

*Proceedings of the 2006 Soref Symposium*

# Dangerous Ambitions: The Challenges of Iran and Hamas

MAY 11–12, 2006





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THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY  
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### EDITOR'S NOTE

These conference proceedings include summaries of presentations and panel discussions. The summaries should not be cited as actual transcripts of speaker remarks. The presentation made by keynote speaker Undersecretary of State R. Nicholas Burns is included as an edited transcript and may be cited as such.



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# Preface

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IN THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST, the United States is currently engaged in three wars: in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and against al-Qaeda and its affiliate organizations. As serious as those conflicts are, they do not constitute the sum of challenges facing America in the region. Indeed, two additional challenges—from Iran and from the new Hamas-led Palestinian Authority—pose particularly serious threats to U.S. interests and acute dilemmas for Washington and its allies.

In Iran, the most radical leadership since the early days of Khomeini's Islamic revolution has not only eviscerated the reformist movement and clamped down on all forms of dissent, but also adopted brinkmanship as a strategy to gain influence both in Iran's immediate neighborhood and within Muslim societies around the world. Iran's threat to annihilate a member state of the United Nations, Israel, and its pursuit of nuclear ambitions in the face of universal condemnation—even rejecting generous offers of compensation for policy modification—are clear examples of this strategy. How to stop Iran—that is, whether to do so by compelling a change in policy or by triggering a change in regime—is an urgent concern.

In the Arab-Israeli arena, the rise of Hamas opens the way for ambitions of a different sort—the opportunity for radical Islamist rejectionists to use the instruments created by past peace accords (such as the Palestinian Authority itself) to advance their own nefarious agenda. That Hamas rode to power via a popular election blessed by Washington and acceded to by Israel compounds the complexities of the challenge posed by the new Palestinian government.

The dangerous ambitions of Iran and Hamas constitute direct threats to longstanding interests of the United States and its allies.



■ Robert Satloff is executive director of *The Washington Institute* and author of *Among the Righteous: Lost Stories from the Holocaust's Long Reach into Arab Lands* (forthcoming in 2006 from *PublicAffairs*).

To discuss these threats, The Washington Institute convened its annual Soref Symposium in May 2006, bringing together experts from America and abroad to define appropriate strategies and tactics. Hopefully, these proceedings—which include an edited transcript of remarks delivered by one distinguished participant and summaries of remarks by several others—will contribute to the dialogue both in and outside of Washington.

Robert Satloff  
*Executive Director*

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# The Speakers

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**Graham Allison** is founding dean of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, where he directs the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. Previously, he served as special advisor to the secretary of defense in the Reagan administration and as assistant secretary of defense in the first Clinton administration. He is author of *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (1999) and *Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe* (2004).

**Amjad Atallah** is founder and president of Strategic Assessments Initiative (SAI). Previously, he advised the Palestinian Authority in negotiations with Israel, coordinating Palestinian cooperation with the Mitchell Commission and with the missions of General Anthony Zinni and Secretary of State Colin Powell. He was also heavily involved in discussions regarding the Quartet Roadmap to Israeli-Palestinian peace. His publications include contributions to SAI's report on the Palestinian security forces, *Planning Considerations for International Involvement in the Palestinian Security Sector*.

**R. Nicholas Burns**, a career foreign service officer, is undersecretary of state for political affairs, the State Department's third-ranking official. Previously, he served as the U.S. permanent representative to NATO, as ambassador to Greece, and as State Department spokesman. From 1990 to 1995, he served on the National Security Council staff at the White House.

**Richard Haass** has served as president of the Council on Foreign Relations since July 2003. Previously, he served in the George W. Bush administration as the State Department's director of policy planning, and in the George H. W. Bush administration as special assistant to the president and senior director for Near East and South Asian affairs on the National Security Council staff. He is the author of ten books on American foreign policy, including *The Opportunity: America's Moment to Alter History's Course* (2005).

**David Makovsky** is a senior fellow and director of the Project on the Middle East Peace Process at The Washington Institute. He has published widely on Israeli-Palestinian affairs, including the newly released Institute Policy Focus *Olmert's Unilateral Option: An Early Assessment* as well as past Institute monographs *Engagement through Disengagement: Gaza and the Potential for Renewed Israeli-Palestinian Peacemaking* (2005) and *A Defensible Fence: Fighting Terror and Enabling a Two-State Solution* (2004). In addition, he is an adjunct lecturer on Middle East studies at Johns Hopkins University's Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies.

**Dan Meridor** is one of Israel's most widely respected public officials and strategic thinkers. His three decades in public life include service as minister of finance, minister of justice, and minister responsible for strategic planning. He also served in the Knesset from 1988 to 2003, representing the Likud and Center Parties and eventually becoming chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

**Lt. Gen. Moshe Yaalon (ret.)**, The Washington Institute's distinguished military fellow, was the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) chief of staff from 2002 to 2005. Previously, he served as IDF deputy chief of staff, as commanding officer responsible for the West Bank, as director of military intelligence, and as commander of an armored division.



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# Michael Stein Address on U.S. Middle East Policy



# U.S. Policy toward Iran

*R. Nicholas Burns*

EDITED TRANSCRIPT

I WANT TO PRESENT some thoughts about the way we should look at modern Iran, the threat it poses to the United States, what we can do as Americans to confront that threat, and what your government is doing and should be doing along those lines.

First a point about the administration of President Bush and Vice President Cheney and the work of Secretary Rice as we confront the world. I served with Ambassador Dennis Ross for many years. Both of us served in the Reagan administration, and when I was serving in Jerusalem as the American consulate general, we interacted frequently when he would visit the region. We also served together in the administration of President George H. W. Bush, and in President Clinton's administration. It is striking to me to reflect back on those days and what concerned American policymakers and where issues ranked on the agenda versus today. I spent the last eight years—before coming back a year ago to take my current job—in Europe as ambassador to NATO, and before then, ambassador to Greece. And I thought the world after those eight years was all about Europe. When I came back to Washington, I saw an administration—and, I think, a city and a Congress—focused in a very different direction as we looked around the world.

