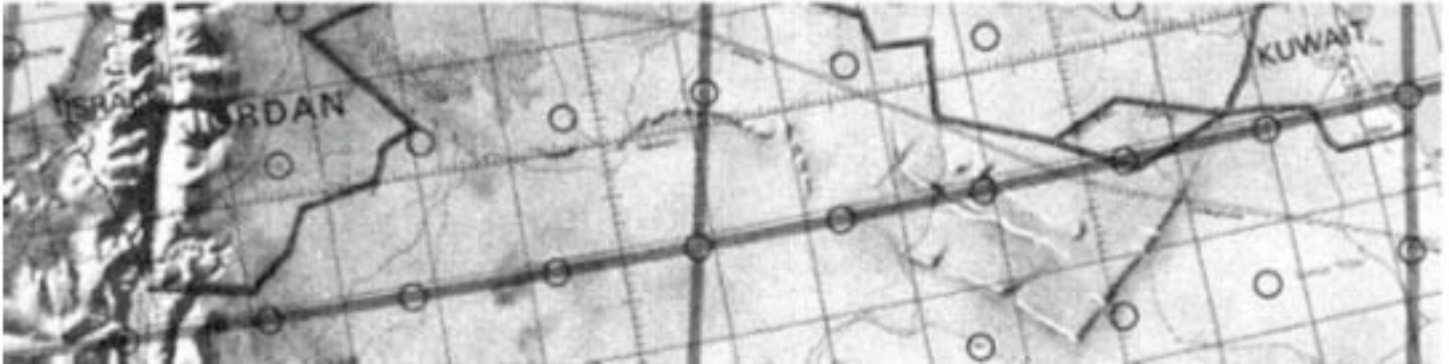


MIDDLE EAST PAPERS

Middle East Strategy at Harvard



The First 100 Days A MESH Roundtable

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The foreign policy teams of John McCain and Barack Obama...

are planning their Middle East strategy. MESH members have been asked these questions: What priorities should the next administration set for immediate attention in the Middle East? What should it put (or leave) on the back burner? Is there anything a new president should do or say right out of the gate? And if a president asked you to peer into your crystal ball and predict the next Middle East crisis likely to sideswipe him, what would your prediction be?

Daniel Byman :: The change in administration will offer no relief on the challenges of Iran's nuclear program, counter-insurgency and state-building in Iraq, and the need to revive Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and keep the Syria-Israel talks moving. Several possible threats also loom and may force themselves upon a new administration's agenda. In addition, the new administration should undertake several new initiatives to address issues neglected by the Bush administration.

One area of neglect is the challenge of Iraq's refugees. The over two million Iraqi refugees could destabilize several neighboring states and play a role in sustaining or increasing conflict in Iraq itself. Given the mismanagement of the occupation, the United States also has a moral responsibility to assist those devastated by the civil strife. Vastly increasing the number of refugees the United States itself accepts is one step, but so too is aiding

allies like Jordan that are bearing much of the weight of the refugee problem.

A vital area—and perhaps the most important medium-term issue—is the need for a new and comprehensive Pakistan policy. Pakistan is the nerve center for Al Qaeda and the insurgency in Afghanistan. In addition, with a new but weak democratic government in place, Pakistan’s relationship with the United States has fundamentally changed. In addition, the Bush administration often neglected policy toward Pakistan (as opposed to counter-terrorism operations related to Pakistan) despite its obvious importance to U.S. national security. A new administration should initiate a comprehensive review of Pakistan policy and ensure that it is implemented across the bureaucracies.

It is easy to say that a new crisis is likely to emerge from the Middle East, but those who offer specific predictions about the region usually look back at their prognostications with embarrassment. However, a number of new crises could easily arise from the Middle East region and be the first high-profile foreign policy test of a new administration. They include:

- A major terrorist attack on a U.S. facility overseas or even the U.S. homeland based out of tribal parts of Pakistan. The Bush administration reportedly has authorized U.S. forces to strike directly into Pakistan without Islamabad’s permission, but a major terrorist attack would put considerable pressure on the U.S.-Pakistan relationship and the new government there.
- A sustained Israeli operation in Gaza. Should rocket attacks from Gaza resume

to the point where they threaten Israeli cities outside the Sderot area, or should a rocket strike in that area kill a large number of Israelis, political pressure to respond militarily will be immense. Because Israeli leaders want to avoid a repeat of the Lebanon War in 2006 and worry that Hamas is using its control over Gaza to build up a Hezbollah-like military, they will face pressure to reoccupy parts of Gaza—a move that many U.S. allies around the world, and all U.S. Arab allies, would loudly criticize.

- The Awakening Councils rebel. Iraq has made progress in part because the United States has successfully partnered with a wide range of local Sunni tribal and militia groups—many of which oppose the Shi’a-dominated government of Nuri al-Maliki. As the Maliki government tries to consolidate power, it is seeking to disarm these groups. This effort may succeed, but it is also possible that some militias will not go gently and Baghdad will not be able to coerce them or, in so doing, fuels the sectarian fires that appear to be diminishing. The United States may find itself caught between its warring partners.

