

18th Camden Conference, February 25–27, 2005

HIGHLIGHTS

THE MIDDLE EAST

COMPROMISE OR CONFLAGRATION?

General Tony Zinni

Juan Cole

Olivier Roy

Deborah Amos

Yossi Alpher

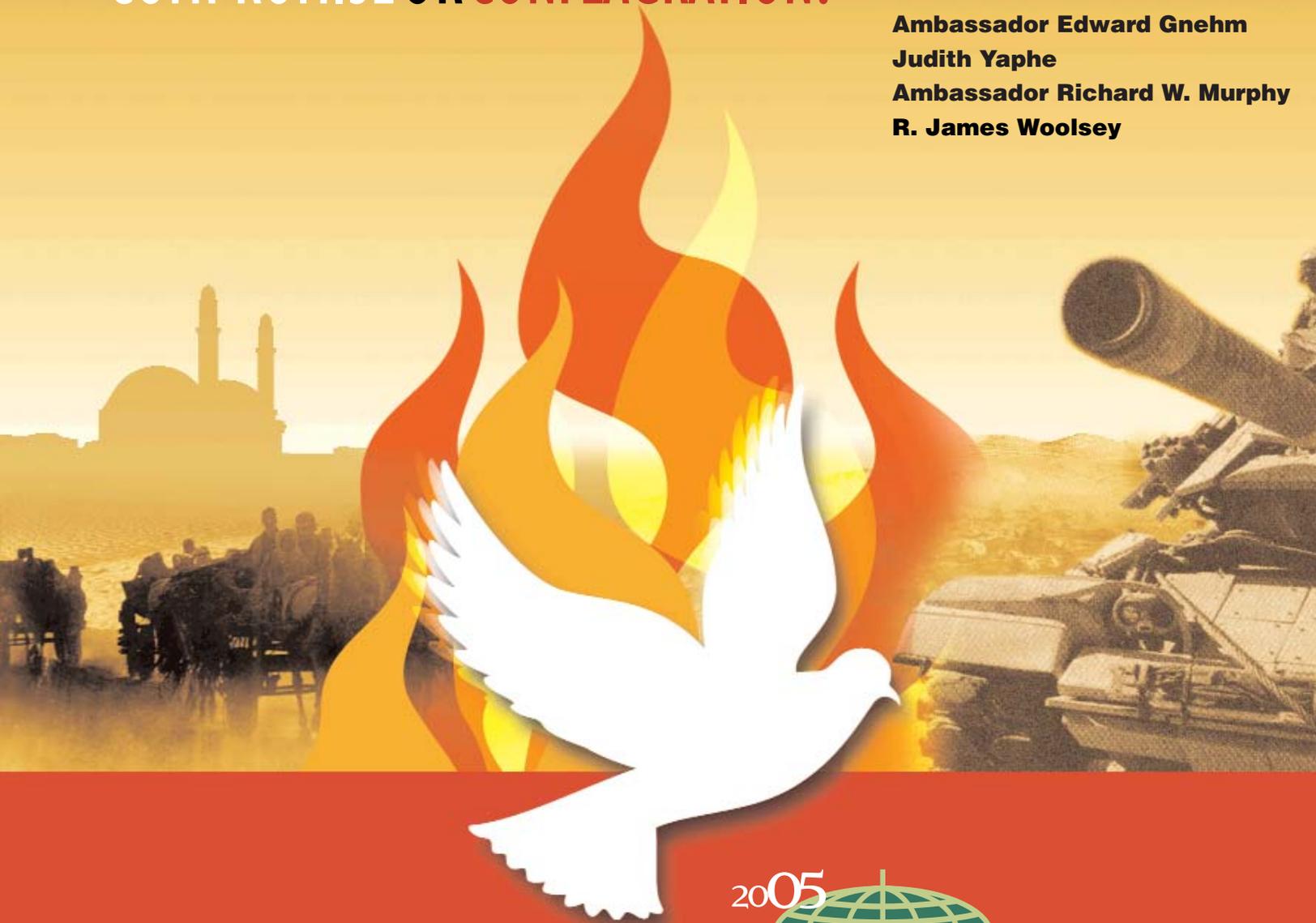
Rami Khouri

Ambassador Edward Gnehm

Judith Yaphe

Ambassador Richard W. Murphy

R. James Woolsey



2005



CAMDEN CONFERENCE

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The 2005 Camden Conference

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Zinni



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Khouri

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This year, for the first time in its 18-year history, the Camden Conference is publishing highlights of its proceedings. Beginning with the keynote address by General Tony Zinni on Friday evening (Feb. 25) and continuing through the concluding panel discussion late Sunday morning (Feb. 27), ideas flew fast and furiously. We have made no attempt to provide a verbatim account. Instead, we have selected important, compelling, controversial and colorful ideas and exchanges. Where possible, we have used the speakers' own words. We hope you will find our *Highlights* helpful and thought-provoking.