Europe is important and is always going to be important, indeed vital to the United States, because that is where so many of our allies are, in NATO and in the European Union. Yet, if you ten years ago would have asked Warren Christopher, then our secretary of state, his day would have been filled with appointments with Europeans. And his agenda was focused on the end of the Cold War, of course, and the wars in the Balkans, our successful intervention in Bosnia a few months before that time, and, looking ahead, the incipient crisis in Kosovo.

And if you fast-forward from ten years ago to today, you look at Secretary Condoleezza Rice's schedule, it is filled with appointments and issues and individuals that are all about the greater Middle East. Because American national interests now are focused on that region, because that is where our interests are at stake. And that is where the truly vital and



■ *R. Nicholas Burns is undersecretary of state for political affairs, the State Department's third-ranking official. Previously, he served as U.S. permanent representative to NATO.*

“We have a generational challenge, and that is to help plant the seeds of democracy, reform, and human rights throughout the Middle East.”

forbidding challenges are to American security.

You think about the agenda we have in the greater Middle East that President Bush has articulated over the last five years. We have the war in Iraq and the aftermath of that war. We have our attempt, and our mission, which is to support the Iraqi government, particularly this new Iraqi government that is just now taking office, to help it stand up, to help it represent itself in the world, to deal with the security challenges at home, to ask our friends in the Arab world to support this government financially and politically, and to tell our friends all around the world—and I see a fair number of diplomats from European countries and South Asian countries here—it is now time to stand up and support that Iraqi government. And as the president has made abundantly clear, we are going to stay in Iraq, and we are going to complete the job that he has asked us to do, and that we all know we have to do to defend American interests in that part of the world.

Add to that the fact that we have a major obligation to continue to be the best possible friend we can be to the state of Israel, and to help Israel negotiate now with a very difficult partner in the Palestinian Authority, and to help make sure that the United States is doing what it has to do to support the Palestinian people through the provision of humanitarian and economic aid but not through Hamas, and not to do it in such a way that in any way, shape, or form could build up Hamas. And that is an important obligation that Secretary Rice was working on just this week in New York when she met with her Quartet partners at the Security Council.

And if you think about our broader objectives, we have a generational challenge, and that is to help plant the seeds of democracy and of reform and of human rights throughout the Arab world and throughout the Middle East. None of us are filled with illusions that that job is easy. In fact, it is quite difficult. But all of us understand that as Americans, we have to represent our core beliefs in our foreign policy, and one must do that not just in select parts of the world, like Europe, but in parts of the world where those beliefs are often under challenge. But because we know they are right and correct, we have that obligation and we have that historic opportunity to try to represent democracy and freedom and human rights on a regional basis. And that is what President Bush said in his second inaugural address, and that is what he has given us a charge to do.

I also just wanted to say, because we have the deputy chief of mission Ambassador Jassal of India here, we have new strategic opportunities in the world looking a little bit further east. And I think one of the largest and most important strategic objectives of the president’s foreign policy is to seek this new strategic partnership with India. The president was there six weeks ago. He has articulated a vision of a global partnership between our two countries. We have put in a very important civil nuclear agreement before Congress, and Ambassador Jassal and I have spent a lot of our personal time in the last six weeks looking at that issue and urging Congress to approve this. But we have a major opportunity for the United States to



reinforce our strategic position in South Asia through our new partnership with India, and of course through our continuing friendship and support for Pakistan as it wages its very difficult war against the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

I could go on and talk about all that we are doing in East Asia, which of course is fundamentally vital to our interests—the newfound American interest as a national security concern in looking at Africa, the problems of Darfur, for example. But I just wanted to say at the beginning of this, we look at the problem of Iran and the challenge of Iran through a different prism in American foreign policy, a focus that is very much centered on the part of the world where our ally and friend, Israel, and our friends and partners Egypt and Saudi Arabia and other countries live. And it's important I think to draw this larger framework around that regional policy. Right now there is no greater challenge to the United States than to confront this unique threat from the Iranian government, and particularly from the new and radical regime of President Ahmadinejad.

We think of it in three ways. There is the challenge that Iran is developing, without any question, a nuclear weapons capability. Success in that venture would be a direct challenge to all that we need to accomplish in the Middle East, to our security and the security of our friends and allies in the greater Middle East region.

There is the challenge of terrorism, and a lot of us who have served in the U.S. government since the late '70s and early '80s remember that it was Iran that unleashed this wave of terrorism against the United States beginning in the early 1980s in Lebanon. And it has not ceased since; Iran continues to be the central banker of many of the major terrorist groups that are directly confronting our country, our soldiers, our diplomats, and our citizens, as well as Israel, Lebanon, and other countries that want to live in peace in the Middle East.

And finally, there is the challenge of democracy or the lack of democracy and freedom in Iran itself, and the need for the United States and our European allies and other countries to be engaged as best we can in a very difficult environment to help support those in Iran who believe that the future of Iran should be a democratic future.

This is a quite daunting agenda for a country with which we have the most unusual relationship in the world. It is the only country with which we effectively have no communications. We haven't had an embassy or any military officials in Iran since 1979, 1980. And you all know why. There are very few American citizens living or working in Iran. It is a country with which we have been out of touch for a quarter of a century. And so imagine trying to craft, as the Reagan administration did and every administration since, a policy toward this country with which we have this unique relationship—no effective communication.

We start with the nuclear issue. And we start with the proposition that it is absolutely contrary to American interests to see Iran acquire a

“It is absolutely contrary to American interests to see Iran acquire a nuclear weapons capability.”

“Iran does not appear to be listening to what the international community is saying.”

nuclear weapons capability. And we are determined, as the vice president has said, and as the president has said, to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. And what we have decided to do, what we’ve tried to do over the last year, is to construct a major international coalition that would unite around that objective, and that would send a unified and clear message to the Iranian government that it has got to suspend its current enrichment programs at Natanz. It has to return to negotiations with the European Union 3 countries, and it has to abide by the obligations that it itself has asserted it should abide by but does not: of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and of the United Nations Security Council.