☀ *Daniel Byman is the director of Georgetown’s Security Studies Program and the Center for Peace and Security Studies as well as an associate professor in the School of Foreign Service.*



Mark T. Clark :: *Biggest issue.* The Iranian nuclear program will remain the single most important item on the new president's agenda. The window of opportunity to halt the Iranian quest for a nuclear bomb is closing rapidly. Within that window, the possibility that Israel may preempt the nascent Iranian program increases daily, and there is a growing disparity between the U.S. and Israeli perspectives on the need to strike key nodes of Iran's nuclear infrastructure. Iran may still be dissuadable diplomatically, but the time necessary for diplomacy to work may be rapidly drawing to a close. Depending on what the next president says at inauguration, the Israelis may feel compelled to act, with or without U.S. help.



Biggest problem. The single biggest problem for the United States will be its strategic inflexibility in the Middle East. Although U.S. "surge" forces in Iraq will be reduced soon, the need to spend time and attention on Afghanistan will continue to constrain U.S. military power. While a mini-surge in Afghanistan may help slow down neo-Taliban advances, it cannot solve some of the more intractable problems of governance in that country. We may need to remain in Afghanistan for some time to come.

Biggest unknown variable. The biggest unknown variable will be the actions—or inaction—of Hezbollah in Lebanon against Israel. Also, I cannot discount an Iranian-supported alliance between Hezbollah and Hamas starting a two-front war to deter—or

counter—a planned or executed Israeli strike on the Iranian nuclear program.

Biggest back burner issue. The "Israeli-Palestinian" dispute should remain on the back burner, at least until the Palestinians form a more coherent and peaceable government.

Biggest geopolitical surprise. Russia's traditional interest in the Middle East may be on the rise. After invading parts of Georgia, Russia may be more confident about its relative power, despite international opposition. Although only Syria supported the Russian action, Russia's willingness to sell missile and air defense programs to Iran and its opposition to stronger

sanctions may indicate a willingness to increase its footprint in the Middle East while circumscribing U.S. options. I wouldn't be surprised to see Russia and Iran announce some kind of entente cordiale, all in the name of "peace" and as a means to gain more leverage over other states in the region.

First speech. The next president should address the Iranian nuclear program and the need for greater U.S. strategic flexibility in the region. What he says, and how he says it, will set the tone for the next four years.

☀ *Mark T. Clark is professor of political science and director of the National Security Studies program at California State University, San Bernardino.*

Hillel Fradkin :: Under almost any plausible scenario, the new administration's first 100 days will be dominated by issues of the Greater Middle East. The two most obvious and somewhat related ones are the war in Iraq and the challenge, threat and question of Iran. But the issue of the war in Afghanistan and relations with Pakistan is coming more and more to the fore. This points to one striking and relatively new general feature of our engagement in the Middle East: the center of gravity of our concerns has shifted markedly eastward. The main thing which tends to push our concerns in the opposite direction is the aggressive efforts of Iran through proxies in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. As this has happened in a somewhat ad hoc way, it is unclear whether American strategy has been rethought to take this shift fully into account. This might be one of the first steps that a new administration might have to take.

As for Iraq, our primary concern will be the continued improvement in the security situation and progress on the political front—including the question of local and regional elections and their impact on the developing Iraqi political dynamic. This is not only important for our efforts in Iraq but in the way we are perceived in the region generally as a future actor.

Prior to the recent success—and partially as a result of American domestic politics—our resolve to stay engaged had come into question, encouraging foes and discouraging allies. This was destined to add to the difficulties of any new administration. This dynamic has now been partially interrupted by the decision that was taken to remain committed to Iraq and the success which that has produced.

But it will be important for either a McCain or Obama administration to affirm this recent success and declare American resolve to build upon it. This will be especially true of an Obama administration, which will otherwise buy itself several months of trouble as nations in the region test the limits of his and our resolve. Obama's recent statements seem to indicate a growing appreciation of this fact.

As urgent as our Iraqi concerns will be, our concerns with Iran may well be even more urgent. This is because the main existing approaches—the diplomatic initiative launched in 2003 and led by the EU 3 and the sanctions initiative at the UN—are now clearly at a dead end. At the same time—and despite the misleading NIE of November 2007—Iran has continued the vigorous pursuit of nuclear-weapon and related capacities such as advanced missile technology.

The new administration will have to address two questions: Should it entertain very much more forceful measures—including military action—to prevent Iran from achieving a nuclear weapon? If not, and if it is therefore necessary to accept the eventuality of an Iranian nuclear capacity, what will be the consequences for American interests in the region and how must it restructure its policies to address them? Given the dramatic change in the strategic situation that a nuclear Iran would effect, a reconsideration of our strategy and tactics will have to be especially wide-ranging. It may be advisable and even necessary for a new administration to announce a wholesale review of our policy towards Iran.

There are two particularly troubling possible developments which might present the new administration with its first “crises” in the region. The first would be a major initiative by Iran to stir up trouble through proxies—either on the Iraqi front or with regard to Lebanon and Israel. The other would concern Pakistan and could entail either a serious deterioration in Pakistani-U.S. relations or Pakistani civil disorder or both. It is likely in any event that the question of Pakistan will demand immediate attention.

