants of a makeshift tent city—also pledged \$1 billion in Exim Bank loans and facilitated a major three-year IMF (International Monetary Fund) standby loan to Turkey (initially approved at SDR 2.892 billion in December 1999 but trebled just before he left office).<sup>32</sup>

Clinton combined commercial and geopolitical objectives in a way that largely dovetailed with Turkey's interests. As part of its overall policy of promoting economic independence, democracy, and market openness in the former Soviet Union (FSU), the Clinton administration advocated "multiple pipelines" extending from the hydrocarbon-rich Caspian Sea littoral states to Turkey. Although Russia was not explicitly excluded from any new energy "corridor"—indeed, Soviet monopolization of all routes of egress for oil and gas exports from the present Caspian states of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan made any exclusion nearly impossible—Iranian routes were expressly precluded.<sup>33</sup> The prohibition on Iran's inclusion in U.S.-sponsored energy routes, one adhered to by George W. Bush and Barack Obama, originated in Clinton's 1995 executive order banning U.S. trade and investment in Iran (an order that has been renewed every March since then) and his approval of the 1996 Iran and Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA-ISA since 2006), which generalized this ban to foreign firms investing \$20 million or more per year in Iran.<sup>34</sup>

Iran sanctions proved a mixed blessing for Turkey. As symbolized by Clinton's presence alongside the Turkish president Suleyman Demirel at the signing of some energy agreements during his aforementioned visit to Turkey, the United States extended an immense geopolitical "lifeline" to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) crude oil pipeline, the commercial prospects of which were inauspicious in the 1990s.<sup>35</sup> However, by similarly enfeebling Iran's capacity to produce and transport natural gas westward, they potentially undercut the feasibility of the mammoth Nabucco Pipeline project, an undertaking backed by both George W. Bush and Barack Obama as well as the European Commission to transport up to 31 billion cubic meters of gas per year through Turkey from potential supplier countries Azerbaijan, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and Turkmenistan.<sup>36</sup> Sanctions also directly clashed with Turkey's plans to import Iranian gas dating

back to a 1997 agreement worth \$19 billion.<sup>37</sup> Given that Turkish firms planned to work only on Turkey's section of the current Tabriz-Erzurum pipeline, the U.S. State Department demurred on the applicability of ILSA sanctions, arguing, "Turkey would be importing gas originating in Turkmenistan, not Iran, under a swap arrangement."<sup>38</sup> This matter continues to circumscribe Turco-U.S. cooperation on the "east-west transportation corridor."

Clinton also faced the dilemma of justifying the suppression of congressional resolutions condemning Turkey on human-rights grounds while also promoting its EU membership. Notably, though not the first U.S. president to oppose legislation embodying views that he personally shared, Clinton pressured the House in 2000, just as his predecessor had done in 1990 vis-à-vis the Senate, to withdraw a nonbinding resolution recognizing the Armenian "genocide."<sup>39</sup> Although the EU rebuffed Turkey at Luxembourg in 1997, it reversed its stance at Helsinki in 1999, partly because of Clinton's support for Turkey's bid. Still, the EU's traditionally insular orientation, the higher premium it attaches to member states' democratic credentials relative to their military prowess, and its abiding focus on the costs of admitting Turkey (an area where the U.S. can enjoy a "free ride") have restricted the extent to which any U.S. administrations can accelerate Turkey's admission.<sup>40</sup>

### **"Unilateral Son": Rupture of the "Strategic Relationship" under George W. Bush**

Ironically, it was this administration's officials, whose policies played a large role in bringing Turco-U.S. relations to new lows of discord, who stepped up pressure on the EU to admit Turkey. This campaign occurred in the run-up to the EU's December 2002 Copenhagen summit but largely because the U.S. administration, already planning to invade Iraq, had an instrumental interest in using Turkey for the passage of U.S. troops. This put an even more pronounced stress on the security-oriented nature of U.S. concerns for Turkey's EU bid.<sup>41</sup> Despite haggling that yielded Turkey \$15 billion in aid (one-third in cash and the remainder in loan guarantees), the late February 2003 deadlock in the UNSC on approving a U.S.- and U.K.-proposed second resolution authorizing intervention in Iraq, combined with months of mutual diplomatic ineptitude, created circumstances wherein the March 1, 2003, Turkish Grand National Assembly vote to allow use of its territory for that purpose lacked a sufficient majority.<sup>42</sup>

This vote and the security ramifications for Turkey of losing much of its ability to shape the nature of the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq significantly worsened bilateral ties. The period between March 2003 and November 2007—when the United States began providing “actionable” satellite intelligence to the Turkish military to fight the PKK—“marked the lowest point in relations since the U.S. arms embargo of 1975–78,” with “reservoirs of trust on both sides . . . greatly depleted.”<sup>43</sup> Despite Turkey’s last-minute approval of American use of Incirlik Airbase for the Iraq war effort, the war’s immediate aftermath saw the abrogation of the U.S. assistance package and warnings to Turkey (echoed by the European Commission) to refrain from intervening in northern Iraq, where defense of the ethnic Turcoman minority offered a potential pretext.<sup>44</sup> In the context of this rupture, the U.S. capture and “hooding” on July 4, 2003, of 11 Turkish covert special-forces operatives in the northern Iraq town of Sulaymaniyya (who were allegedly collaborating with the Turkmen Front) brought anti-American sentiments to an unprecedented pitch of virulence.<sup>45</sup>

Both parties were slow to repair this rend. In October 2003, Turkey begrudgingly authorized troops for Iraq, but the provisional Iraqi authority rejected them.<sup>46</sup> The Bush administration dilatorily resumed U.S. advocacy of Turkey’s EU accession bid, which included a parallel effort begun under Clinton to promote a Cyprus settlement, but this lobbying did not become salient until after Greek Cypriot rejection of the “Annan Plan” (endorsed by Turkish Cypriots) and Cyprus’s subsequent EU accession in May 2004.<sup>47</sup> The lingering trans-Atlantic rift over Iraq that saw Turkey aligning with France and Germany and moving to adopt EU-mandated reforms may have obviated the necessity of U.S. lobbying anyway.<sup>48</sup> Largely forced by the massing of Turkish troops on the Iraq border and the need to keep trans-Turkey supply lines open, Bush’s late-2007 decision to provide real-time intelligence on PKK movements in northern Iraq and to largely condone resulting Turkish military airstrikes, as well as the opening of a joint Office of Defense Cooperation in Ankara, nudged up levels of trust.<sup>49</sup>

### **Barack Obama and the “Model Partnership”?**

For reasons of both necessity and personal style, Barack Obama’s foreign policymaking embodied a renewed emphasis on multilateralism and a substantively differentiated approach to the Muslim world, as epitomized in his April 2009 speech in Turkey. In contrast to Bush’s

2004 visit, strongly symbolized by an expansive security cordon, Obama took part in a student roundtable.<sup>50</sup> He also elevated the importance of expanding commercial ties.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, Obama (largely focused on economic recovery) found his administration mostly responding to, rather than actively influencing, new departures in Turkish foreign policy. Whereas some of these are positive from a U.S. standpoint, the negative ones may constrain the Obama administration's behavior or motivate it to act less conciliatorily toward Turkey.

President Obama has largely hewed to specific U.S. policy tacks on Turkey set by his predecessors. His administration continued to advocate on behalf of Turkey's EU bid, championed by the European Commission but notably opposed by France, which prefers restricting the EU to a "privileged partnership" with Turkey that the latter eschews.<sup>52</sup> Even while supporting a brief interlude of "democratic opening" that the JDP government sought to initiate vis-à-vis Turkey's Kurdish population, Obama also pledged to maintain George H. W. Bush's second-term efforts to assist the Turkish military in prosecuting its post-2007 campaign to eradicate PKK camps in northern Iraq's Kandil mountain range. Moreover, he followed Clinton's policy of promoting Turkey as the hub of a new "East-West energy corridor," both reaffirming U.S. support for this vision during his Ankara visit and sending the U.S. special envoy for energy Richard Morningstar (who reprised his analogous role under Clinton) to attend the July 2009 Ankara signing ceremony of the Nabucco Project intergovernmental agreement by consortium states Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Turkey.<sup>53</sup>

This latter project has faced an array of obstacles, including one generated by U.S. pressure on Turkey to normalize relations with Armenia, a process launched with a September 2008 World Cup qualifying match in Yerevan between Armenian and Turkish national teams, which was attended by both countries' presidents. This yielded a "road map" just before Obama was to make a ritual April 24 commemorative speech on the events of 1915.<sup>54</sup> However, the process offended Turkey's traditional ally Azerbaijan, a major supplier of the BTC oil and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (South Caucasus) gas pipelines (as well as the future Nabucco project) and one locked in conflict with Armenia over the latter's occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Province. Azeri leaders, already disputing Ankara on gas prices and transit fees, did not attend a related Istanbul summit meeting during Obama's visit and thereafter arranged to sell gas to Russia by 2010.<sup>55</sup> The flagging of mutual political will for normalization made the



political climate conducive to renewed Turco-Azeri gas agreements by mid-2010.<sup>56</sup>

Although this keeps U.S. policy consistent with support for the East-West transportation corridor, new trends in Turkish foreign policy under the JDP government may have diminished Obama's ability or will to safeguard against future U.S. congressional recognition of the Armenian "genocide." As the difficulty of reconciling Azeri-Armenian relations hinted, the Turkish foreign minister Davutoglu's "vision-based" strategy—including "zero problems" with neighbors, policy multidimensionality, and diplomatic flexibility<sup>57</sup>—ran into the highly intractable disputes in Turkey's environs. Whereas Obama expected Turkey, as Clinton did, to mediate in Israel's peace talks with the Palestinians and Syria and possibly between the United States and Iran as well as to continue its peacekeeping role in Lebanon and Afghanistan, the JDP government seems to have improved Turco-Arab and Turco-Iranian relations at the expense of close post-1996 ties with Israel.