Until fourteen months ago, the United States had been very far removed from the international diplomacy concerning Iran. After President Bush’s trip to NATO and to Germany in February of 2005, after his discussions with the French and German and British leadership, he became convinced that we had to put our diplomatic weight behind these negotiations—not that we would be directly involved, not that we would be at the table, but that we would try to help, as best we could, Germany and the United Kingdom and France to negotiate effectively with the Iranian government. And from March 11, 2005, until August of 2005, we did so. I was given the opportunity by Secretary Rice to be the liaison with the European 3. I made eleven trips to Europe in a six-month time span to try to help them invigorate their negotiating position and to support what they were trying to do with the Iranian government.

But then a fundamental event occurred: the elections in Iran, the inauguration on August 4 of last summer of President Ahmadinejad, and the fact that he and his government then unilaterally walked out of those negotiations and left the European 3 after two-and-a-half years of inclusive discussions. And so in the autumn of last year, we decided that we could not stop our efforts to try to achieve a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear problem. We began to talk to the Russian government, the Chinese government, the Indian government, and others about forming a major coalition that would have two objectives: to isolate the Iranians diplomatically on this issue, and to begin to use much more effectively the institutions of the IAEA and the United Nations Security Council to place that kind of direct pressure on the Iranian government. And that is what we did.

The Russian government stood up in October of last year and offered Iran an exit strategy, a large exit door. It said that the international community could not abide the maintenance or expansion of nuclear fuel cycle activities in the territory of Iran—enrichment and reprocessing—because that might lead to the production and the scientific and technological capacity of Iran to produce fissile material and nuclear warheads. But Russia said, “We’ll supply fuel for civil nuclear reactors. And so we’ll give the Iranians what they say they want—the stated objective of Iranian

policy on the nuclear issue, peaceful nuclear power—but will deny them the sensitive aspects of the fuel cycle, which we believe we should not give to that country.”

We thought that was a generous proposal, one that made sense. And President Bush, on a trip to Asia in November of last year, said he supported the Russian initiative. It was a way out for the Iranian government. It was a way to climb down from the impossible position that Ahmadinejad had taken, wherein Iran would drive straight through and over the international redlines established by the IAEA and the UN and achieve an enrichment capability. But Iran did not take it.

And then that started this latest phase of the diplomatic process: the concentration of Russian, Chinese, European, and American influence to band together to take Iran to the IAEA, where it was twice rebuked for having overridden all of its obligations. I should say that India joined us in both of those votes. And it was a very courageous step by Prime Minister Singh. He was the first leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, the G-77, to step outside that movement and to directly criticize and put the weight of his country behind the work of the United States and Europe and Russia and China. And in the IAEA in February, and in the United Nations Security Council on March 29, Iran has twice been specifically rebuked for having violated its international understandings.

But what has happened? Iran has not responded to the votes in Vienna or the votes in New York. Iran appears not to be listening to what the international community is saying. And so we have determined that of course you have to raise the level of diplomacy and raise the costs to Iran of this kind of behavior. And so our European allies last week introduced a Chapter 7 resolution at the United Nations Security Council. Secretary Rice was in New York earlier this week for talks with her Russian, Chinese, and European counterparts. And unfortunately, we were not able to secure the agreement of Russia and China to support that Chapter 7 resolution.

Now this is a very ordinary resolution. This is not a radical resolution. It does not provide for sanctions against Iran. And it does not provide for the use of force against Iran. In fact, it simply asks the members of the Security Council to restate in the Security Council under Chapter 7 what they have already agreed to and voted upon in the IAEA: Iran should suspend what it is doing, return to negotiations, and play by the rules. And so our position is we are not going to give up on that effort to effectively rebuke Iran through a Chapter 7 resolution. And you will see Ambassador Bolton, who has been very effective on this issue in New York, continue his efforts to get this Chapter 7 resolution passed, we hope in the next few weeks.

At the same time, we have agreed with the Chinese and Russian and European governments that we will develop a package of negative incentives and positive incentives that will be offered by the Europeans to the Iranian government as another exit door, as another way out of this crisis. And we expect that package to be assembled in the next week to ten days.

“As we try to negotiate a termination of Iran’s nuclear weapons program, all options remain on the table.”

“We are determined to use every ounce of our energy to see diplomacy through to the end.”

And I think it will encompass the following initiatives. You will likely see a repeat or a variation of the offer that Russia made: that Iran of course, as President Bush has said, has the right to civil nuclear power, but not to the fuel cycle. So the international community will step forward once again to say to the Iranians, “If it’s civil nuclear power you want, we can all provide that for you, but under international supervision, and without the possibility of access to enrichment and reprocessing technologies.”

And there may be other economic and technological incentives for the Iranian people in that package. Secretary Rice insisted in the meeting on May 8, and we will continue to insist, that there will be a second part of that package. And the package cannot be whole until both halves are joined together. And that is a section that will involve penalties and sanctions against the Iranian government if it does not choose the exit door of the positive incentive package.

In other words, if we can all agree on this in the next two weeks, the Permanent Five of the United Nations Security Council, Iran will be offered a way forward, but it will be asked to choose: “Are you going to cease and desist from your enrichment activities? If you do, there is a way forward. And if you do not, there will be a sanctions regime imposed by the UN Security Council.” That is the package we would like to agree to. It has not yet been fully agreed on. It needs to be assembled, and there will be a final discussion among the current five countries to agree that this is the way forward.

But our view in Washington is that both are important. And while you offer the hand of peace to Iran, you also have to let the Iranians know that the costs are going to rise for the fact that they have not responded to either the IAEA or the UN Security Council. Our president and our vice president and our secretary of state and our secretary of defense have been completely united in what we say to the Iranians. We say that as we try to negotiate a termination of its nuclear weapons program, all options are on the table. And all options *are* on the table. And we also say that we are trying very hard to follow a diplomatic path and to use diplomacy as a tactic to achieve that end. And you will not see us quit the diplomatic path easily.