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The Way Ahead

Keynote

General Tony Zinni



Reforms will happen. The pressure is on, internally and externally.

Keynote speaker General Tony Zinni focused on issues of reform in the Middle East, the peace process and the war on terrorism. He began by discussing what he referred to as the current and ongoing “transformation” of the Islamic world in the Middle East. The Arab world is not monolithic or simple: “What I learned in this region is that the complexity and the diversity are keys to understanding it.” We [the West] treat the people of the region or have expectations of them as if they are Europe at the beginning of the 21st century when, in fact, they are Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. There is a tremendous amount of pressure in a concentrated period of time, and they clearly know they are not going to come out at the other end of this the same way they went in.

“The reforms are going to happen,” General Zinni added. “We will question the speed. We will question the depth. The pressure is on, not only externally to do this, but internally in many ways.”

Recent elections in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Palestine are more a result of pressures from without, but their own citizens were also part of the pressure. And while we in the West can be pleased with this progress, we must, above all, refrain from taking credit, which would only serve to undermine and discredit indigenous reformers, General Zinni said. “We can’t simply design reform in Washington and export it.”

According to General Zinni, the term Global War on Terrorism (GWOT, or Gee-Wat, as it’s called within the Beltway) is a misnomer. “Terrorism is a tactic, not an enemy.” If you declare war on a tactic ... you fight it as a tactic [you count bodies].” We need to understand an enemy’s center of gravity—what gives him strength at the operational and the strategic levels—if we are to successfully fight him. “At the strategic level, Osama bin Laden’s need is to develop an endless flow of angry

young men willing to kill themselves. We can’t just focus on body counts. We need to stop, by our actions, encouraging the growth of this army of young men.

“There is nothing inherent in either culture [Islam or Christianity] that makes a natural clash of civilizations,” General Zinni said, and warned that we can make this a self-fulfilling prophecy. In the end, this is a battle for the next generation of young people in this part of the world. “This is the generation that will expel the mullahs from Iran. This is the generation that will make the demands that will generate the reforms in this region. This is the generation that will decide the relationships with the West While all of us argue moral arguments, justification and history, they are arguing their future.” Addressing the needs of that generation must be the focus, the center of gravity, of resolving these problems.

“There is nothing inherent in either Islam or Christianity that makes a natural clash of civilizations.”

■ **General (USMC, Ret.) Tony Zinni** is co-author of *Battle Ready*, which sketches his evolution from the cauldron of Vietnam through the operational revolution of the seventies and eighties, to the new realities of the post-Cold War, post-9/11 world. In the late 1990s, he was Commander-in-chief of CENTCOM (the U.S. Central Command), with responsibilities for military matters in the Middle East, and served as U.S. mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations during George Bush’s first term.

“I am cautiously pessimistic about Iraq I don’t believe we should have any bases in Iraq I am opposed to a draft.”

conflict, with the occupation and the humiliation and the security measures—I would get rid of special envoys. We don’t need high-profile people doing touch-and-go’s out there. I would not start with the mediators presenting plans. When the mediator finds himself putting plans on the table, you’re losing. We must implement things incrementally. It will require a whole different approach from what we did in the past.”

Another issue that this part of the world is going to have to come to grips with is relationships with the United States. Pakistan and, more recently, Libya have chosen to

Regarding the Middle East peace process, General Zinni said, “What I learned out there is you can’t quit. You’ve got to stay engaged. You’ve got to continue the process Only the United States can broker this process.” But before you can get to the important issues, “you have to deal with terrorism and violence and the attacks,” he added. “With the economic crises both [Israel and the Palestinians] face now because of this

cooperate with us; Iran and Syria haven’t. The Arab world will watch how we treat the two groups. “In the end they will say, Which path is the right one to go down?”