The anti-Israel posture of the JDP government did not readily appear when it first took power in 2002. It did become clearer in Davutoglu's early 2006 and 2009 visits with the Hamas representative Khaled Mashal; and it was more overtly manifest in the Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's public tirade and walk-off at the 2009 World Economic Forum against the Israeli president Shimon Peres over Israel's deadly military offensive in Gaza,<sup>58</sup> which aggravated its blockade to deepen an ongoing humanitarian crisis. Turkey's October 2009 cancellation of Anatolian Eagle military exercises with Israel, which caused the United States and Italy to withdraw as well, invited speculation that Israeli authorities would no longer defend Turkey against U.S. congressional resolutions recognizing the Armenian genocide.<sup>59</sup> As if to compound its vulnerability there, Ankara (marking growing Turco-Sudanese trade ties) hosted Sudan's leader Omar el-Bashir, convicted by the ICC of war crimes in the Darfur region.<sup>60</sup> Obama's lobbying against another congressional Armenian genocide resolution in April 2010 seemed notably lackluster.<sup>61</sup>

Two more events brought Turco-Israeli ties to the breaking point in mid-2010, further threatening to constrict Obama's latitude in promoting Turkey's interests. First, the IDF's May 2010 storming of the Turkey-registered ship in a flotilla attempting to break the Gaza blockade and the killing of eight Turkish activists on board, as well as the detention of nearly 100 other passengers, were widely denounced and prompted calls for an investigation. The Obama administration's mediation to secure the detainees' release maintained some semblance of U.S.

neutrality in the widening fissure between Turkey and Israel (although the United States did not join in Turkey's unrequited demand for an apology by Israel).<sup>62</sup> Obama also felt chagrined by Turkey's objection to further UN sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program. For a host of reasons, including an expansion of trade ties with Iran that reached \$10 billion in 2008, the Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan—whose country signed a May 2010 agreement to allow Russia to build a new power plant near Sinop—joined the Brazilian president Lula da Silva in brokering a fuel swap along the lines of a jettisoned October 2009 agreement (except with Turkey, not Russia, becoming the repository of Iran's low-enriched uranium).<sup>63</sup> Believing the deal would mollify Iran, rotating UNSC member Turkey voted against a fourth round of sanctions in June 2010, although it later tempered its view on Tehran's willingness to talk.<sup>64</sup> Though Defense Secretary Robert Gates partially attributed Turkey's vote to the EU's failure to provide "an organic link to the West that Turkey sought," the U.S. delegate to the UN Susan Rice labeled Turkey and Brazil as international "outliers."<sup>65</sup> UN sanctions nonetheless passed, and the Obama administration approved U.S. sanctions on Iran's oil products trade in July.<sup>66</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Advocating a "model partnership" with Turkey, Obama was instead forced to grapple with a new recurrence of marital strife. These troubles are not rooted simply in the U.S. government's tendency to treat "Turkey as a *function* of Washington's big idea of the moment."<sup>67</sup> They have also sprung up on the Turkish side, as the JDP government arguably consolidated an earlier trend of marshaling religious forces for political purposes to accelerate "dismantling the Republic's code of conduct in statecraft—in the name of populism."<sup>68</sup> Yet it took the aforementioned diplomatic imbroglios to force the U.S. foreign policy establishment to pay closer scrutiny to the presumed secular democratic quality of Turkey's polity per se. By 2010 Obama was hearing increasingly pointed questions about Turkey's merit as a NATO ally and the need to reassess U.S. policy on Turkey.<sup>69</sup> The assistant secretary of state Philip Gordon even intoned that Turkey needed to demonstrate its commitment to NATO, the European Union, and the United States.<sup>70</sup> Thus, Obama—who made eloquent mention in Ankara of Turkey's self-initiated path to democracy, after which time his administration relegated Turkey lower on its list of policy priorities—was goaded by events germinating in Turkish political and diplomatic trends to

focus on the quality of a bilateral relationship that is often taken for granted while also being prone to crisis.

## NOTES

1. President Barack Obama, remarks to the Turkish Parliament, White House Office of the Press Secretary, April 6, 2009, [www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-turkish-parliament](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-turkish-parliament). (Accessed on February 16, 2011).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Mark R. Parris, "Common Values and Common Interests? The Bush Legacy in US-Turkish Relations," *Insight Turkey* 10, no. 4 (2008): 13. Indeed, although the Pew Research Center's 2009 polling showed only a slight rise in U.S. overall favorability ratings in Turkey (from a low of 9 percent in 2007 to 14 percent in 2009), 33 percent of surveyed Turks expressed confidence that Obama "will do the right thing," as opposed to 2 percent expressing similar confidence in Bush in 2008. See Pew Global Attitudes Project, *Most Muslim Publics Not So Easily Moved: Confidence in Obama Lifts U.S. Image around the World*, July 23, 2009, pp. 1–2.
5. Fusun Turkmen, "Turkish-American Relations: A Challenging Transition," *Turkish Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009): 122.
6. Jim Bodgener, "Armenian Dead Haunt Turkey's Relations with the US: A Congressional Resolution Striking at Deepseated National Sentiments," *Financial Times*, February 23, 1990, p. 3.
7. "President Barack Obama Holds a News Conference with Turkish President Abdullah Gul—News Conference," *Financial Market Regulatory Wire*, April 6, 2009.
8. Turkmen, "Turkish-American Relations," 111–112.
9. Charles P. Kindleberger, "Dominance and Leadership in the International Economy: Exploitation, Public Goods, and Free Rides," *International Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (1981): 248.
10. U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1994* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1994), 814.
11. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979), 168–169.
12. Joseph C. Satterthwaite, "The Truman Doctrine: Turkey," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 401, *America and the Middle East* (1972): 79.
13. Barton J. Bernstein, "The Cuban Missile Crisis: Trading the Jupiters in Turkey?" *Political Science Quarterly* 95, no. 1 (1980): 99.
14. Bernstein, "Cuban Missile Crisis," 79.
15. Nur Bilge Criss, "A Short History of Anti-Americanism and Terrorism: The Turkish Case," *Journal of American History* 89, no. 2 (2002): 475.

16. Charlotte Wolf, *Garrison Community: A Study of an Overseas American Military Colony* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1969), 57n9; and Criss, "Short History," 473.
17. Turkmen, "Turkish-American Relations," 112–113.
18. Criss, "Short History," 475.
19. Ahmet Davutoglu, "Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy," *Foreign Policy*, May 20, 2010, [www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/05/20/turkeys\\_zero\\_problems\\_foreign\\_policy](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/05/20/turkeys_zero_problems_foreign_policy). (Accessed on February 16, 2011).
20. U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1994*, 814.
21. U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1978* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1978), 871–873 (for 1975 figures); *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1979* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1979), 857–859.
22. Criss, "Short History," 473–476; Turkmen, "Turkish-American Relations," 112–113.
23. Criss, "Short History," 476–482.
24. Amy E. Schwartz, "Atta Turk: Ozal Looks West," *New Republic* (Washington, DC), April 15, 1991, pp. 19–21.
25. Turkmen, "Turkish-American Relations," 113.
26. Morton Abramowitz, "The Turkish Portfolio," *American Interest* 4, no. 3 (2009): 64.
27. Kenneth Katzman, "Iraq: Oil-for-Food Program, International Sanctions, and Illicit Trade," Congressional Research Service, February 28, 2003, pp. 1–2, 14.
28. Paul A. Williams, "Turkey's H<sub>2</sub>O Diplomacy in the Middle East," *Security Dialogue* 32, no. 1 (2001): 28–32.
29. Ziya Onis and Suhnaz Yilmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the JDP Era," *Turkish Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009): 1.
30. Turkmen, "Turkish-American Relations," 113.
31. U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1990* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1990), 806–807 (for 1980 and 1988 figures); U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1994*, 823–826 (for 1992 figures); and U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2001* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2001), 802–805 (for 2000 figures).
32. Chris Morris, "US Offers Turkey 1bn in Quake Aid," *Guardian* (UK), November 16, 1999; and International Monetary Fund, "Turkey: Financial Position in the Fund as of December 31" (2000), [www.imf.org/external/np/fin/tad/exfin2.aspx?memberkey1=980&date1Key=2000-12-31](http://www.imf.org/external/np/fin/tad/exfin2.aspx?memberkey1=980&date1Key=2000-12-31). (Accessed on February 16, 2011).
33. Jan H. Kalicki, "U.S. Policy in the Caspian: Pipelines, Partnership and Prosperity," *Middle East Policy* 6, no. 2 (1998): 145–149.