I have been surprised—maybe I shouldn’t be surprised—by some of the public reaction and press reaction over the last couple of days. There are a lot of people saying the real problem is that the United States won’t sit down with Iran and talk to Iran directly. We say to that, we didn’t create this nuclear problem and crisis with Iran. We weren’t the country that chose to override the combined will of the international community. And the problem is not the absence of regular diplomatic contact between the United States and Iran. The problem is, directly, the behavior of the government of Iran.

Other people say that diplomacy is too hard and that it cannot work, and that the Security Council is taking too long. Anybody who knows multi-

lateral diplomacy—and I spent four years at NATO practicing multilateral diplomacy—knows that it does take time. It is often frustrating. And you often have to jump through lots of hoops to get to the place where you want to be. We have not given up on diplomacy. We have not given up on the proposition that the combined weight of the international community could convince the Iranians to reassess the costs and benefits of what they are doing in the nuclear field. And we are determined to use every ounce of our energy and vitality to see that diplomatic play through to the end.

But the Iranians have to know, and other members of the Security Council have to know, that we cannot be captive to endless discussions in the Security Council, and we will not allow ourselves to be captive to endless discussions there. If at the end of the day we feel that there is no chance of using the Security Council, multilateral diplomacy, to achieve this purpose, there will be the opportunity for the United States to associate itself with like-minded countries to create a sanctions regime—targeted sanctions against Iran—and to raise the costs on our own. And we are determined to keep both of those opportunities alive. As you can see, we have been working nonstop for fourteen months to try to get the attention of the Iranian government and use diplomacy as a tool, and we have not given up on that prospect.

I would also like to say that we as a country cannot forget one of the other major grievances that we have with Iran, and that is the terrorism issue. We do not forget what happened in Beirut to our embassy and to our Marine barracks in 1983, or to Colonel Higgins, who was serving with the UN forces in southern Lebanon in 1985. And we certainly do not forget, and I believe Dennis and I were together that day, what happened at Khobar Towers outside of Dhahran, because we were there just several hours after the blast with Secretary Christopher and saw what happened to over 30 Americans who were killed and to 300 American military officers who ended up in the hospital.

We know that Iran and the Iranian intelligence services continue to be the one central organization in the Middle East that funds and directs several of the major Middle Eastern terrorist groups, including Hizballah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. And we ask our European friends and our friends all around the world not just to focus on the nuclear issue, but to focus on this central issue of direct Iranian support for terrorism, which is a threat to our ally, Israel, and a threat to Americans as well.

Finally, some people say that, given the nature of this radical, dictatorial regime in Tehran, there is not much one can do, or a country can do, or the world can do, to promote democracy and freedom and justice inside Iran. And, fortunately, our president does not agree with that. And he has asked Congress to help underwrite a major program to make sure that we are supporting as best we can those people in Iran and nongovernmental organizations and those people outside Iran who want to see democracy be part of the future of Iran.

“The Iranian intelligence services continue to fund and direct several major Middle Eastern terrorist groups.”

“We want to see an expansion in the ability of Iranians to travel to the United States and study in our country.”

We want to see an expansion in the ability of Iranians to travel to the United States and to study in our country. There may be fewer than 2,000 Iranians studying here, versus 200,000 thirty-five years ago. And there is no question that as we focus on the short and medium term in our policy, we have also got to have our vision on the long term and care about what Iranians think about us and what our relationship will be like twenty to twenty-five years from now. And one of the ways you can do that is to increase societal contacts through student exchanges. So the president and Secretary Rice have asked Congress for a supplemental appropriation of \$75 million—it is really seed money; it is not a great sum of money—to help begin to underwrite those programs and also to expand our ability as a government to broadcast twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, our Farsi-language TV and radio stations into Iran itself. Because there is no question that those without access to the internet in Iran are not getting a fair and balanced view of what is happening in the world, to coin a phrase.

The last thing I wanted to mention is this: if you think about the estrangement between our two countries over the last quarter of a century, you will understand that we have skipped an entire generation of American diplomats and American military officers who have not been asked to serve there, to learn Farsi, to become experts in Iranian history and culture and politics. And when Secretary Rice arrived at the State Department a little over a year ago, she was focused on the question of Iran, and she looked around and said, “Well, where are my troops? What’s my apparatus in this department?” And it turned out that there were exactly two people focusing on Iran full time a year ago in the Department of State. Secretary Rice said, “We’ve got to do something about that.” And so we have now created an Iran desk that is fundamentally and solely responsible for following events in that country and being intelligent and sophisticated in interpreting events in that country.

And we decided that since it is not possible for us to establish a diplomatic mission in Tehran for obvious reasons, we would do the next best thing: we are establishing an American diplomatic presence in Dubai inside our consulate, and we call it “Dubai Station.” For those of us who began our careers focusing on the Soviet Union, our inspiration was Riga Station. During the time between 1919 and 1933 when we did not have diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, we established a station in Riga, which was a window into the Soviet Union. We sent in 1928 a young diplomat named George Kennan to Riga Station, where he helped to perfect his Russian language and his understanding of the Soviet Union.

And while we cannot be inside Iran these days, we can devote a considerable number of people to serve in Dubai and to focus on Iran and to make sure that we know everything we can from that perch. And in addition to that, we have told Congress that we are going to set up a number of positions in consulates and embassies all around that region that will be

solely responsible for following events in Iran, talking to Iranian exiles, and increasing our ability to understand that country.

I would say the Department of Defense has made probably even greater efforts over the last five or six years in training its officer corps to understand this country. Dov Zakheim knows that because he was part of this. And the Department of State now is stepping up to match what our other sister agencies in the U.S. government have done to increase the ability of our government to be intelligent in discerning the internal affairs and foreign policy of the Iranian government.