The issue least likely to demand such attention is the Israeli-Palestinian question. This is at least partially a reflection of the shift in the center of gravity from the Persian Gulf eastward, as noted above.

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Robert O. Freedman :: When the new administration takes office on January 20, it will face four Middle Eastern challenges: (1) preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons; (2) restoring U.S. credibility in the Arab-Israeli conflict; (3) actively engaging Syria in the Syrian-Israeli peace process; and (4) diminishing U.S. dependence on energy imports from the volatile Middle East, as well as from other uncertain suppliers such as Nigeria and Venezuela.

1. Iran. A nuclear-armed Iran would pose a danger not only to the United States but to American allies in the Persian Gulf and to Israel. While diplomacy has been the preferred alternative for dealing with Iran, despite occasional bellicose verbiage from the

Bush administration, so far neither the European Union, nor the International Atomic Energy Agency, nor the UN Security Council has succeeded in getting the Iranian regime to stop its program of nuclear enrichment. Under the circumstances, the new U.S. administration should actively consider the military option, which would involve using U.S. air and missile assets to destroy Iranian nuclear installations. Destroying these installations would be a major political blow to rising Iranian political influence in the Middle East, as well as a significant blow to Iran’s military capabilities.

2. The Arab-Israeli conflict. Beginning in 2001, a number of illegal Jewish settlement outposts were established in the West Bank by Israeli settlers. Successive Israeli governments have vowed to remove the outposts, as part of the on-going Israeli-Palestinian peace process, but have failed to do so. The Bush administration has failed to pressure Israel to uproot these outposts, which are seen by most Arabs—and especially the Palestinians—as a process of expanding existing Israeli settlements on the West Bank and thereby seizing territory which the Palestinians want for their independent state. The new U.S. administration must pressure Israel to do what it has already promised to do—that is, uproot the outposts. If the post-Olmert Israeli government fails to do so, the new administration should consider financial sanctions against Israel until it complies. Such an action would do much to restore U.S. credibility in the Arab world while not affecting Israel’s basic security requirements.

3. Syria. In recent years, the Syrian regime of Bashar Asad has hinted that it was willing to

make peace with Israel, if Israel returned the Golan Heights and went back to the pre-1967 war boundaries. The question perplexing many Israelis is whether Syria is serious about peace, or whether it is just using its peace offer to improve ties with the United States. The Bush administration has chosen not to engage Syria in the peace talks, but the new administration should do so. Whether Syria would be willing to cut its ties to Hezbollah and Iran as part of a peace settlement is a very open question, but the new administration should test Syria to see if it is willing to do so. If Syria were to cut ties to Iran and Hezbollah, there would be a major transformation of the current Middle Eastern balance of power, both in America's favor and in Israel's. Consequently, whether or not the U.S. engagement with Syria turns out to be successful, it is definitely worth the effort.

4. *Energy.* Since the Arab oil embargo of 1973, U.S. dependence on foreign oil has jumped from one-third to two-thirds of total U.S. oil consumption of 20 million barrels per day, and much of this oil comes from undependable import sources such as Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Venezuela. Despite a good bit of verbiage, successive U.S. governments have done very little to reverse the trend of ever-increasing oil imports. There are a number of steps that the United States should take to reverse this negative trend—first and foremost, to consider energy issues as national security issues, rather than as primarily economic ones. Specific steps to be taken include the following:

- Double the fuel efficiency requirements for all cars built in the United States over a period of five years.

- Massively increase subsidies for solar and wind power projects.
- Upgrade the national electricity grid and build additional lines to link wind and solar power sites to population centers.
- Undertake a major effort to produce oil products from non-food sources such as switchgrass, and from non-vital food sources such as sugarcane (as Brazil does).
- Establish a crash program for the gasification and liquefaction of coal, America's most abundant energy source, with due respect to environmental concerns such as carbon. Such an effort should be coordinated with China, another country rich in coal, which is already surpassing the United States as the leading world polluter.

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Chuck Freilich ::

Mr. President,

See it through in Iraq. A relative success is within your grasp, with vital ramifications for U.S. policy throughout the region. Maintain a robust military presence for the long haul, but as troops are withdrawn, maintain strong economic and political involvement to help ensure that Iraq is a moderate, pro-American force in the region.

Engage rogues, but carry a big stick. Engagement need not deteriorate into appeasement; it is in your hands. You will get no-

where with the rogues without a stick, but a carrot is also needed.

Iran's nuclear program must be stopped. The only question is how: engagement if possible, military action if necessary. Make engagement one of your first initiatives, to see if Iran is incontrovertibly aggressive, but with a clear price tag. This will probably fail, but only after trying will you be able to take the tougher measures required. Try to get Russia on board by ending gratuitous friction over outdated policies such as NATO enlargement and the anti-missile system, but prepare the ground for major extra-UN sanctions. Make it clear to all that the United States will go it alone if they do not cooperate. If real sanctions fail—and time is short—impose a naval blockade. Discount the doomsayers who warn of a severe Iranian response to a blockade, let alone to an attack. Iran can inflict pain, but its options against the United States are limited.