34. Kenneth Katzman, "Iran Sanctions," Congressional Research Service, June 23, 2010, [www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS20871.pdf](http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS20871.pdf). (Accessed on July 15, 2010).
35. Paul A. Williams and Ali Tekin, "The Iraq War, Turkey, and Renewed Caspian Energy Prospects," *Middle East Journal* 62, no. 3 (2008): 389–393.
36. Thomas Mattair, "The United States and Iran: Diplomacy, Sanctions and War," *Middle East Policy* 17, no. 2 (2010): 51.
37. Chris Nuttall, "Turkish Deals with Iran Risk US Rift," *Guardian* (UK), August 12, 1996.
38. Katzman, "Iran Sanctions," 5.
39. Juliet Eilperin and Stephen Mufson, "Hastert Withdraws 'Genocide' Resolution; Clinton Plea, Ties with Turkey Cited," *Washington Post*, October 20, 2000, p. A04.
40. Ziya Onis and Suhnaz Yilmaz, "The Turkey-EU-US Triangle in Perspective: Transformation or Continuity?" *Middle East Journal* 59, no. 2 (2005): 271–273. The European Parliament itself called on Turkey to recognize the events of 1915 as genocide. Brian Kenety, "Politics: EU Reference to 'Genocide' Angers Turkey," *Inter Press Service*, November 16, 2000.
41. Onis and Yilmaz, "The Turkey-EU-US Triangle," 273.
42. Cameron S. Brown, "Turkey in the Gulf Wars of 1991 and 2003," *Turkish Studies* 8, no. 1 (2007): 98–100.
43. Onis and Yilmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism," 12–13.
44. Onis and Yilmaz, "The Turkey-EU-US Triangle," 276–277.
45. Turkmen, "Turkish-American Relations," 123–125.
46. Brown, "Turkey in the Gulf Wars," 101.
47. "US May Offer de Facto Recognition to Turkish Cypriots: Officials," *Agence France Presse*, April 29, 2004; and George Parker and Joshua Chaffin, "US Presses Case for Turkey's Accession to EU," *Financial Times*, June 27, 2004.
48. George Parker and Judy Dempsey, "EU Tells US to Stay out of Turkey's EU Bid," *Financial Times*, April 21, 2003.
49. Demetri Sevastopulo and Vincent Boland, "US Urges Turkey to Limit Iraq Incursion," *Financial Times*, February 28, 2008. The United States' favorability rating rose from 9 percent in 2007 to 12 percent in 2008, according to Pew Global Attitudes Project 2009, p. 1.
50. Deb Riechmann, "Bush Meets Turkish Leaders as They Grapple with Hostage Crisis," *Associated Press*, June 27, 2004; and U.S. State Department, "Remarks by President Obama at Student Roundtable in Turkey—Obama Committed to Rebuilding U.S. Relations with Muslim World," *State Department Press Releases and Documents*, April 7, 2009.
51. U.S. State Department, "Remarks by President Obama."
52. David Charter, "Leave Turkey's Bid to Join EU to Us, Sarkozy Warns Obama," *Times* (London), April 6, 2009.

53. David O'Byrne, "Baku Snubs US-Turkey Summit," *International Gas Report*, April 13, 2009; and "Turkey Expects to Receive €450 Mln Annually from Nabucco," *Hurriyet Daily News.com*, July 11, 2009, [www.hurriyet.com.tr/finance/12048098\\_p.asp](http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/finance/12048098_p.asp). (Accessed on July 11, 2009).
54. Marc Champion, "Turkey, Armenia Break Ice," *Wall Street Journal Europe*, April 24, 2009, p. 1.
55. O'Byrne, "Baku Snubs"; Nadia Rodova, "Russian, Azeri Presidents Hope to Sign Azeri Gas Export Deal," *Platts Commodity News*, April 27, 2009.
56. Fulya Ozerkan, "Turkey Strikes Key Gas Deals with Azerbaijan," *Hurriyet Daily News* (Turkey), June 7, 2010, [www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-strikes-key-gas-deals-with-azerbaijan-2010-06-07](http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-strikes-key-gas-deals-with-azerbaijan-2010-06-07). (Accessed on June 7, 2010).
57. Turkmén, "Turkish-American Relations," 118–120.
58. Daniel Dombey and William Wallis, "US Struggles to Prevent Quartet Rift over Hamas," *Financial Times*, February 22, 2006, p. 10; Margaret Coker and Jay Solomon, "Israel Discusses Cease-Fire Amid New Attacks on Hamas," *Wall Street Journal*, January 2, 2009, p. A1; and Robert Tait, "International Reaction: Erdogan Risks Mediator Role," *Guardian* (UK), January 31, 2009.
59. Julian Borger, "Turkey Confirms It Barred Israel from Military Exercise Because of Gaza War," *Guardian Unlimited* (UK), October 13, 2009.
60. Nicholas Birch and Sarah Childress, "Turkey Says It Won't Arrest Sudan President during Visit," *Wall Street Journal Europe*, November 6, 2009, p. 10.
61. Marc Champion, "Erdogan Calls Israel 'Threat' to Peace; Turkish Premier's Remarks Further Strain Countries' Alliance as Analysts Ponder Nation's Foreign-Policy Leanings," *Wall Street Journal*, April 8, 2010.
62. Gerald F. Seib, "U.S. Plays Therapist with Turkey, Israel," *Wall Street Journal*, June 4, 2010.
63. Sinan Ulgen, "Preventing the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: What Role for Turkey?" Discussion Paper Series—2010/2 (Edam: Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies, 2010), 12–15.
64. George Percovich, "Sanctions on Iran—The Least Bad Option," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 28, 2010, <http://carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=41066>. (Accessed on February 16, 2011); Marc Champion, "World News: Turkey Takes Iran to Task over Delay in Nuclear Talks," *Wall Street Journal*, June 30, 2010, p. A13.
65. Daniel Dombey, Alex Barker, and Najmeh Bozorgmehr, "US Blames Europe as Turkey Opposes Sanctions," *Financial Times*, June 9, 2010.
66. Greg Bruno, "The Lengthening List of Iran Sanctions, Council on Foreign Relations: Backgrounder," July 28, 2010, [www.cfr](http://www.cfr).

- org/publication/20258/lengthening\_list\_of\_iran\_sanctions.html. (Accessed on February 16, 2011).
67. Parris, “Common Values and Common Interests?” 6.
  68. Nur Bilge Criss, “Dismantling Turkey: The Will of the People?” *Turkish Studies* 11, no. 1 (2010): 47.
  69. Elliot Abrams, “A Turkey of a Policy: Obama Makes the Middle East an Even More Dangerous Place,” *Weekly Standard* (USA), June 21, 2010, <http://weeklystandard.com/print/articles/turkey-policy>. (Accessed on February 16, 2011); Andrew C. McCarthy, “Turkey Turns,” *National Review*, July 5, 2010, pp. 32–36; and Michael Rubin, “Turkey, from Ally to Enemy,” *Commentary*, July–August 2010, pp. 81–86.
  70. Delphine Strauss and David Gardner, “The Sentinel Swivels,” *Financial Times Asia Edition*, July 21, 2010, p. 1.

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2004.
- Abramowitz, Morton. "The Turkish Portfolio." *American Interest* 4, no. 3 (2009): 63–73.
- Adelman, Howard, ed. *Protracted Displacement in Asia: No Place to Call Home*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008.
- Afghanistan in 2009: A Survey of the Afghan People*. Kabul and San Francisco: Asia Foundation, 2009.
- Akbarzadeh, Shahram. *Uzbekistan and the United States: Authoritarianism, Islamism and Washington's Security Agenda*. London and New York: Zed Books, 2005.
- Al-Faisal, Turki. "Don't Be Crude: Why Barack Obama's Energy-Dependence Talk Is Just Demagoguery." *Foreign Policy*, September–October 2009: 102–103.
- Allison, Roy, and Lena Jonson, eds. *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, and Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001.
- Alterman, Jon B. *Egypt and American Foreign Assistance, 1952–56: Hopes Dashed*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Anceschi, Luca. "Integrating Domestic Factors and Foreign Policy Making: The Cases of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan." *Central Asian Survey* 29, no. 2 (2010): 143–158.
- Baker, James A., Lee H. Hamilton, Eagleburger, Lawrence S., Jordan, Vernon E. Jr., Meese, Edwin III, O'Connor, Sandra Day, Panetta, Leon E., Perry, William J., Robb, Charles S., Simpson, Alan K. *The Iraq Study Group Report*. U.S. Institute of Peace, December 2006.
- Balz, Dan, and Haynes Johnson. *The Battle for America 2008: The Story of an Extraordinary Election*. New York: Viking, 2009.
- Bardouille, Raj, Muna Ndulo, and Margeret Grieco. *Africa's Finances: The Role of Remittances*. Newcastle, UK: Oxford Scholars Publications, 2009.
- Barfield, Thomas. *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.
- Bass, Warren. *Support Any Friend*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.