This is clearly a generational challenge for us. Iran is a strong state. If you look at the speeches of President Ahmadinejad or of Ali Larijani, the secretary of the Iranian national security council, this particular Iranian government aspires to be the most powerful state in the Middle East, the most influential, and it is certainly trying to expand its influence as we speak throughout the Middle East. And we talked to our good friends in the Gulf, and neighbors beyond, and there is a great deal of concern about this latest trend in Iranian foreign policy. And we are as determined to resist an expansion of Iranian influence on a regional basis as we are absolutely determined to prevent it from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability, and determined to confront it as it poses this terrorist threat to the United States.

I wanted to give you just those simple and admittedly quite general views about how we view the Iranian challenge, and assure you that we are focused on it quite intently. And I hope you have some confidence that we have designed a strategy to cope with this threat, because we are going to need your support and your understanding as we proceed.

I will say to this audience, because I know we have some distinguished Israelis in attendance: we have had over the last several months two occasions to have very thorough discussions with the Israeli government, including on May 10 at the State Department, concerning all aspects of this Iranian challenge. And we are heartened that the Israeli government sees things pretty much as we do in terms of the serious nature of this threat. And you all know what President Bush said about the defense of Israel when Ahmadinejad three or four times made the outrageous remark that Israel should be wiped off the map of the world. It is an extraordinary thing that in this day and age any leader—given the way that politicians and diplomats talk these days—would make such an absurd and blatant threat against a member state of the United Nations and a friend of the United States.

We take what the Iranian government says seriously. We listen to what it says, and we will hold it accountable for its actions as well as its words.

“We will hold the Iranian government accountable for its actions as well as its words.”







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# How to Deal with the Challenge from Hamas



# How to Deal with the Challenge from Hamas

*Moshe Yaalon, Amjad Atallah, and David Makovsky*

SUMMARY

## MOSHE YAALON

A VIABLE PALESTINIAN STATE cannot be established behind fences, nor will a state split between Gaza and the West Bank work. The Oslo process sought to encourage cooperation, facilitate open borders (as in Europe), and produce a common economy with the Palestinians. The vast majority of Israelis were ready for this kind of compromise after a decade of Oslo, but they were confronted with the Palestinian leadership's refusal to recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state, as well as a rejection of the two-state solution. Israel ultimately was forced to construct the fence to protect its civilians from the Palestinian war of terrorism that ensued.

With Hamas in government, Palestinian moderates have even less power than they did previously. A peaceful solution simply is not currently possible, and it may take at least another generation for the Oslo paradigm to be workable, if at all. For this reason, it might be time to consider other paradigms for solving the conflict and promoting stability in the region. While examining other paradigms, Israel should also work to promote Palestinian moderates, who are, thus far, politically powerless.

Looking regionally, Hamas's victory in the Palestinian elections may pose a threat to Jordan and Egypt, given the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in these countries. Jordan in particular sees Hamas's victory as a threat, especially given Hamas's possible cooperation with Iran and the consolidation of Shiite power in Iraq and elsewhere. Amman has therefore acted recently to undermine Hamas's attempt to operate within the kingdom.

Egypt, however, has failed to take similar action. Israel permitted Egypt to play a very significant role before, during, and after the Gaza disengagement, but Egypt has failed to act responsibly. As a result, Egypt is now paying a price: Sinai has become a safe haven for terrorists, including al-Qaeda, while weapons smuggling into Gaza has continued. While Egypt views Hamas as a threat because of its potential to



■ Lt. Gen. Moshe Yaalon (ret.), the distinguished military fellow at The Washington Institute, is former chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces. He has also served as the IDF's director of military intelligence and as commander of an armored division.

encourage the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt will probably continue along the path of inaction.

For any future negotiations with the Palestinians to be possible, ensuring Palestinian accountability is essential. Currently, a lack of accountability transcends the Palestinian arena, whether in preventing terrorist attacks or managing civilian affairs. Responsibility for Palestinian affairs should no longer be the domain of other players.

So long as the Palestinian narrative emphasizes the destruction of the State of Israel over the construction of a Palestinian state living side by side with it, there is no chance for a political solution to the conflict. The absence of Israel on Palestinian maps and in Palestinian textbooks indicates the denial of linkage between the Jewish people and the land of Israel, as well as the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state. Under these circumstances, there can be no peaceful option. Hostilities will only be perpetuated by a Palestinian education system that sanctifies death and not life, encouraging the next generation to become homicide bombers.

At the present time, any withdrawal will be perceived as a victory for global terror elements, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Iran. In moving ahead, Israel must bear this in mind.

In terms of the security situation, unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank is unlikely to succeed without a future military presence in the areas that will be evacuated. Israel will not experience calm without continued deployment in the West Bank, and it should enjoy freedom of operation throughout.



■ *Amjad Atallah is founder and president of Strategic Assessments Initiative. Previously, he advised the Palestinian Authority in negotiations with Israel, with involvement in initiatives such as the Quartet Roadmap and the Mitchell Commission.*

### AMJAD ATALLAH

THE UNITED STATES SHOULD distinguish between its own policy vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the policy the rest of the world adopts toward the PA. While the United States is not obliged to engage with Hamas or to give it money, other states may wish to do so. After all, preventing a humanitarian disaster requires paying Palestinian salaries. Education and healthcare, among other services, cannot be provided otherwise. The U.S. experience regarding Iraq in the 1990s should be instructive. After the Gulf War, the sanctions regime effectively served to destroy the middle class, while strengthening Saddam Hussein. There is the danger that a sanctions regime might have the same effect in the West Bank.

To argue that Palestinians voted for Hamas because they rejected Israel's right to exist is simply to ignore all the empirical evidence on the ground. Postelection polls indicated that the Palestinians accept a two-state solution, and Hamas appears to recognize this support for peace among its constituents. In this vein, Hamas is gradually moderating its position; for example, it recognizes that Israel exists, but does not accept its right to exist. Hamas is further trying a variety of formu-

las, including holding a referendum on any peace deal that Hamas will back; this is a way of justifying future moderations. The question of recognizing Israel as a Jewish state is problematic for many Palestinians, including moderates. The priority for Israel should be that Palestinians accept Israel's right to exist and that Jews have a right to self-determination, as well as the right to decide on the nature of Israel.