Give Syria a chance. Decades of containment have failed because Syria was only interested in what the United States could not offer: the Golan. But Bashar may finally be seeking a rapprochement. Anything that can be done to weaken the Syria-Iran-Hezbollah axis should be pursued. Prepare for another round between Israel and Hezbollah.

Go slow on the Palestinian issue. Resist the advice of the “peace professionals” and old Washington hands to jump into the process. Bush stayed away for good reason: there is little the United States can do. Mahmoud Abbas is well-meaning but speaks for no one.



Try and help him postpone the elections in January and provide some tangible benefits to help maintain his rule, but prepare for a Hamas president and for internecine Palestinian violence and Palestinian-Israeli violence. If Binyamin Netanyahu is elected, forget major progress. If Tzipi Livni gets the brass ring, you definitely have with whom to work, which brings us back to the Palestinians' disarray. Be prepared

to focus on conflict management, not resolution.

Keep an eye on Egypt. The succession to Mubarak is likely during your first term. If neither his son nor a general from the junta takes over, Egypt could go Islamic. There is little the United States can do, but this would be a nightmare.

Strengthen ties with Turkey, which will have increasing importance for almost all U.S. interests in the region. Turkey is there for the losing, needlessly.

Democratization is good—selectively. Regional democratization is not going to happen. The United States cannot truly affect it, and it could undermine regimes in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. Pursue democratization wherever doable without adversely affecting vital U.S. interests, primarily in Iran and some small Gulf and Maghreb states.

☀ *Chuck Freilich was Israel's deputy national security adviser for foreign affairs, and is now a senior fellow at the Belfer Center, Harvard Kennedy School.*

Adam Garfinkle ::

Sir,

You will have a problem in and with the Middle East. That essence of the problem is simple to state: the Middle East does not exist.

We live at a time when causal connections between the region and the rest of world are more important than causal connections within it. This fact alone increases the usual level of uncertainty with which we must deal: Middle Eastern reality consists of more and different kinds of moving parts than it used to, and this puts added stress on a U.S. foreign policy decision structure not designed for such circumstances.

Three examples: Sources of and resources for Islamist terrorism flow back and forth among Europe, Southeast Asia and even Latin America as well as within the Middle East. The role of Middle Eastern oil and gas cannot be understood in isolation from broader pipeline geopolitics, global financial conditions and our own domestic policy choices. The Iranian nuclear challenge is a potential game-changer far beyond the Middle East, for it functions as a platform that a revanchist Russia can mount to bring countervailing pressure against the United States on a larger strategic canvas.

Meanwhile, linkages within the region are routinely exaggerated. The idea that solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the key to settling other Middle Eastern problems is widely believed, but wrong. The idea that whatever happens in Iraq will ramify might-

ily throughout the Arab world is widely believed, but overwrought.

You will be told you need an integrated strategy for the Middle East. Not so. You need a coherent statecraft (by definition, integrating foreign and domestic policy) for the world based on core U.S. interests. The Middle East is an important—but not necessarily *the* most important—component in that statecraft, but regional policies must always flow from national strategy, never the other way around.

That said, here's what to do (or avoid doing) in the 100 days after the Inauguration:

- Do not announce a “policy review.” This will communicate irresolution to determined adversaries and worried clients, both in and beyond the region.
- Avoid any optic of defeat in Iraq. The global consequences for our reputation would be devastating. That does not require maximizing U.S. military activity or too rapidly ending it; it does require talking about a morning for sovereign Iraq rather than an evening for the U.S. military mission.
- Hammer out in private with our allies trade and financial sanctions with real teeth against Iran in return for a pledge not to use force for at least a year. Say nothing in public, in light of tumultuous Iranian political circumstances. Let Iran propose engagement as the sanctions draw blood.
- Name a prestigious, politically shrewd Special Envoy for Arab-Israeli Affairs who understands the poor prospects for quick significant progress. This will mute the braying of many donkeys and mules,

get the portfolio off your desk, and purchase some equity with (and leverage against) several Arab states for later use.

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Josef Joffe :: It was always wrong to claim that the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, or even with all the Arabs, was the root of all evil in the Middle East. That clash was always one conflict among many, both within and between Arab/Muslim nations—between states and states, rulers and ruled, and sects and denominations. Since the rise of Iranian power in the aftermath of Iran’s war against Iraq (1980-88), the dominant regional conflict has again been over hegemony. Past claimants have been Egypt, Egypt-plus-Syria, and Saddam’s Iraq. Now it is Iran, pitted against the reigning hegemon, the United States, and its regional allies ranging from Israel to Saudi Arabia.

Iran’s hegemonic quest deserves the lion’s share of the next administration’s attention.