As for the Iraqis, the problems can arise out of their inability to find some way to come together, “some sort of federal system to operate within, with the degree of autonomy they demand. I am cautiously pessimistic about Iraq. There may be a possibility, but I don’t see it. And I want to be wrong.”

The pressures in the area are enormous: internal, regional, external. “This part of the world is misjudged in many ways by the evaluations that are made by us and others looking from the outside in. It is important to realize that the Arabs’ views of us have to do with our policies over time, not a basic dislike of us. The policies have been inconsistent, and they have trouble understanding that.”

General Zinni concluded by noting that there is, in the long term, good news: Osama and his ilk are ultimately doomed to failure, because they offer nothing. “Can you imagine bin Laden marching into Riyadh and announcing, ‘I am marching you back to the 7th century. Follow me.’? I’m trying to imagine all those young Saudis whom I know saying, ‘Yes, let’s go back to the 7th century.’ That’s not what the majority wants.” But we “need to counter the frustration of the young people, we and the rest of the world, because it threatens us all.”

■ *Reported by Thomas MacAdams Deford*



Q: What most grates in your mind about the policy going on now?

A: “I think we have done a terrible job at communication—culture to culture, people to people. The value [Middle Easterners] place on our education system is a means of doing that. We need to allow more in to study.”

Q: What about our military future in Iraq?

A: “I don’t believe we should have any bases in Iraq. There are two realistic ways out: The Iraqi security forces develop to a level that permits them to take on the insurgency, which could be possible in two years or so. Or, and they’re not mutually exclusive, the new Iraqi government gets its citizens involved and supportive.”

Q: What about a draft?

A: “I am opposed to a draft. We have a different kind of military now that cannot absorb a draft element. Our current hi-tech military cannot absorb large numbers of draftees. We need to improve the volunteer army We don’t understand what kind of military we need to face the threat from terrorists, much less what kind of strategy.”



An Odyssey Through Political Shiism

Juan Cole

How Radical Shiites Came To Rule Iraq—With Washington’s Help

Juan Cole, a history professor at the University of Michigan and well-known blogger at juancole.com, took conference attendees on an odyssey to a world “you won’t often see on your TV”—the world of political Shiism. The journey stretched from the origins and core beliefs of Shiite Islam through its rise to political leadership in Iran and now in Iraq. The United States has unleashed forces it cannot control, forces that are headed in directions it probably will not like, argued Cole, author of *Space and Holy War*, a history of Islam in Iraq, Iran and the Gulf.

The “core of Shiite Islam,” as described by Cole, is “devotion to the family of the Prophet,” his daughter, Fatima, and her husband, Ali, and sons Hasan and Husain, whose martyrdom is celebrated as the “central ritual of Shiites.” Cole used Westerners’ ignorance of the importance of shrines, to Husain in Karabala and Ali in Najaf, to highlight the fundamental misunderstanding behind the Bush administration policy in Iraq.

Today, followers of Shiite Islam account for only about 10% of all Muslims worldwide, but in the Muslim “heartland,” “they’re very important,” Cole said. Shiites account for about 90% of Iranians, 62% of Iraqis, a majority of Bahrainis, 15% of Afghans, 13% of Pakistanis, 10% of Saudis, including most of those in the oil-rich Eastern Province, and 16% of Syrians, including leaders of the Baath Party.

Using the vantage point of Sunni monarch King Abdallah II of Jordan, Cole traced the ascent of Shia from the overthrow of the Shah of Iran by Shiite Ayatollah Khomeini to the ascent of Lebanese Shiite parties Amal and Hezbollah, leaving Sunni Arab Saddam Hussein as “the one bulwark for Jordan against the Shiite wave.” So King Abdallah “watched in some consternation as Washington decided to get rid of Saddam and put the Shiites in power in Iraq,” Cole said. The Jordanian monarch “now thinks he’s surrounded.”

Within Iraq, political Shia began in the late 1950s as an

attempt to beat off the Communists and “the nationalist, secular socialist movement called the Baath.” Iraq’s first big Shiite party was the Dawa, meaning “the Call.” Its theorizer, Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr, accepted “consultative elections,” but wanted Islamic law and a Muslim economy. He was a major influence on Khomeini, who went further, saying “not only should ... Islamic law be the law of the land, but society should be ruled by the clerics” under a Platonic system headed by a sort of Islamic dictator. Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr eventually accepted Khomeini’s innovations, Cole said, as does his dynastic heir, Muqtada al-Sadr.