In the current environment, potential approaches for U.S. policy include conflict promotion (active efforts to compel Hamas's failure); conflict management (building alternatives to Hamas in the long run while restricting Hamas's freedom to maneuver); and conflict resolution (working closely with Abu Mazen on jumpstarting diplomacy with Israel).

If the two-state paradigm fails—especially now, when a majority of Israelis and Palestinians openly support it—it will fail because of a lack of political will in Washington. The easiest solution for Hamas is a continuation of U.S. policy, which removes the onus of having to deliver on good governance. So long as it emphasizes that under U.S. leadership the international community has predetermined its failure, Hamas will succeed politically.

The unilateral separation plan currently proposed by the Israeli government is problematic. While it would result in two states, the very fact that the Palestinian side rejects the plan means that there would be no stable, accepted solution.

Empowering PA president Mahmoud Abbas requires either permanent status negotiations or a process leading to permanent status negotiations. Other alternatives, such as strengthening his presidential guard, will not enable him, politically, to make a deal with Israel. If the Palestine Liberation Organization, under Abbas's leadership, is shown to be the party with which the international community is engaging to end the conflict, Palestinian moderates will be strengthened.

In the short run, democratization in the Middle East may mean the rise to power of moderate Islamist forces. For the last twenty years, the West promoted autocracies in the region; the only opposition that could succeed was religiously based. Progress will take time, and it requires a process through which Islamist movements can be moderated.

## DAVID MAKOVSKY

CURRENTLY, THE UNITED STATES is considering a proposal for a temporary international mechanism to alleviate humanitarian concerns in the Palestinian Authority in which the duration of funding would be defined. However, the payment of PA salaries does not appear to be part of this consideration. The Bush administration view is that paying PA salaries would enable Hamas to conduct its business unhindered. Nor is there any practical means for an international body to step in; there is no way for outsiders to write individual checks to the 150,000



■ *David Makovsky is a senior fellow and director of the Project on the Middle East Peace Process at The Washington Institute. He has published widely on Israeli-Palestinian affairs, including the May 2006 Institute paper *Olmert's Unilateral Option: An Early Assessment*.*

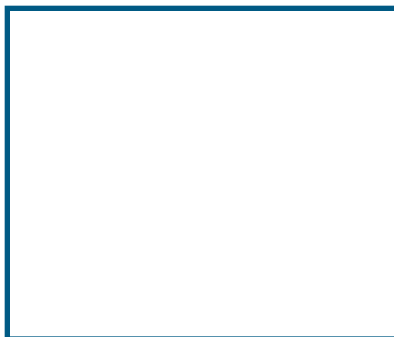
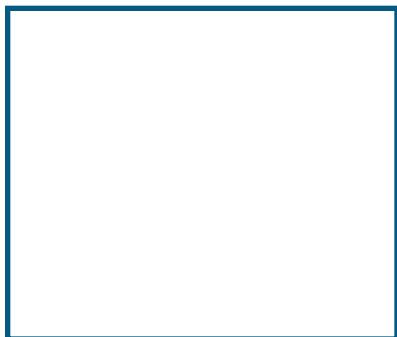
Israeli unilateralism still requires consultations with various players, especially the United States.

PA employees. Currently, Hamas has access to \$400 million in the Palestine Investment Fund; Iran might contribute, at most, \$50 million, but Tehran will face difficulties in getting this money to the Palestinians. In the short run, welfare payments may be channeled through Abbas, though we should work to avoid a culture of dependency.

For its part, Israel is looking to disengage from the territories. It withdrew from Gaza in August 2005 and is now looking to at least relocate settlers in the West Bank east of the security barrier. However, Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert will find it difficult to implement this policy if Israel faces renewed violence, particularly because his coalition is not very strong. Moreover, both Olmert and his defense minister, Amir Peretz, lack the security gravitas of their predecessors. If there is a spate of terrorism, it will be very damaging, though it is not clear that it will derail the process.

Israel has gained little from removing its army from Gaza. It has not gained much on the security front; with Hamas in power, it is even more concerned about rocket attacks aimed at Israeli cities. The international community fumbled on Israel's pullout from Gaza in failing to give Israel appropriate credit for the disengagement plan. Both because of its security needs and because of a lack of incentives from the international community, Israel is unlikely to withdraw the IDF from the West Bank. In all likelihood, Olmert will focus on withdrawing the settlers rather than the IDF. Violence would reinforce that trend away from a military withdrawal, even if settlers are removed.

In the Middle East, it takes more than one to be unilateral. Israeli unilateralism still requires multiple consultations with various players, especially the United States. Israel will not enter into open-ended negotiation with Abbas; he will not necessarily be able to implement anything agreed to in negotiations. However, Olmert should attempt to coordinate his West Bank withdrawal with Abbas. The lack of coordination in the run-up to the Gaza disengagement was a major shortcoming.



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# How to Deal with the Challenge from Iran





# How to Deal with the Challenge from Iran

*Graham Allison and Richard Haass*

SUMMARY

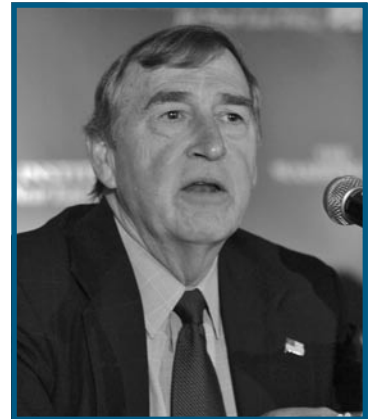
## GRAHAM ALLISON

TO UNDERSTAND HOW to deal with the challenge of Iran, one can take a historical analogy, that of the Cuban missile crisis. One of the most remarkable differences between 1962 and today is that whereas in the past information was tightly held, today a careful newspaper reader can know all the relevant facts that are being addressed by the people trying to deal with a complex problem such as Iran. A second difference is that in 1962 the crisis took place over a mere thirteen days, whereas the Iran crisis will develop over a much longer period. A similarity between the two situations is that in both cases, at the end of the game, the options may be a stark choice between acquiescing to nuclear arms that threaten the United States or launching an attack to prevent this. Faced with this choice, it is likely that in the Iranian case, as in the Cuban case, serious consideration will be given at the end to options that looked unthinkable at the start.