The aim is to contain and deter and possibly intimidate a power that has married its revolutionary ambitions to sudden oil wealth, and which is well-advanced on the road to nuclear missile-weapons. Whatever happens in this arena will affect America’s power and interests by at least an order of magnitude more than events unfolding between Gaza and Nablus. Indeed, the so-called “core” of

the Middle East conflict has shrunk *pari passu* with the enlargement of the Middle Eastern stage that now extends from the Levant via the Gulf to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

By itself, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has no strategic implications simply because neither side has any strategic option against the other. The Israelis cannot “destroy” Palestine, and vice versa. Over the decades, it has also become clearer that no Arab state is willing to send its boys to die for Jenin, let alone Haifa. Iran would like to acquire a strategic option against Israel, but its murderous desires have very little to do with imposing a two-state solution on Jerusalem. The point is rather to eliminate America’s most important regional pawn (well, make it “castle” and “rook”) from the chessboard. So, for the next administration, “it is the hegemony, stupid.”



Add to this a cold-eyed assessment of the Israeli-Palestinian issue. It may well be true that neither side is interested in a two-state solution. The Israelis will not repeat the “Gaza gambit”—unconditionally vacating Hamas- or Fatah-

controlled lands that are turned into a launching pad for rocket and terror attacks against Green-Line Israel. What goes for Gaza, goes triply for the West Bank. No sane government will leave the security situation between Tulkarem and Jericho in the hands of a Palestinian authority, no matter whether it is Fatah- or Hamas-dominated. There may also be a more charitable element in play here: No Palestinian authority acceptable to Israel will

want to forego the protection of the Israeli army.

Are the Palestinians truly interested in their own state? An affirmative answer is hardly a given. If statehood were their main business, the Palestinians would have turned Gaza into a proto-state between 1994 (when Arafat set up shop there) and 2005 (when Sharon vacated the Strip), and into a real state after the withdrawal. Instead, the Hamas game was not state building, but a test of wills and endurance, the object being to demonstrate that the Palestinians were (a) completely immune to deterrence and (b) willing to absorb any punishment the Israelis meted out to them, whether blockades, bombs or incursions. Entities that want to become states do not behave in this self-debilitating manner. Hence, we ought to conclude that statehood (rather than, say, honor, pride or dreams of final victory) is not the primary objective of the Palestinian powers that be. Nor are two states what Israelis long for day and night.

Whence two prescriptions follow for the next administration. One, pay homage to the irradicable theory according to which Palestine is the “core” of the conflict; engage in meetings, bilaterals, conferences; be an “honest broker.” But do not confuse motion with movement, given that neither Israel nor the Palestinians are pining away for two states. Second, keep in mind what the real issue is: the hegemonic ambitions of Iran. Talk to Iran, by all means, but keep piling up the powder and protect your alliances, especially with the strongest ally of them all, Israel. And do not expect too much from talking. Iran’s is a classic revolutionary foreign policy—like that of Napoleon, Stalin/Trotsky, the

Mussolinis and of course Hitler. Revolutionary regimes must be defanged or contained until the “break-up” or “mellowing” of their power; they do not lend themselves to the normal give-and-take of diplomacy. Read George F. Kennan’s “Mr. X” article; that’s the best one-sentence advice there is.

☀ *Josef Joffe, the Marc and Anita Abramowitz Fellow in International Relations at the Hoover Institution, is publisher-editor of the German weekly Die Zeit.*

Mark N. Katz :: In addition to the many problems in the Middle East that we already know about (Islamic extremism in several countries, the conflict in Iraq, the Iranian nuclear issue, the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, etc.), it will be important for the new administration to recognize that there is a larger, overarching problem affecting the region: the fragmentation of existing states along ethnic, sectarian, and regional lines.

It is well known that Iraq has fragmented into Sunni Arab, Shi’a Arab, and Kurdish sectors. But the forces of fragmentation are also present in other countries in the region. These include Kurds in Turkey; Azeris, Kurds, Baluchis and others in Iran; Pushtuns and Baluchis in Pakistan; Pushtuns and others in Afghanistan; southerners in Yemen seeking to undo the 1990 unification of North and South; and both southerners and Darfuris in Sudan. Minority rule by Alawites in Syria is resented by the Sunni majority there, and in Lebanon there is a clash for control over the state between the Shi’a minority on the one hand and the other minorities on the other. Looked upon in this light, the ongoing ten-

sion between Israelis and Palestinians is not exceptional, but normal for the Middle East.

By ending the Sunni minority dominance in Iraq, allowing the Shi'a majority to dominate the national government, and furthering Kurdish control over the country's north, the American-led intervention that began in 2003 has strengthened the forces of fragmentation in the Middle East. The United States, however, did not cause them to arise. Indeed, fragmentation in the Middle East is part of a larger global tide of fragmentation that began at the end of the Cold War. While successful secession or transitions from minority to majority rule were rare during the Cold War, the breakup of the Soviet Union into fifteen different states led the way to further secessions, including the breakup of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia, and of Kosovo from Serbia. Russia has acted forcefully to secure Abkhaz and South Ossetian secession from Georgia, but is vulnerable to secessionist forces itself in the North Caucasus. Indeed, secessionist forces are active in Europe, Asia, Africa, and even the Americas.

In Europe, both democratic governments and the European Union are attempting to defuse the demand for independence by granting autonomy and providing resources that regions would not enjoy if they became independent. In the Middle East, however, where both governments and secessionist movements tend to be authoritarian, violence has so far proven to be the method preferred by both sides in these struggles.