- Bernstein, Barton J. "The Cuban Missile Crisis: Trading the Jupiters in Turkey?" *Political Science Quarterly* 95, no. 1 (1980): 97-125.
- Biddle, Stephen, Fotini Christia, and J. Alexander Thier. "Defining Success in Afghanistan: What Can the United States Accept?" *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 4 (2010): 48-60.
- Blank, Stephen J. *Challenges and Opportunities for the Obama Administration in Central Asia*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009.
- Bowden, Brett, Hilary Charlesworth, and Jeremy Farrall, eds. *The Role of International Law in Rebuilding Societies after Conflict: Great Expectations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Bradsher, Henry S. *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985.
- Bregman, Ahron. *Elusive Peace: How the Holy Land Defeated America*. London: Penguin, 2005.
- Brodie, Bernard. *War and Politics*. New York: Macmillan, 1973.
- Bronson, Rachel. *Thicker Than Oil: America's Uneasy Relationship with Saudi Arabia*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2005.
- Brown, Archie. *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- . *The Gorbachev Phenomenon*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Brown, Cameron S. "Turkey in the Gulf Wars of 1991 and 2003." *Turkish Studies* 8, no. 1 (2007): 85-119.
- Bruno, Greg. "The Lengthening List of Iran Sanctions." *Council on Foreign Relations: Backgrounder*, June 28, 2010.
- Campbell, Kurt M., Einhorn, Robert J., Reiss, Mitchell B., eds. *The Nuclear Tipping Point*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004.
- Carothers, Thomas. *Democracy Promotion under Obama: Finding a Way Forward*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Policy Brief 77 (February 2009).
- Catignani, Sergio. "The Strategic Impasse in Low-Intensity Conflicts: The Gap between Israeli Counter-Insurgency Strategy and Tactics during the Al-Aqsa Intifada." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 1 (2005).
- Chayes, Sarah. *The Punishment of Virtue: Inside Afghanistan after the Taliban*. New York: Penguin Press, 2006.
- Chomsky, Noam. *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999.
- Christison, Kathleen. *Perceptions of Palestine, Their Influence on US Middle East Policy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Chubin, Shahram. *The Role of Outside Powers, vol. 4 of Security in the Persian Gulf*. London: Gower for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1982.
- Clunan, Anne L., and Harold Trinkunas. *Ungoverned Spaces? Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010.

- Cohen, Craig, and Derek Chollet. "When \$10 Billion Is Not Enough: Rethinking U.S. Strategy toward Pakistan." *Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (2007): 7–19.
- Coll, Steve. *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. London: Penguin, 2005.
- Cooke, Jennifer, and J. Stephen Morrison. *US Africa Policy beyond the Bush Years: Critical Challenges for the Obama Administration*. Washington, DC: CSIS Press, 2009.
- Cordesman, Anthony H. *Saudi Arabia: National Security in a Troubled Region*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 2009.
- Criss, Nur Bilge. "A Short History of Anti-Americanism and Terrorism: The Turkish Case." *Journal of American History* 89, no. 2 (2002): 472–484.
- . "Dismantling Turkey: The Will of the People?" *Turkish Studies* 11, no. 1 (2010): 45–58.
- Daalder, Ivo H., and James M. Lindsay. *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003.
- Darbouche, Hakim, and Yahia H. Zoubir. "Conflicting International Policies and the Western Sahara Stalemate." *International Spectator* 43, no. 1 (2008): 91–105.
- Davutoglu, Ahmet. "Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy." *Foreign Policy*, May 20, 2010.
- Democracy in Afghanistan 2004: A Survey of the Afghan Electorate*. Kabul and San Francisco: Asia Foundation, 2004.
- Dobbins, James. *After the Taliban: Nation-Building in Afghanistan*. Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2008.
- Dunne, Michele. "The Baby, the Bathwater, and the Freedom Agenda in the Middle East." *Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2009): 129–141.
- Eldar, Dan. "Egypt and Israel: A Reversible Peace." *Middle East Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (2003): 57–65.
- Etzioni, Amitai. "Israel: Samson's Children." *Society* 46, no. 6 (2009): 477–478.
- Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004.
- FitzGerald, Frances. *Fire in the Lake*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1972.
- Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan*. Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, January 2010.
- Freedman, Lawrence. *A Choice of Enemies: America Confronts the Middle East*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008.
- Freeman, Chas W. Jr. "U.S.-Arab Relations: Forks in the Way Forward." *Middle East Policy* 16, no. 4 (2009): 68–75.
- Gause, F. Gregory III. *Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1994.

- . *Relations between the Gulf Cooperation Council States and the United States*. Dubai: Gulf Research Center, 2004.
- Ghafouri, Mahmoud. "China's Policy in the Persian Gulf." *Middle East Policy* 16, no. 2 (2009): 80–92.
- Gilboa, Eytan, and Efraim Inbar, eds. *US-Israeli Relations in a New Era: Issues and Challenges after 9/11*. Abingdon, England: Routledge, 2009.
- Gregory, Derek. *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2004.
- Gregory, Shaun. "The ISI and the War on Terrorism." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no. 12 (2007): 1013–1031.
- Gutman, Roy. *How We Missed the Story: Osama Bin Laden, the Taliban, and the Hijacking of Afghanistan*. Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2008.
- Haass, Richard, and Martin Indyk. "Beyond Iraq: A New U.S. Strategy for the Middle East." *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1 (2009): 41–58.
- Halberstam, David. *The Best and the Brightest*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1992.
- . *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War*. New York: Hyperion, 2007.
- Harbeson, John, and Donald Rothchild. *Africa in World Politics*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2010.
- Haass, Richard. *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars*. New York: Simon and Shuster, 2009.
- Heathershaw, John. "Worlds Apart: The Making and Remaking of Geopolitical Space in the US-Uzbekistan Strategic Partnership." *Central Asian Survey* 26, no. 1 (2007): 123–140.
- Hill, Fiona. "Une Stratégie Incertaine: La Politique des Etats-Unis dans le Caucase et en Asie Centrale Depuis 1991." *Politique Étrangère* 66, no. 1 (2001): 96–108.
- Holbrooke, Richard. *To End a War*. New York: Random House, 1998.
- Hoopoes, Townsend. *The Limits of Intervention*. New York: David McKay Co., 1969.
- Human Rights Watch. *People Fleeing Somalia War Secretly Detained*. New York: HRW, March 30, 2007.
- Hua, Shiping, ed. *Islam and Democratization in Asia*. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2009.
- Hussain, Rizwan. *Pakistan and the Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2005.
- International Crisis Group. *Central Asia: Migrants and the Economic Crisis*. Asia Report no. 183, January 5, 2010.
- . *Counter-Terrorism in Somalia: Losing Hearts and Minds?* Africa Report no. 95, Brussels/Nairobi, July 11, 2005.
- . *Somalia: To Move beyond the Failed State*, Africa Report no. 147, Brussels/Nairobi, December 23, 2008.

- . *Somalia's Divided Islamists*, Africa Policy Briefing 74, Brussels/Nairobi, May 18, 2010.
- Jawad, Saad. "A Taboo Being Challenged in Washington." *Bitter Lemons* 9, no. 8 (2010).
- Jentleson, Bruce. *Opportunities Missed, Opportunities Seized: Preventive Diplomacy in the Post-Cold War World*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000.
- Jervis, Robert. *American Foreign Policy in a New Era*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Johnson, Dominic D. P., and Dominic Tierney. *Failing to Win: Perceptions of Victory and Defeat in International Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Jones, Clive. "One Size Fits All, Israel, Intelligence and the Al Aqsa Intifada," POLIS Working Paper, Leeds, 2004.
- Jones, Seth G. and C. Christine Fair, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND National Security Research Division, 2010).
- . *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2009.
- . "Pakistan's Dangerous Game." *Survival* 49, no. 1 (2007): 15–32.
- Jones Luong, Pauline, and Erika Weinthal. "New Friends, New Fears in Central Asia." *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 2 (2002): 61–70.
- Kalicki, Jan H. "U.S. Policy in the Caspian: Pipelines, Partnership and Prosperity." *Middle East Policy* 6, no. 2 (1998): 145–149.
- Kaplan, Robert D. *Hog Pilots, Blue Water Grunts: The American Military in the Air, Sea, and on the Ground*. New York: Random House, 2007.
- Katzman, Kenneth. "Iran Sanctions." Congressional Research Service, June 23, 2010.
- . "Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses." CRS Report for Congress, Congressional Research Service, July 2009.
- . "Iraq: Oil-for-Food Program, International Sanctions, and Illicit Trade." Congressional Research Service, February 28, 2003.
- Kepel, Gilles. *Beyond Terror and Martyrdom: The Future of the Middle East*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Khaitous, Tariq. *Arab Reactions to a Nuclear-Armed Iran*, Policy Focus 94 June 2009, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2009. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pubPDFs/PolicyFocus94.pdf>
- Kilcullen, David. *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- . *Counterinsurgency*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Kindleberger, Charles P. "Dominance and Leadership in the International Economy: Exploitation, Public Goods, and Free Rides." *International Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (1981): 242–254.
- Kinsman, Jeremy. "The Gaza Conflict, the Obama Factor and the Endless Search for Peace in the Middle East." *Policy Options*, March 2009: 53–62.