The Bush administration's current strategy that it calls the "slow squeeze" is not a strategy for achieving a nonnuclear Iran. The best hope is for the administration to become persuaded that it would, at the end of the current road, face only two options—acquiesce or attack. Ideally, it would then become more motivated to explore something outside that box. There are various versions of such a "grand bargain" floating around. Whether there is any offer that could be made to Iran by the United States and the international community that the current Iranian government would accept is uncertain. But it is certainly untested.

There are two questions surrounding the structuring of a grand bargain: One is whether the United States can get over its hesitation to put a bargain on the table, and the other is whether Iran will accept anything short of having nuclear weapons.

For the strategy vis-à-vis Iran, it is important to look carefully at the military options. There is a strange argument that many people are attracted to, which is that talking about military options undermines diplomacy. In reality, military capabilities and other forms of hard power are the hand



■ *Graham Allison is founding dean of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, where he directs the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. Previously, he served as assistant secretary of defense in the first Clinton administration and as special advisor to the secretary of defense in the Reagan administration.*

in the glove of diplomacy. Thus, the proposition that no options have been taken off the table is exactly right. The U.S. government has actually tried to discourage the Israeli government from talking about its options here. Instead of discouraging Israel from threatening Iran, it may prove beneficial to do the opposite. Diplomacy is more likely to be successful if the military option seems like a credible threat to Iran. In examining the military options, one must look at all options, and while it is very possible to destroy the known enrichment facilities, for example, the real question is where military action will lead and what the Iranian reaction might be.

### RICHARD HAASS

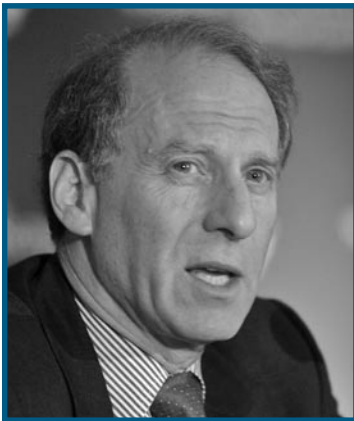
THERE ARE ESSENTIALLY four options when dealing with Iran. One is the use of military force, most realistically some version of a preventive—not preemptive—strike. The United States could accomplish a lot through this option, but Iran could also retaliate quite a lot, and so no one is particularly anxious to go down that path.

The second option would be to focus on the nature of the regime, but the problem here is that the regime simply is not going to change any time soon; hopes to the contrary are based on wishes rather than facts. The Iranian behavior on the nuclear question is far more important than the remote possibility of near-term regime change. The approach to regime change should be implicit, not explicit; there is no need for Congress to enact a highly publicized, \$85 million program.

The third approach, which could be called the North Korea option, is that after years of making complaints and threats, the United States would quietly learn to live with a nuclear Iran without formally acknowledging it. Perhaps deterrence would be appropriate given the concern that Iran might use its weapons, but a much bigger problem would obviously be the question of whom Tehran might clandestinely arm.

The least undesirable of the options is diplomacy—that is, trying to negotiate an acceptable outcome. Not only does it avoid some of the negatives of the other paths, but also if the United States is ever going to have to move to more confrontational options, it must be seen to have made every effort at diplomacy. A parallel example would be Saddam’s invasion of Kuwait, where the George H. W. Bush administration embraced sanctions, not necessarily because it thought these would work, but because sanctions were a necessary tool of domestic and international political management.

Washington needs to be willing to deal with the Iranians directly. The United States should never be afraid to talk unconditionally with a country like Iran. Diplomacy is not a gift given to others; diplomacy is a tool to advance American national security interests. This also means that the United States should be responding to things like Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s letter. Using the Cuban missile crisis as an analogy, there are multiple letters to respond to, and the response should be not to



■ *Richard Haass has served as president of the Council on Foreign Relations since July 2003. Previously, he served as the State Department’s director of policy planning.*

the letter received but to the letter the United States wishes it had received. It is counterproductive and unnecessary to allow Ahmadinejad to pose as someone who is more interested in communication and diplomacy than the United States. Because the confrontation is being played out largely in the public domain, Washington needs to appeal to American public opinion, to the international community, and to the Iranian public. This Iranian regime is, at the end of the day, a minority regime. The United States should design its diplomacy to make clear to the Iranian people the benefits that would accrue to them if their government were to take a responsible stance on the nuclear question, and the penalties that will come their way if their government persists in taking an irresponsible stance.

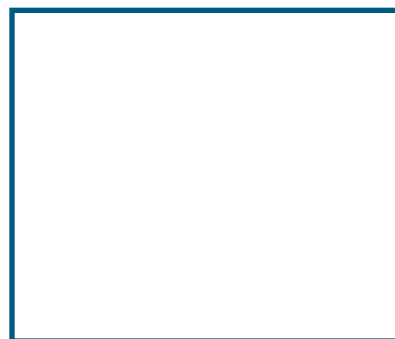
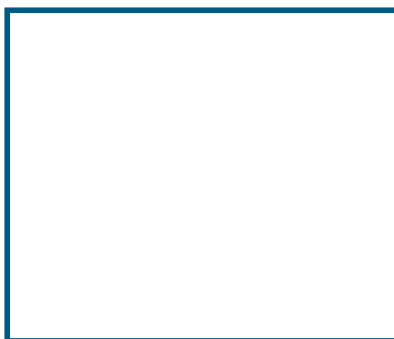
The United States must ask itself what it is prepared to live with. The uranium enrichment program is not a black or white affair; there are many shades of gray, in terms of size and transparency. The Iranians talk about their rights. If that is going to be an essential element of any diplomatic package, then an interesting question is how to define those rights in a way that is enough for the Iranians and not too much for the West.