Afraid of what Shiites had done in Iran, Saddam Hussein made membership in the Dawa Party a capital crime and executed Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr. “A very large number of those bodies now being found in mass graves in Iraq in the south were Dawa Party members,” Cole said. Much of the Iraqi Shiite leadership fled to Iran, where another Baqir, Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim, became head of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq. It sent people “back over the border into Iraq to blow things up,” according to Cole.

Around this time, Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari emerged as an important young leader of the Dawa, having fled to Iran in 1980 and London in 1989. The Dawa Party in the 1980s developed a “paramilitary capability” that hit the U.S. and French embassies in Kuwait, among other targets, and helped form the Hezbollah in Lebanon.

■ **Juan Cole**, Professor of History, University of Michigan, has written extensively about modern Islamic movements in Egypt, the Persian Gulf and South Asia. His current research focuses on two contemporary phenomena: 1) Shiite Islam in Iraq and Iran and 2) the “jihadi” or “sacred-war” strain of Muslim radicalism, including al-Qaeda and the Taliban among other groups.

“The January 30 elections were held not because the Bush administration wanted that kind of election but because Sistani forced them into doing it.”

“So both the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq and the Dawa Party were radical, revolutionary Shiite parties at this time,” Cole said.

Although “much beaten down,” the Shiites responded in 1991 when then-President Bush called on Iraqis to overthrow Saddam. But Saddam was allowed to put that uprising down. “Nobody can quite understand why President Bush called on the people to rise up and, when they did, let Saddam slaughter them,” Cole said.

Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, who later in the 1990s emerged as the main Shiite leader, is “a quietist” who made himself popular by recommending avoidance of martyrdom. But in 2003, he “took on” the Americans. The Coalition Provisional Authority planned to appoint a committee of Iraqis to draft a new constitution for Iraq. Instead, Cole said, “Sistani gave a fatwa, a religious ruling, that if there was going to be a constitution for Iraq, it

would be written by elected delegates of the Iraqi people.” Sistani “more or less quoted Rousseau to Mr. Bremer,” and he won. The January 30 elections were held not because the Bush administration wanted that kind of election but because Sistani “forced them into doing it,” said Cole.

Sistani then blessed a single Shiite candidate list encompassing the Dawa and the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq. This United Iraqi Alliance won 51% of the vote and, with some small parties, will probably have about 54% in the parliament and the prime minister. The Dawa Party “is not in its history or in its nature significantly different from the Muslim Brotherhood [in Egypt] or Hamas in Palestine or the Jamad al Islami in Pakistan,” Cole said. And Sistani wants “an Islamic state that would have Islamic law and Islamic principal and practice at its foundation.”

Unlike Khomeini, he doesn’t want to be “in charge of garbage collection,” Cole added. But where an issue touches on Islam, Sistani “would issue a fatwa ruling, and by God, the members of parliament who are Shiites should take it seriously.”

This elected parliament is likely to have warm relations with Tehran and the Shiites of southern Lebanon, including Hezbollah, Cole concluded, “and I guess in the end, I share King Hussein of Jordan’s puzzlement as to why the United States wanted to do this.”

■ *Reported by Sarah Miller*



Looking at Two Islams

We have a disconnect between Muslim fundamentalism in Europe and in the Middle East

Olivier Roy

Westerners who view the Muslim world through the prism of a “clash of cultures” suffer from a basic misunderstanding of the nature and complexity of the radical fundamentalism that is Islamism and the events in broader Muslim societies, according to Olivier Roy, research director at the CNRS (French National Center for Scientific Research) in the “Iranian World” research unit. Religious fundamentalism, Roy said, is not “a backlash” against incursions by Western culture into traditional societies. Rather, it results from a “disconnect” between the globalized societies in which many Muslims live—particularly those in Europe—and traditional cultures. Muslim

fundamentalists in Europe are fighting for “pure religiosity,” abstracted from national identity and culture, and they provide most of the recruits for al Qaeda. In the Middle East itself, nationalism is a critical political factor alongside religion, and democracy is becoming increasingly compelling.