- Kupkhan, Charles. "Enemies into Friends: How the United States Can Court its Adversaries." *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 2 (March–April 2010).
- Kuran, Timur. *Private Truths, Public Lies: The Social Consequences of Preference Falsification*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Kurtzer, Daniel, and Scott Lasensky. *Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace: American Leadership in the Middle East*. Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2008.
- Kux, Dennis. *United States and Pakistan, 1947–2000: Disenchanted Allies*. Washington, DC: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.
- Lacey, Robert. *Inside the Kingdom*. New York: Viking, 2009.
- Looney, Robert E. *Handbook of US–Middle East Relations: Formative Factors and Regional Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 2009.
- Lyons, Terrence, and Ahmed Samatar. *Somalia: State Collapse, Multilateral Intervention, and Strategies for Political Reconstruction*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1995.
- Maley, Michael. "Transplanting Election Regulation." *Election Law Journal* 2, no. 4 (2003): 479–497.
- Maley, William. *The Afghanistan Wars*. Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- . "Democratic Governance and Post-Conflict Transitions." *Chicago Journal of International Law* 6, no. 2 (2006): 683–701.
- . *Rescuing Afghanistan*. London: Hurst & Co., 2006.
- . *Stabilizing Afghanistan: Threats and Challenges*. Washington, DC: Policy Brief no. 68, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008.
- . "Talking to the Taliban." *World Today* 63, no. 11 (2007): 4–6.
- , ed. *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*. London: Hurst & Co., 1998.
- Maloney, Suzanne. *Iran's Long Reach: Iran as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World*. Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2008.
- . "Sanctioning Iran: If Only It Were So Simple." *Washington Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (January 2010): 131–147.
- Maloney, Suzanne, and Ray Takeyh. *Refashioning Iran's International Role*. Working Paper, the Stanley Foundation, 2008.
- Marat, Erica. *The Military and the State in Central Asia—From Red Army to Independence*. Abingdon, England, and New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Mattair, Thomas. "The United States and Iran: Diplomacy, Sanctions and War." *Middle East Policy* 17, no. 2 (2010): 52–61.
- McCarthy, Andrew C. "Turkey Turns." *National Review*, July 5, 2010.
- McNamara, Sally. "President Obama Must Not Concede to Russian Demands over NATO." Heritage Foundation, May 8, 2009.
- Mead, Walter Russell. "Change They Can Believe in, To Make Israel Safe, Give Palestinians Their Due." *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1 (2009): 59–76.
- Melvin, Neil, ed. *Engaging Central Asia—The European Union's New Strategy in the Heart of Eurasia*. Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2008.

- Menkhaus, Ken. "The Crisis in Somalia: Tragedy in Five Acts." *African Affairs* 106 (Summer 2007): 357–390.
- . "Dangerous Waters." *Survival* 51, no. 1 (February–March 2009): 21–25.
- Menkhaus, Ken, and Lou Ortmyer. *Key Decision in the Somali Intervention*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Pew Case Studies, 1995.
- Milani, Abbas. "US Foreign Policy and the Future of Democracy in Iran." *Washington Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (2005): 41–56.
- Miller, Aaron David. "The False Religion of Mideast Peace." *Foreign Policy*, May/June 2010: 50–59.
- Milton-Edwards, Beverley. *Contemporary Politics of the Middle East*. Cambridge: Polity, 2006.
- . *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, A People's War*. Abingdon, England: Routledge, 2009.
- . "Political Islam and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict." *Israel Affairs* 12, no. 1 (2006): 65–85.
- Milton-Edwards, Beverley, and Stephen Farrell. *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*. Cambridge: Polity, 2010.
- Murray, Donette. *US Foreign Policy and Iran: American-Iranian Relations since the Islamic Revolution*. London: Routledge, 2010.
- Neumann, Ronald E. *The Other War: Winning and Losing in Afghanistan*. Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2009.
- Niblett, Robin, ed. *America and a Changed World: A Question of Leadership*. London: Wiley-Blackwell/Chatham House, 2010.
- Nichol, Jim, "The April 2010 Coup in Kyrgyzstan and Its Aftermath: Context and Implications for US Interests." U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, CRS Report R41178, 2010.
- . "Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for US Interests." U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, CRS Report RL33458, 2010.
- . "Kyrgyzstan and the Status of the US Manas Airbase: Context and Implications." U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, CRS Report R46054, 2009.
- Nye, Joseph S. "The Decline of America's Soft Power: Why Washington Should Worry." *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 3 (2004): 16–20.
- Obama, Barack. *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2006.
- . "Renewing American Leadership." *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2007: 2–16.
- O'Hanlon, Michael E., and Hassina Sherjan. *Toughing It Out in Afghanistan*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2010.
- Onis, Ziya, and Sunnaz Yilmaz. "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP Era." *Turkish Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009): 7–24.
- . "The Turkey-EU-US Triangle in Perspective: Transformation or Continuity?" *Middle East Journal* 59, no. 2 (2005): 265–284.

- Ottaway, David. *The King's Messenger*. New York: Walker & Company, 2008.
- Ottaway, Marina, and Anatol Lieven. *Rebuilding Afghanistan: Fantasy versus Reality*. Policy Brief no. 12. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002.
- Palmer, Michael A. *Guardians of the Gulf: A History of America's Expanding Role in the Persian Gulf, 1833–1992*. New York: Free Press, 1992.
- Parris, Mark R. "Common Values and Common Interests: The Bush Legacy in US-Turkish Relations." *Insight Turkey* 10, no. 4 (2008): 5–14.
- Peleg, Ilan, and Paul Scham. "Historical Breakthroughs in Arab-Israeli Negotiations: Lessons for the Future." *Middle East Journal* 64, no. 2 (2010): 215–233.
- Perry, Mark. "The Petraeus Briefing: Biden's Embarrassment Not the Whole Story." *Foreign Policy*, March 13, 2010.
- Peters, Gretchen. *Seeds of Terror: How Heroin is Bankrolling the Taliban and Al Qaeda*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2009.
- Poullada, Leon B. "Afghanistan and the United States: The Crucial Years." *Middle East Journal* 35, no. 2 (1981): 178–190.
- Quandt, William B. *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2005.
- Rashid, Ahmed. *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*. New York: Viking Press, 2008.
- Riedel, Bruce. *The Search for Al Qaeda: Its Leadership, Ideology and Future*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008.
- Ronen, Yehudit. *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2009.
- Roston, Aran. "Talking to the Taliban." *Foreign Policy*, Dispatch (October 8, 2009).
- Rotberg, Robert. *Battling Terrorism in the Horn of Africa*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2005.
- Rubin, Barnett R. *The Search for Peace in Afghanistan: From Buffer State to Failed State*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995.
- Rubin, Michael. "Turkey, from Ally to Enemy." *Commentary*, July–August 2010: 81–86.
- Saikal, Amin, and William Maley, eds. *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Salah, Ziad. "Lutte Antiterroriste: Les Américains S'alignent sur la Position Algérienne." *Le Quotien d'Oran* (Algeria), July 22, 2010.
- Sanger, David E. *The Inheritance: The World Obama Confronts and the Challenges to American Power*. New York: Harmony Books, 2009.
- Schmidt, Elizabeth. "Introduction: ASR Forum, Africa in the Age of Obama." *African Studies Review* 53, no. 2 (September 2010): 3–5.
- Shaikhutdinov, Marat. "Central Asia in the Foreign Policy Strategy of Barack Obama's Administration: Results and Prospects." *American Foreign Policy Interests* 32, no. 2 (2010): 83–92.

- Sharp, Jeremy M. "Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations." CRS Report for Congress, September 2, 2009.
- . *US Foreign Aid to Israel*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 2009.
- Shepherd, Robin, ed. *The Bucharest Papers*. Washington, DC: German Marshall Fund of the United States, and London: Chatham House, 2008.
- Shikaki, Khalil. "The Peace Process, National Reconstruction and the Transition to Democracy in Palestine." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no. 2 (1996): 5–20.
- Shultz, George P. *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State*. New York: Scribner's, 1993.
- Sorenson, David, ed. *Interpreting the Modern Middle East: Essential Themes*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2010.
- St. John, Ronald Bruce. *Libya and the United States: Two Centuries of Strife*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.
- . "'Libya Is Not Iraq': Preemptive Strikes, WMD, and Diplomacy." *Middle East Journal* 58, no. 3 (2004): 386–402.
- Stork, Joe. "Israel as Strategic Asset." *Middle East Research and Information Project*, May 1982: 3–13.
- Suhrke, Astri. "Reconstruction as Modernisation: The 'Post-Conflict' Project in Afghanistan." *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 7 (2007): 1291–1308.
- . *When More Is Less: Aiding Statebuilding in Afghanistan*. Madrid: Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior, 2006.
- Tellis, Ashley J. *Reconciling with the Taliban? Toward an Alternative Grand Strategy in Afghanistan*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009.
- Theofilopoulou, Anna. *Western Sahara: The Failure of "Negotiations without Preconditions"*. "Peacebrief 22, U.S. Institute of Peace, April 23, 2010. <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/PB%2022%20Western%20Sahara%20the%20Failure%20of%20Negotiations%20w-out%20Preconditions.pdf>.
- Thompson, Christopher. "US/Africa: A Militarised Diplomacy." *Africa Report*, March 27, 2010.
- Traub, James. "Surge Incapacity." *Foreign Policy*, March 8, 2010.
- Turkmen, Fusun. "Turkish-American Relations: A Challenging Transition." *Turkish Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009): 109–129.
- Twinam, Joseph Wright. "America and the Gulf Arabs." *American-Arab Affairs* 26 (Fall 1988): 126–156.
- Ulgun, Sinan. "Preventing the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: What Role for Turkey?" Discussion Paper Series—2010/2. Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (2010).
- United Nations. *Corruption in Afghanistan: Bribery as Reported by the Victims*. Vienna: UN Office on Drugs and Crime, January 2010.