The potential impact on the rest of the world of conflict related to fragmentation in the

petroleum-rich Middle East is enormous. Nor will quelling it be easy. Even the presence of large numbers of American troops in Iraq could not prevent widespread inter-communal fighting in Iraq during the early years of the occupation (they have had more success lately). They obviously cannot do much about this problem in countries where they are not present.

What can be done? Supporting one side could well prove an opportunity for Al Qaeda and its affiliates to side with—and gain control over—the other. Promoting democracy and conflict resolution, though, will not work either if they lead to all-or-nothing referenda on secession that prompt the losing side to reject the results and continue fighting.

A solution that could work is to promote federalism as a means of giving those who support and those who oppose fragmentation part of what each wants. The deployment of peace-keeping forces may be essential for the achievement and maintenance of such solutions.

Dealing with the fragmentation of the Middle East is clearly not something that the next administration will be able to resolve within its first 100 days. Just acknowledging that fragmentation is a serious problem and beginning to seriously think about how to deal with it during this period, though, would help the next administration in formulating its overall Middle East policy.

 *Mark N. Katz is professor of government and politics at George Mason University.*

Walter Laqueur :: I remember countless position papers on every possible contingency written for new administrations. A few of them I wrote. I do not recall a single instance when use was made of them. New incumbents have their own agendas and limited attention span to absorb information and advice. And quite often they think they know better.

The major conflicts that seem most likely to occur are insoluble in present circumstances. There should be deterrence; the absence of deterrence invites aggression. But deterrence may not work. A change in this respect may occur but only after a major disaster has taken place affecting the major powers, when greater readiness to collaborate can be expected. This refers for instance to failed states which should be (and I think eventually will be) of equal concern to China, India and Russia. It refers to future proliferation and the use of weapons of mass destruction by states or terrorist groups. As long as they have not been used, there will not be sufficient readiness to cooperate on the international level nor sufficient understanding within societies.

With all this there ought to be intensive negotiations with friends and enemies alike. Unless this is done there will be recriminations about missed opportunities for the next hundred years. But there ought to be no illusions about the effectiveness of diplomacy in the contemporary world. The idea that the United



Nations or our European allies or a new alliance of democratic states could be of great help facing a major crisis is fanciful—to put it mildly.

It will be more profitable to plan for the post-disaster age than for the very near future. However, governments are seldom willing to invest much thought in thinking how to confront threats that might (or might not) occur in a number of years. Some Russian hotheads have mentioned the possibility of war with America in a decade from now. But this

should not be taken too seriously. A new period of containment will probably be necessary. But having ignored (or underrated) Russia for a long time, there is now the danger that the threat will be overrated. It is a colossus on a base of oil and gas. It will recover some of its influence in the countries that once were part of the Soviet Union (and to some extent in the former “People’s democracies”). Its moment of glory is likely to be short.

One issue which ought to have top priority is reducing the dependence on imported oil and finding new sources of energy. This is the Achilles’ heel not only of the United States but of Europe and the developing countries. Technological breakthroughs are possible provided the enormous effort needed will be undertaken. Both parties agree in principle on the necessity to do this, but will they live up to their promise? It will always be difficult to find the huge funds needed and to mobilize

science and technology. But this is the only way to remedy a fatal weakness, and the beneficiaries will be not only the United States but also many other countries. If America succeeds in this huge enterprise, it will find it much easier to gain support in world affairs.

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Gal Luft :: During the first term of the next president, some 68 million new cars will roll onto America's roads. In China, the world's fastest growing auto market, sales of new cars will surpass those in the United States as early as 2015, and in India millions of \$3,000 Tata Nano cars will soon begin to flood the bustling streets of Calcutta and Mumbai. Most of these cars will have a street life of roughly 15 years and (barring action by those countries' leadership) almost all of them will be able to run on nothing but petroleum, locking our future to OPEC and its whims for decades to come. In the words of the International Energy Agency: "We are ending up with 95 percent of the world relying for its economic well being on decisions made by five or six countries in the Middle East."

Avoiding such an outcome should be a top priority for the next administration. Unfortunately, despite the broad agreement by both presidential candidates on the urgent need to reduce petroleum dependence, they both focus on solutions that are politically contentious (like domestic drilling and increasing mandatory fuel efficiency standards) and that are by and large tactical rather than strategic. The reality is that neither efforts to expand

petroleum supply nor those to crimp petroleum demand will be enough to materially address America's strategic vulnerability. Such solutions do not address the roots of our energy vulnerability: oil's monopoly in the global transportation sector—almost all of the world's cars, trucks, ships and planes can run on nothing but petroleum—and the stranglehold of OPEC over the consuming nations' economies.

This cartel, which owns 78 percent of global reserves, produces today about as much oil as it did thirty years, despite the fact that the global economy and non-OPEC production have doubled over the same period. Policies that perpetuate the petroleum standard, doing nothing to address the lack of transportation fuel choice, would therefore guarantee a



worsening future dependence on the oil cartel as the relative share of non-OPEC oil reserves and production further shrinks.