It is very important to make the distinction between giving a conditional security guarantee and giving a regime guarantee. It is not up to the United States to guarantee the Iranian regime, or any other regime; history will take care of that. Instead, the United States should be talking about the evolution of Iranian society. What the United States can offer is a conditional security guarantee of the form, "If Iran does not attack the United States, the United States will not attack Iran." Just because Iran receives such a security assurance, that will not make it exempt from this administration's general call for movement in the direction of markets and more democratic societies, respect for the rule of law, human rights, and the like.

Calling explicitly for regime change is not smart. It actually strengthens the hand of the regime in Iran because it seems like outside interference. It also makes it more difficult for the United States to garner international support, because this will be used as an argument against American foreign policy. One of the many ironies of U.S. policy toward Iran is that after five years of often explicitly calling for regime change and clearly having a foreign policy toward Iran in which the desire for regime change enjoyed priority, the only change in the Iranian regime is that hardliners have increased their power.

Calling explicitly for regime change in Iran actually strengthens the regime's hand.





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# Israel: Confronting the Strategic Challenges Ahead



# Israel: Confronting the Strategic Challenges Ahead

*Dan Meridor*

SUMMARY

THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS have witnessed two parallel movements in Israeli and Palestinian societies. From the Israeli side, there was a movement toward an agreement with the Palestinians that required concessions and risks on Israel's part. On the Palestinian side, there was a simultaneous movement away from negotiations and toward extremism with the January 2006 election of a Hamas majority to the Palestinian Legislative Council.

Additionally, one can see the importance of religion and politics in these changes. In Israel the hardcore of the settler and religious national movements have argued that the Israeli government, even with majority support, has no right to give up land they believe was given to them by God. This dangerous assertion was also made by Yitzhak Rabin's assassin, Yigal Amir, though his actions were rejected by the vast majority of Israelis. The Palestinians had the same option in their last election, but moved away from politics and into the realm of religion. With a religious argument that God bequeathed territory to the Muslims, there can be no compromise.

Today Israel is in a very good strategic situation. With Egypt and Jordan at peace with Israel, there is no conventional threat between Israel and its neighbors. However, the battlefield is changing and Israel's opponents are taking their fights to new levels, namely above the conventional battlefield—nuclear weapons—and below it—terrorism. Israel now faces significant threats from an axis of three: Iran, Hamas, and Hizbullah. All three have expressed a belief that Israel should not exist and must be eliminated. In addition to this rhetoric, Israel faces not only terrorism, but also Iran's development of nuclear weapons.

At the same time, Israel is facing the implications of a significant setback in its relationship with the Palestinians: the lack of a central government. Israel cannot negotiate peace if there is no leader who is in a position to impose a peace agreement on his own people. Even if it was decided that war, rather than negotiations, would be the best alternative, the lack of a central leadership hinders even this effort, as there is no head of command to be pressured or who can concede. Israel needs a Palestinian leadership that is centralized.



■ *Dan Meridor is one of Israel's most widely respected public officials and strategic thinkers. His three decades in public life include service as minister of finance, minister of justice, and minister of strategic affairs.*

## Israel now faces significant threats from an axis of three: Iran, Hamas, and Hizballah.

In Israel there has been a shift in the political landscape that dominated the country over the past forty years. Since 1967, there had been a sharp split between the left and the right. However, the dreams of both camps have collapsed—the left in the wake of renewed terror attacks and the right in a realization that Israel cannot hold onto the Palestinian territories and remain a Jewish democratic state. The Israeli people have become more realistic about the situation confronting them. In every poll 70 to 80 percent of Israelis believe in a two-state solution.

Though the new Israeli government was elected and sworn in just a week ago, it must move quickly. Ehud Olmert and his Kadima Party were elected on a platform to act and they must fulfill their commitment. The new government faces three major challenges. First, it must strengthen stability in the region and its partners in peace. Jordan is Israel's primary regional partner, and any decision that Israel makes concerning the Palestinians must take into account the Jordanians. While Egypt has not been very active in taking the initiative in the Arab-Israeli conflict, it also must be considered. Israel should support stability in Egypt and be aware of the threat of the Muslim Brotherhood. Beyond these two nations Israel should seek to draw other Arab countries into this circle of peace.

Second, Iran presents three threats: the nuclear threat, the unprecedented terror threats (with money, instruction, and incitement), and dangerous rhetoric calling for the elimination of Israel. If Iran is allowed to get what it wants, it is a threat to everything Israel has built so far. If one understands the magnitude of Iran's threat and the development of nuclear weapons, its relationship with Russia must also be an issue of great concern.

Finally, Israel faces the significant challenge of how to deal with the Palestinians and what to do about Israel's eastern border. Israel should do everything it can to work toward peace as quickly as possible. However, this goal may be impossible given the current political situation. The current coalition, while wide, is very fragile and it must act quickly to prepare and implement a plan. The Israeli government understands that it cannot stay idle and wait for developments, especially with the threat of Hamas renewing terror attacks. It is in this context that Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert's scheduled May 23 visit to Washington is so important. Israel must continue to address questions that have not yet been answered, including which settlements are to be dismantled, where to relocate settlers, whether there will be a Palestinian partner with whom to work on withdrawal issues, and whether the Israel Defense Forces will remain in the West Bank or leave as it did from Gaza. A particularly important question will be the American reaction to the withdrawal. Perhaps the United States cannot say that the lines to which Israel withdraws are final borders, but that leaves many possibilities for how the United States can react positively to the withdrawal—for instance by declaring that the withdrawal lines are boundaries, though temporary ones.



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