- Uslaner, Eric M. *Corruption, Inequality, and the Rule of Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Van der Walle, Nick. "US Policy towards Africa: The Bush Legacy and the Obama Administration." *African Affairs* 109, no. 434 (2009): 1–21.
- Volman, Daniel. *Obama, Africom, and U.S. Military Policy toward Africa*. Program of African Studies Working Paper no. 14. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 2009.
- Waldman, Matt. *The Sun in the Sky: The Relationship between Pakistan's ISI and Afghan Insurgents*. Discussion Paper no. 18, Crisis States Research Unit. London: London School of Economics and Political Science, June 2010.
- Waltz, Kenneth N. *Theory of International Politics*. New York: Random House, 1979.
- Warikoo, K., ed. *The Afghanistan Crisis: Issues and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Bhavana Books, 2002.
- Wehrey, Frederic, Dalia Dassa Kaye, Jessica Watkins, Jeffrey Martini, and Robert A. Guffey. *The Iraq Effect: The Middle East after the Iraq War*. Santa Monica, California: Rand Corporation, 2010.
- Weinbaum, Marvin G., and Jonathan B. Harder. "Pakistan's Afghan Policies and Their Consequences." *Contemporary South Asia* 16, no. 1 (2008): 25–38.
- . *Pakistan and Afghanistan: Resistance and Reconstruction*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994.
- Weiner, Tim. *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*. New York: Penguin, 2007.
- Williams, Paul. "Turkey's H2O Diplomacy in the Middle East." *Security Dialogue* 32, no. 1 (2001): 27–40.
- Williams, Paul A., and Ali Tekin. "The Iraq War, Turkey, and Renewed Caspian Energy Prospects." *Middle East Journal* 62, no. 3 (2008): 389–393.
- Wolf, Charlotte. *Garrison Community: A Study of an Overseas American Military Colony*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1969.
- World Bank. *The Crisis Hits Home—Stress-Testings Households in Europe and Central Asia*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2010.
- Wright, Steven. *The United States and Persian Gulf Security: The Foundations of the War on Terror*. Reading, England: Ithaca Press, 2007.
- Zoubir, Yahia H. "Algerian-Moroccan Relations and Their Impact on Maghrebi Integration." *Journal of North African Studies* 5, no. 3 (2001): 43–74.
- . "Les Etats-Unis dans l'espace Euro-Méditerranéen: Complémentarité, Rivalité et Réajustement d'influence." *Géoeconomie* 35 (2005): 65–83.
- . "Libya in US Foreign Policy: From Rogue State to Good Fellow?" *Third World Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2002): 31–53.

- Zoubir, Yahia H., and Haizam Amirah-Fernández. *North Africa: Politics, Region, and the Limits of Transformation*. London and New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Zunes, Stephen, and Jacob Mundy. *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism, and Conflict Irresolution*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010.



## CONTRIBUTORS

**Shahram Akbarzadeh** is professor of Asian politics (Middle East and Central Asia) and deputy director of the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies at the University of Melbourne, Australia. Professor Akbarzadeh has produced over 40 research papers and a number of books. Among them are *US Foreign Policy in the Middle East* (Routledge, 2008) and *Uzbekistan and the United States* (Zed, 2005).

**Luca Anceschi** is lecturer in international relations in the School of Social Sciences, La Trobe University, and research associate at the LTU Centre for Dialogue. He is a graduate of the University of Naples “L’Orientale” and of La Trobe University, and his principal areas of research include the politics and international relations of post-Soviet Central Asia. His recent publications include *Turkmenistan’s Foreign Policy: Positive Neutrality and the Consolidation of the Turkmen Regime* (Routledge, 2008).

**Charles W. Dunne** is a scholar with the Middle East Institute in Washington, D.C. A former Foreign Service officer, he was director for Iraq at the National Security Council and foreign policy adviser to the director for Strategic Plans and Policy at the Joint Staff in the Pentagon. He also served as a member of the secretary of state’s policy planning staff, where he was responsible for Iraq, the Middle East peace process, and regional democratization.

**Michele Dunne** is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and editor of the online journal the *Arab Reform Bulletin*. A former specialist at the U.S. Department of State and White House on Middle East affairs, she served in assignments including the National Security Council staff, the secretary of state’s policy planning staff, the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem, and the Department of State’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research. She holds a PhD in Arabic language

and literature from Georgetown University, where she is an adjunct professor.

**Touqir Hussain** is a former senior diplomat from Pakistan who has served as ambassador to Japan, Spain, and Brazil. He also held senior positions in the Pakistani Foreign Office, including that of additional foreign secretary heading the bureaus of the Middle East and of the Americas and Europe. From 1996 to 1998, he was the diplomatic adviser to the prime minister. Since moving to the United States in 2003, he has been teaching and conducting research. He was a senior fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace in 2004–2005 and subsequently has been a research fellow at George Washington University and an adjunct professor at Georgetown University and the University of Virginia. He has written op-eds for Pakistani and American newspapers and policy briefs for think tanks on issues relating to South Asia. He has been a guest speaker at several universities and also appeared on *PBS News Hour*.

**Christian Koch** is the director of international studies at the Gulf Research Center located in Dubai, UAE. Prior to joining the GRC, he worked as head of the Strategic Studies Section at the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, Abu Dhabi. Dr. Koch received his PhD from the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany, and also studied at the American University in Washington, D.C., and the University of South Carolina. He is the author of *Politische Entwicklung in Einem Arabischen Golfstaat: Die Rolle von Interessengruppen im Emirat Kuwait* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2000) and the editor of five books, including *Broadening the Horizon: European Union—Gulf Cooperation Council Relations and Security Issues* (Dubai: Gulf Research Center, 2008) and *Gulf Security in the Twenty-First Century* (Abu Dhabi: ECSSR, 1997—as coeditor). He regularly writes articles for the international media, including the *Financial Times*, *Handelsblatt*, *die Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and Jane's Sentinel Publications on Gulf issues; his media appearances include the BBC, Deutsche Welle, and Al-Arabiyya television. In January 2007, he joined the advisory board of the German Orient Foundation.

**Thomas W. Lippman**, former Middle East bureau chief of the *Washington Post*, is an adjunct senior fellow of the Council on Foreign Relations and an adjunct scholar at the Middle East Institute. He has been studying and writing about Middle East affairs for 35 years. A frequent guest and commentator on television in the United States

and in the Middle East, he is the author of five books about the Arab world, Islam, and U.S. foreign policy. His new book, *Saudi Arabia on the Edge: The Perilous Future of an American Ally*, is scheduled for publication in 2011 (Potomac).

**William Maley** assumed the position of foundation director of the Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy at the Australian National University in 2003. He taught for many years in the School of Politics, University College, University of New South Wales, Australian Defence Force Academy; and has served as a visiting professor at the Russian Diplomatic Academy, a visiting fellow at the Centre for the Study of Public Policy at the University of Strathclyde, and a visiting research fellow in the Refugee Studies Programme at Oxford University. Professor Maley is also a barrister of the High Court of Australia, a member of the executive committee of the Refugee Council of Australia, and a member of the Australian committee of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP). In 2002 he was appointed a member of the Order of Australia (AM).

**Ken Menkhaus** is professor of political science at Davidson College, where he has taught since 1991. He specializes in the Horn of Africa, focusing primarily on development, conflict analysis, peace building, and political Islam. He has published over 50 articles and chapters on Somalia and the Horn of Africa, including the monograph *Somalia: State Collapse and the Threat of Terrorism* (2004) and "Governance without Government in Somalia" in *International Security* (2007).

**Beverley Milton-Edwards** is professor of politics in the School of Politics, International Studies, and Philosophy at Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland. She is the author of a number of books, including recent publications such as *Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement* (Polity, 2010, with Stephen Farrell); *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, A People's War* (Routledge, 2009); and *Islam and Politics in the Contemporary World* (Polity, 2008). She has written numerous articles published in journals such as *Security Dialogue*, *Journal of Peacekeeping Studies*, *Third World Quarterly*, *Civil Wars*, *Journal of Global Change, Peace and Security*, and the *Journal of Democratization*.