The new president should therefore declare a strategic goal to break the petroleum standard and replace it with an Open Fuel Standard. This would require that every automobile sold in the United States (and, by extension, throughout the world, since no automaker would give up on the U.S. market) must be able to run on non-petroleum fuels in addition to gasoline. Flexible fuel cars (which cost automakers \$100 extra to make and can run on any combination of alcohol and gasoline), electric cars and plug-in hybrids cars (which enable us to use made-in-America electricity) are only some of the solutions at

hand. Only through competition at the pump (and the socket) can we drive down the price of oil, reduce its strategic value and curb the transfer of wealth from oil importing countries to OPEC. To bring those solutions to the marketplace in mass would require some presidential signatures, and like everything in life there is some cost involved. But christening more aircraft carriers than would otherwise be needed isn't cheap either.

☀ *Gal Luft is executive director of the Institute for the Analysis of Global Security (IAGS) a think tank focused on energy security.*

Jacqueline Newmyer :: The next president's foreign policy should be attentive to the ways in which the balance of global economic and military power has tilted toward Asia. To the extent that the Bush administration has been preoccupied with Central Asia and the Middle East since 9/11, an eastward shift in our foreign policy focus may be warranted. That said, the new administration should keep three points in mind as it crafts a Middle East agenda:

1. As the United States draws down its forces in Iraq (while renewing attention to Afghanistan), other external powers with strategic interests in the region are likely to perceive a vacuum to fill. For instance, China can be expected to continue to expand its ties in the Middle East by means of investments and agreements in Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. The United States may want to try to prevent any other single outside power from exercising undue influence. Options would include allowing India to develop better relations with Iran; encouraging Indian, Korean, and

Japanese development of Iraq; and maintaining naval and air forces in the region.

2. The U.S.-India nuclear agreement is likely to have follow-on effects in the Gulf, where India has traditionally had strong ties. New Delhi will have incentives to transfer technology received from the United States. If American know-how is going to spread, it would be best for Washington to try to shape that process and build capital that might prove useful in the event of a future Middle East conflagration or crisis.
3. Whether John McCain or Barack Obama prevails, the United States will be led by a president with a compelling biography and personal appeal. Such a commander in chief creates a potential competitive advantage in executive diplomacy for the United States, relative to China and other Asian powers, in a region with a tradition of charismatic leadership and around the world. At least at the beginning of the first 100 days, the new occupant of the White House will project an image of U.S. strength, based on a record of self-sacrifice and resolve or a demonstration of the American electorate's liberal tolerance and openness. Both kinds of strength have their uses in outreach to strategic interlocutors. After a campaign that seems poised to revolve around domestic issues, President McCain or Obama would do well to exploit this advantage by visiting allies with interests in the Middle East early in his term.

☀ *Jacqueline Newmyer is president and chief executive officer of Long Term Strategy Group, LLC, a defense consultancy.*

Stephen Peter Rosen :: There are a number of ways in which we can think about the president's agenda during his first 100 days. My suggestions reflect the belief that the new president will have essentially no staff in place, precious little knowledge of the ongoing work of the permanent bureaucracy, and not enough time to have developed a long-term strategy. As a result, an agenda for the first 100 days should address an urgent problem in the international environment, and should make use of the president's political capital at home in order to undertake necessary but difficult initiatives.

Most issues in the Middle East are not amenable to bold initiatives. The Arab-Israeli problem is not a problem, but a more or less permanent condition. Managing Iran will call for the slow and quiet development of American and allied military capabilities in the region, and new nuclear guarantees. Iraq and Afghanistan are problems for the long haul, both militarily and economically. Limiting the growth of Chinese influence in the region is a basic strategic goal, which presidential diplomacy can assist, as Jacqueline Newmyer points out.

But the destabilization of Pakistan could occur quickly and might already be underway before the new president is sworn in. There is a generation of Pakistani Army officers who came of professional age in the 1990s, who remember the United States walking away from Afghanistan and abandoning Pakistan. They are reported to be more Islamist than their elders. The frontier province in the



north of Pakistan is the current home of Al Qaeda because Al Qaeda is safe there from the Pakistani Army. No Pakistani officer, old or young, was willing to fire on Pakistani civilians in the rioting earlier this year. The expectation, valid for 60 years, that the Pakistani Army will be able to hold the country together, is no longer supportable.

The American president-elect should begin private discussions with India, Israel, and China about what those countries would do in the event of a civil war in Pakistan that splits the Pakistani Army. This discussion would focus on how to contain the effects of the war within Pakistan, and how to ensure control of Pakistani nuclear weapons. The president-elect must not only ask the American military to present their contingency plans for such an event, but become deeply involved in shaping them. Homeland security must prepare for Pakistani nuclear weapons that are suddenly not under verifiable control. History, recent and old, confirms that absent a process that educates both political leaders and military officers about their often conflicting perspectives and needs, military plans will fail.

This is a problem which can benefit from timely preparation, in the days before and during the first 100 days of the next president.