**Paul A. Williams** is assistant professor in the Department of International Relations at Bilkent University in Ankara, Turkey. He holds a PhD in political science from the University of California, Los Angeles. Teaching interests include global environmental politics, international political economy, international relations theory, and

U.S. foreign policy. Publications center on international conflict and cooperation over natural resources, including (with coauthor Ali Tekin) *The Geo-Politics of the Euro-Asia Energy Complex: The European Union, Russia and Turkey* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

**Yahia H. Zoubir** is professor of international studies and director of research in geopolitics at Euromed Management, Marseille School of Management. In recent years, he was coeditor of *North Africa: Politics, Region, and the Limits of Transformation* (Routledge, 2008) and the editor of and main contributor to *North Africa in Transition—State, Society & Economic Transformation in the 1990s* (University Press of Florida, 1999). He has published numerous articles and book chapters on U.S. policy in North Africa. His publications have appeared in major American, Canadian, Middle Eastern, and European scholarly journals. He is currently conducting research on security issues in the Maghreb and Sahel regions.

# INDEX

- 9/11, *see* September 11
- Abbas, Mahmoud, 90, 93, 95,  
97–98, 100
- Afghanistan, 27, 57, 59, 92, 121,  
146, 163, 164, 173, 178–179,  
181, 183–184, 185, 187, 188,  
189–190, 195–211, 218–219,  
222–223, 225, 229–230, 238,  
248  
*see also* Afghanistan War,  
Afghanistan Invasion,  
Afghanistan-U.S. withdrawal
- Afghanistan War, 1, 3, 44, 138, 139,  
163, 178, 180–183, 184–187,  
190, 197–198, 200, 237
- Afghanistan Invasion, 82, 177, 211
- Afghanistan-U.S. withdrawal, 184
- Ahmadinejad, President Mahmoud,  
43, 62, 167, 171, 173
- Al Qaeda, 1, 8, 18–19, 34–37,  
107–108, 114, 121, 133–134,  
138–139, 141, 144–145,  
147–148, 150, 153, 177, 181,  
183, 185, 187, 190, 197, 202
- Al-Faisal, Prince Saud, 40, 57
- Al-Faisal, Prince Turki, 42, 63
- Algeria, 36, 108–113, 116–118,  
120–121, 123–124, 126
- Andijon Events, 220–222
- anti-terrorism, *see* counterterrorism
- Arab-Israeli conflict, 1, 7, 57, 58,  
62–63, 64, 65, 72, 76, 79, 82
- Arab-Israeli peace process, 63–64,  
72, 73, 75–6, 79–80
- Armenian Genocide, 238–239, 245,  
248
- assistance (from U.S.), 22, 73,  
74–77, 80–82, 86, 90, 93, 106,  
110, 112, 113–114, 123, 137,  
148–149, 152, 184, 219, 240,  
246
- Azerbaijan, 228, 244, 247
- Bekaa Valley, 243
- Biden, Joe, 7, 21, 63, 89, 100, 126,  
169
- Bin Laden, Osama, 3, 173, 177,  
197
- Bush Administration (George W.),  
5, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23,  
24, 27, 33, 35, 36, 49, 53, 54,  
55, 56, 59, 67, 72, 75, 78, 79,  
80–81, 90, 92–93, 95, 106–107,  
124, 125, 133, 134–135, 138,  
141, 150, 151, 153, 155, 163,  
165, 166, 168, 169, 172, 178,  
195, 197, 198–199, 200,  
207–208, 210, 217–218, 219,  
221, 224, 230, 246
- Bush, President George Sr., 12, 33,  
133, 137, 242
- Bush, President George W., 12,  
13, 14, 17, 18, 21, 23, 25, 31,  
32–35, 36–39, 41, 46–47,  
54–56, 57, 59, 63, 64, 67, 72,  
77, 80, 82, 91, 92–93, 95, 97,  
98, 105–106, 114, 115, 118,  
120, 123, 134, 138, 155, 162,  
166, 169, 172, 178, 182, 183,  
197, 199, 201, 217–222, 224,  
229, 231, 238, 242, 244, 246,  
247  
*see also* Bush Administration



- Central Intelligence Agency (CIA),  
13, 17, 20, 110, 113, 202
- China, 18, 25, 33, 35, 45–47, 122,  
126, 170, 172–173, 188, 222,  
227, 229, 231
- Christian, Coptic, 73
- Clinton Administration, 12–13,  
75, 125, 133, 137–138,  
243–246
- Clinton, Hillary, 39, 47, 61, 64,  
72, 83, 84, 86, 94, 119,  
124–125, 126, 148, 169,  
201, 203, 228
- Clinton, William J. (Bill), 12, 13,  
64, 72, 91, 92, 133, 243–246  
*see also* Clinton Administration
- Cold War, 18, 32, 74, 75, 90,  
107–108, 109, 110, 136–137,  
229, 239–242
- counterterrorism, 3, 11, 21, 77, 92,  
112, 126, 134, 138, 140,  
142–144, 146, 150, 152, 187,  
229
- Cyprus, 241, 246
- democracy, 4–6, 11–12, 15–17,  
19–20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 31–33,  
36, 72, 77, 79, 86, 106–107,  
119, 111, 115, 165, 180, 182,  
206–207, 208, 209, 230–231,  
249  
*see also* democracy promotion
- democracy promotion, 6, 15, 19,  
22–23, 35–36, 37, 38, 79,  
80–83, 85, 92, 100, 118, 119,  
126, 165–167, 221, 237
- Egypt, 3, 4–6, 12, 37–38, 48,  
71–86, 95, 98, 107, 110, 113,  
118, 119, 126
- Egyptian Uprising (2011), 71–72,  
80–86, 107–108, 118, 126
- Egyptian-U.S. relations, *see*  
U.S.-Egyptian relations
- Eizenstat, Stuart, 116–117
- Esfandiari, Haleh, 166–167
- failed state, 86, 121, 137
- Fatah, 43, 93, 96, 97
- G-20, 46
- gas, 42, 66, 113, 115, 117, 218,  
227–228, 244–245, 247–248
- Gazprom 228–229
- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC),  
41, 53–68
- GCC-U.S. relations, *see* U.S.-GCC  
relations
- globalization, 108, 111
- Green Movement, 167–168, 173
- Hamas, 5, 33, 41, 43, 72, 76, 79,  
93, 96–98, 101, 106, 248
- hard power, 90, 99, 101
- Hezb-e Islami, 196, 198, 203
- Hizbullah, 2, 33, 79, 99, 100, 161
- human rights, 12, 22, 28, 38,  
64–65, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82,  
84, 85, 106, 111, 113, 115,  
118–119, 125, 126, 137, 144,  
165–168, 217, 218, 220, 224,  
226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 245
- Hussein, Saddam, 3, 11, 19, 57, 62,  
85, 164, 238, 242, 243
- India, 177, 179, 181, 189, 191
- Inter Services Intelligence  
Directorate, 188–189
- International Atomic Energy  
Agency (IAEA), 48, 61, 83,  
162
- International Criminal Court  
(ICC), 248
- International Monetary Fund  
(IMF), 244
- Iran, 2, 5, 8, 13, 18–19, 22, 24,  
25, 27, 33, 34, 37–38, 39, 41,  
43, 44, 45, 47–49, 53, 54, 55,  
56, 57, 58, 59–62, 66, 73, 76,  
80, 95, 99–101, 161–173, 196,  
244–245, 248, 249
- Iran-U.S. relations, *see* U.S.-Iran  
relations

- Iran Democracy Fund, 166
- Iran Sanctions, 13, 59, 60, 162, 170, 172, 244–245, 249
- Iraq, 1, 3, 6, 11–26, 31, 33, 37, 38, 41–42, 43, 47, 53, 54, 55, 57, 62, 66, 76, 114, 123, 163–165, 198, 238, 242–243, 243
- ‘Surge’, 17–18, 19, 20
- U.S. invasion, 7, 14, 24, 33, 37, 56, 82, 198, 200, 207, 238, 245
- Iraq War, 1, 3, 14–17, 18–19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 53, 55, 120, 155, 178, 198, 200, 237, 245
- Iraq-U.S. relations, *see* U.S.-Iraq relations
- Iraq-U.S. withdrawal, 20–21, 66
- Islam/Islamism/Islamists/  
Islamization, 1, 5, 6, 36, 37, 85, 93, 97, 99, 100, 106, 113, 115, 121, 134, 136, 138, 140, 141, 143, 147, 148, 155, 180, 185, 209, 220, 224
- Islamic Courts Union (ICU), 140–141, 143, 144, 147
- Israel, 1–2, 3, 7, 8, 33, 43, 47, 48, 53, 62, 63–65, 74–75, 89–101, 111, 161, 170, 239, 243, 248–249
- Israel-Settlement, 1–2, 7, 8, 40–41, 63, 64, 89–90, 93, 94–95, 96, 97, 98–99
- Israeli-U.S. relations, *see* U.S.-Israeli relations
- Israel-Palestine conflict, 1, 7–8, 40–41, 89, 92, 94, 96, 97, 99, 100, 101
- Jihad, 37, 94, 99–100, 139, 140, 145, 146, 155, 180, 183, 191, 192
- Justice and Development Party (JDP), 238, 239, 241, 247, 248, 249
- Karzai, President Hamid, 163, 189, 195, 197, 200, 203, 205–206, 207, 209
- Kazakhstan, 219, 220, 221, 222, 225, 226, 227–228, 230, 244
- Kazakhstan-U.S. relations, *see* U.S.-Kazakhstan relations
- Khatami, President Seyed Mohammad, 2, 162–163
- Ki-Moon, Ban, 169
- King Abdullah—Peace initiative, 57, 64
- Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), 238, 239, 243, 246, 247
- Kyrgyzstan, 219, 221, 223, 224, 225–226, 229–230, 231
- Kyrgyzstani-U.S. relations, *see* U.S.-Kyrgyzstani relations
- Libya, 12, 73, 108, 109, 112, 114–116, 117, 120, 121, 123, 124, 126, 244
- Maghreb, 105–127
- Maghreb-U.S. relations, *see* U.S.-Maghrebi relations
- McChrystal, General Stanley A., 202, 203
- Middle East, 1–9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 24, 25, 31, 32, 38, 39, 43, 48, 54–55, 56, 62–65, 67–68, 72, 74, 75, 76, 77, 79, 81, 92, 94, 95, 99, 100, 106, 107, 116, 118, 119, 126, 161, 165, 167, 221, 237, 239
- Morocco, 2, 108, 109, 110–111, 112, 117–118, 120, 121, 123, 124, 125
- Mubarak regime, 4–5, 98
- Musharraf, President Pervez, 198–199
- Muslim Brotherhood, 5, 73, 77, 78, 84

- Nabucco, Nabucco Project, 229, 244, 247
- NATO, 7, 108, 184, 187, 190, 208, 209, 223, 237, 238, 239, 240–241, 249
- Nobel Peace Prize, 59
- Nour, Ayman, 4–5, 72, 76, 78–79
- nuclear capability, 13, 36, 43, 48, 53, 61, 62, 99, 161, 163, 168–171, 181, 249
- nuclear power, *see* nuclear capability
- nuclear weapons, 2, 12, 37, 47–49, 54, 59, 60, 61–63, 115, 177, 188, 240
- Obama Administration, 3, 6–7, 8, 12, 19, 20, 23, 26, 42, 43, 45, 47, 48, 49, 53, 55, 58, 61, 63, 66, 67, 72, 80, 81, 82–84, 85, 89, 95, 96, 97–99, 101, 107, 110–111, 112, 119, 121, 123, 124–126, 133–136, 142, 146, 147–151, 153, 155, 161, 162–163, 165, 167, 168, 169–173, 178, 182, 185, 186, 195, 203, 206, 209, 211, 217, 218, 221, 222–231, 239, 247, 248, 249
- Obama, President Barack, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 21, 31, 38, 53, 54, 55, 58–59, 62–63, 64, 67, 71, 81, 82, 89, 95, 98, 100, 105, 126, 135, 153, 161–162, 165, 167, 168–169, 171, 182–183, 187–188, 195, 200, 201, 205, 210, 228, 229, 247
- Cairo speech, 4, 5–6, 31, 35, 38, 58, 81, 82, 83, 94, 119, 165
- West Point Speech, 183, 187, 202, 206  
*see also* Obama Administration
- Oil, 3, 32, 34, 36, 42–43, 46, 58, 66, 113, 114–115, 117, 171, 218, 227–228, 243, 244, 247
- Operation Iraqi Freedom, 14
- Pakistan, 6, 8, 73, 164, 177–192, 196, 197, 198–199, 201, 202, 204, 209, 210, 223
- Pakistani Taliban (TTP), 182, 183
- Pakistani-U.S. relations, *see* U.S.-Pakistani relations
- Palestine, 41, 73, 106
- Petraeus, General David, 41, 44, 46–47, 49, 98, 100, 188, 190, 203
- Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), 76, 91, 93, 96
- Qaddafi, Muammar, (Gaddafi), 123
- Reagan, President Ronald, 196, 199, 244
- Rice, Condoleezza, 4, 5, 31, 78, 79, 115, 138, 220, 230
- Russia, 18, 25, 122, 169–170, 172–173, 218, 220, 222, 225, 228–229, 230, 244, 249
- Saudi Arabia, 2, 24, 31–49, 53, 56, 58, 63, 64, 66, 67, 73–74, 113, 118
- Saudi Arabia-U.S. relations, *see* U.S.-Saudi relations
- September 11 (9/11), 14, 33, 34, 76, 105, 106, 107, 108, 111, 112, 113, 115, 118, 120, 123, 125, 134, 138, 177, 180, 197, 210, 217, 230
- Shia, 1, 2, 24, 27, 33, 42, 164
- Six-Day War, 75
- soft power, 6, 7, 9, 90, 93, 98, 99, 101
- Somalia, 121, 133–156  
conflict / civil war, 137, 139, 143, 148–149  
piracy, 39, 134, 146–147, 150, 158
- Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), 114, 225, 240, 241

- Sunni, 1, 16, 18, 20, 24, 26, 37, 42, 62, 73
- Syria, 27, 43, 73, 74, 75, 76, 243, 248
- Tajikistan, 219, 221, 223, 224
- Taliban, 1, 2, 3, 6, 163, 177, 181, 183–184, 187, 188–189, 190, 195–196, 197, 198–199, 200, 202, 203, 204, 209–210, 221, 222, 229
- terrorism, 2, 14–15, 32–37, 39, 54, 66, 72, 76, 82, 86, 91–92, 97, 100, 105–106, 108–110, 112, 114–124, 134, 138, 144–146, 152–154, 156, 177–185, 187–188, 190–192, 197, 209, 218, 220, 222, 230, 238, 241, 243
- terrorist attacks, 14, 33, 35, 76, 82, 97, 105, 138, 156, 197, 238
- see also* counterterrorism, ‘war on terror’
- The White House, 44–45, 72, 79, 83, 92, 93, 113, 137, 218–219, 228, 229, 238
- Transitional Federal Government (TFG), 133, 136, 140, 142–144, 146, 147, 148–150, 154, 155
- Tunisia, 12, 84, 107, 108, 109, 112, 113–114, 117, 119–120, 121, 123, 126
- Turkey, 3, 7, 25, 72, 73, 228, 237–250
- Turkish-U.S. relations, *see* U.S.-Turco relations
- Turkmenistan, 219, 221, 225, 228–229, 244–245
- Turkmenistan-U.S. relations, *see* U.S.-Turkmenistani relations
- Twitter, 167
- U.S. Congress, 8, 23, 44, 47, 60, 77, 80, 111, 184, 186, 204, 211, 219, 238, 241, 245, 248
- U.S.-Afghanistan relations, 204–208, 210–211, 229–230
- U.S.-Egyptian relations, 72–80, 85
- U.S.-GCC relations, 54–58, 63, 66, 67–68
- U.S.-Iran relations, 161, 162, 167, 168, 170–171
- U.S.-Iraq relations, 11, 12, 21–2, 23, 24, 25
- U.S.-Iraq Withdrawal, 15, 18, 20–21, 23, 44, 53, 66
- U.S.-Israeli relations, 1, 7, 74, 89, 90, 91–92, 93, 95, 99, 100, 101
- U.S.-Kyrgyzstani relations, 225–226
- U.S.-Kazhakstani relations, 226
- U.S.-Maghrebi relations, 109–116, 120, 123
- U.S.-Pakistani relations, 6, 178, 179–182, 185, 186, 189, 190, 191
- U.S.-Turco relations, 238, 239–249
- U.S.-Turkmenistani relations, 228
- U.S.-Saudi relations, 33–34, 35, 36, 39, 43, 46, 49
- U.S.-Uzbek relations, 230–231
- UN Security Council, 7, 12, 13, 57, 84, 125, 162, 170, 173
- United Nations, 12–13, 16, 25, 43, 57, 60, 64, 111, 112, 124, 125, 137, 142, 143, 168–71, 197, 238, 243, 249
- USAID, 134, 145, 150–151, 152, 154
- Uzbek-U.S. relations, *see* U.S.-Uzbek relations
- Uzbekistan, 219–221, 230, 244
- ‘War on terror’, 2, 8, 14, 22, 54, 82, 92, 106, 112, 115, 122, 141, 145, 154, 177–185, 191, 218–222, 230
- see also* Terrorism

- Washington, 3, 4, 5, 9, 14, 23, 24,  
25, 32, 33, 34, 35, 41, 42, 43,  
44, 46, 47, 49, 53, 55, 58, 59,  
61–65, 67, 74, 76, 79, 80, 82,  
85, 97, 105, 107, 108, 109,  
110, 112, 113, 120, 121, 123,  
125, 137, 148, 164, 165, 168,  
170, 171–172, 173, 177, 180,  
181, 186–188, 189, 190, 191,  
196, 197, 198, 201, 204, 206,  
217, 218, 219, 220, 221,  
223, 226, 228–229,  
230–231, 249
- West Bank, 40, 93, 96–97, 98
- Western Sahara, 108–110, 111, 117,  
124, 125
- World Trade Organisation (WTO),  
227
- Yemen, 43, 73, 74, 138, 154