✻ *Stephen Peter Rosen is Beton Michael Kaneb Professor of National Security and Military Affairs and director of the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University.*

Philip Carl Salzman :: The new administration does not have the luxury of a blank slate. American policies, resources, and commitments have already filled up most of the space. Therefore...

Accept the fact that America's main investment and hope is Iraq, a country of central importance to the Middle East. Stability and example in Iraq would not only be the fulfillment of past American efforts, but the best hope for future political and economic progress in the Middle East. A strong Iraq, friendly to the United States, would be a powerful influence and counter to Iran and Syria.

Avoid trying to be the hero who finally solves what no one else has been able to solve in the sixty years of ongoing efforts: the Palestinian problem. All previous attempts have seen the situation go from bad to worse. Minimizing the worse possibilities is the most realistic course. In any case, the Palestinian problem, central to ideological discourse in the Middle East, is in fact a minor problem of a minor population.

Afghanistan is a frontier fight, not critical to the Middle East—however important it may be to the prestige of America and the West, now that they have committed to making it into a real state and civil society. The project must be pursued, and pursued vigorously, but not at the expense of the more important commitment to the central Middle East.

Look to hitherto peripheral players, Russia and India, who may increasingly contribute to future developments in the Middle East, Russia in a negative way, and India poten-

tially in a constructive way. Both are giants on the borders of the Middle East, and both are feeling their oats and itching to benefit from their weight. The new administration must find ways of discouraging Russia and encouraging India.

✻ *Philip Carl Salzman is professor of anthropology at McGill University.*

Michael Young :: A priority of any new administration will be to take a pill against a rampant disease afflicting the Middle East policy community: engagement-itis. Everybody today advocates engagement: of Iran; of Syria; of Hamas; of whatever the Bush administration failed to engage. But no one seems to have clearly defined how engagement should happen and what it must bring about—neither the wonks of the campaigns nor the think tank mavens dying to be offered a policy position.

Depending on who the United States engages, the calculations will differ. Talking to Iran offers different gains than talking to Syria, for example. An American opening to Tehran may be inevitable in the coming months, because the United States wants to avoid a military confrontation in the region over Iran's nuclear program—whether Washington or Israel does the bombing. The next administration will also need Iranian cooperation in Afghanistan, which will emerge as a battleground in the coming years.

However, for the United States to successfully engage Iran, Washington will need leverage. That means consolidating its gains in Iraq while downgrading its military presence and getting the Europeans and Russia on

board in imposing further sanctions on Iran. A rather tall order. Whether the United States wants to attack Iranian nuclear facilities or not, not having leverage over Iran elsewhere may make more likely the administration's resorting to the military threat to compensate—belying the claim that engagement will necessarily calm tensions in the region.

One source of leverage over Iran is to weaken its ally Syria. There has been an argument making the rounds that it is time to talk to the regime of Bashar Asad. But talk to Asad about what? The engagers first suggested the United States should try this to break Syria off from Iran, and by extension

from Hezbollah and Hamas. But then Asad made clear he wouldn't break with anybody. Why should he? His dubious relationships are what bring everyone to his doorstep, hat in hand.

So the engagers backtracked and suggested it was a good idea to engage Syria because this might advance Syrian-Israeli peace. But Asad again made plain that his priority in talking to Israel was to normalize relations with the United States and break Syria out of its isolation. And if Asad does that, why should he split with Iran if this was never an American precondition?

Iran will be at the heart of the administration's problems in the coming year, but Syria will be the Iranian Achilles' heel that everyone ignores. If the screws are tightened on Syria, Iran could be denied a useful ally in the Levant. But is that going to happen? No. So don't be surprised if Iran, Syria, and Israel, but also Saudi Arabia and Egypt, as they find themselves having to deal with a United States eager to engage but with little leverage or lucid ideas on how to do so, begin manipulating the dynamics of the one place that serves as everyone's default game board in the region: Lebanon.

☀ *Michael Young is opinion page editor of the Daily Star newspaper in Beirut, Lebanon, where he writes a weekly column.*



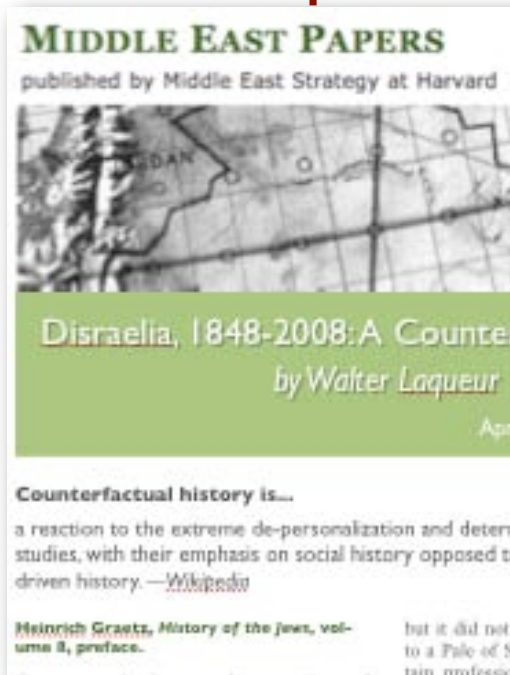
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