Roy noted that Islamists in Europe are becoming “more and more Westernized.” Their brand of religious fundamentalism is part of a global phenomenon that has little to do with historic Islam. Some fundamentalist Muslims in Europe have gone so far as to adapt their rhetoric and issues to the Christian fundamentalist debate in the West. “Abortion has never been much of an issue with

Muslims, but conservative Muslims are taking this value from fundamentalist Christians,” Roy said. Conservative Muslims even talk of fighting divorce, which has always been accepted under Islam.

Many people have the idea that Islam itself is an obstacle to democracy, Roy noted, while the real barriers are authoritarian regimes built on “a European model.” The Baath Party, for example, was born of Italian fascism. Authoritarian models generally reflect a melding of fascist and Marxist ideologies. European governments “tend to support secular authoritarian regimes against Islam” under the assumption that democracy will naturally follow from secularism. When this didn’t happen, Roy said, the neo-conservatives in Washington “found a way to solve this issue: Impose democracy now.”

But this simply “didn’t work.” Paul Bremer, administrator of the U.S.-led occupation government in Iraq, operated “on the assumption one could discard history. Discard local society.” The United States “wants to build democracy from scratch, but you don’t build democracy from scratch . . . Democracy is based on history.”

Roy said that “the idea of democracy is popular in the Middle East,” opening “a sort of window of opportunity” for change. The problem from a U.S. perspective is that in the Middle East today, political legitimacy is based on nationalism and on religion. If you ignore either, you’ll be “unable to build any viable political system.” Bremer ignored both. “All the conflicts in the Middle East are conflicts about nationalism,” Roy maintained. Palestinians want a political state. Hamas is fighting about borders, not trying to impose the sharia, or Islamic law. If the Iranians get a nuclear bomb, it will be “an Iranian bomb, not an Islamic bomb.”

In Iraq, it’s the same, according to Roy. “The Shiite coalition is an Iraqi nationalist coalition.” If the United

“Abortion has never been much of an issue with Muslims, but conservative Muslims are taking this value from fundamentalist Christians.”

■ **Olivier Roy** is Research Director, the Iranian unit at the French National Center for Scientific Research, lectures at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) and the Institut d’Etudes Politiques (IEP) in Paris, and has acted as consultant to the French Foreign Ministry (Center for Analysis and Forecast) since 1984. He recently authored *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2004).

“Hamas is fighting about borders, not trying to impose the sharia, or Islamic law. If the Iranians get a nuclear bomb, it will be an Iranian bomb, not an Islamic bomb.”

States wants to claim success, it has to recognize the success of the coalition of the Shiites,” even though the Shiites are friends with the Iranians and don’t get on with regimes friendly with the United States, such as Jordan.

Today, “almost no one is pushing for an Islamic state” on the Iranian model. But people do want some sharia. “What does this mean?” Roy queried, answering his own question in a word: “Women.” The chador, he said, is the “last symbol of ideological Islam.”

Nonetheless, Roy took issue with the French government’s move to ban wearing of veils and other religious symbols. Most of the girls who wear scarves are not under pressure at home to do so, he said. They do it “to assert some sort of individualism.” Some may even turn to their fathers and say, “See, I wear a veil. Now let me go to university.”

We have “no choice but to address Islamists,” Roy said. The good news is that the Islamists are evolving, and we could be heading toward “some sort of Islamic . . . democracy.”

What about the terrorists? Islamic terrorism is often seen as a consequence of fundamentalism in the Arab world, but Roy argued that al Qaeda “has little to do with the Middle East” and a lot to do with Muslims in Europe and the West. Of those who joined al Qaeda in the 1990s, “very few . . . came directly from the Middle East.” Few Palestinians joined, and those who did were generally refugees. Saudi members tended to follow a “European trajectory.” They became “born-again Muslims” in Europe, or Montreal or London, not Damascus or Cairo. They went to Chechnya or Bosnia to fight, not to the Middle East.

Now some are going to Iraq, but “they don’t care about Iraq” or the Middle East. Rather, al Qaeda is “the expression of a different radicalism” that developed out of the extreme left in the West, and their targets are Wall Street and the Pentagon. The policy of al Qaeda is “to make things worse in Iraq,” Roy contended. They are “not interested in a political solution.”

The Iraqi fundamentalists, on the other hand, “want to find some sort of a political solution,” as does Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon, Roy said. “Sooner or later, we will have to talk with them” as political groups. But this is “not true of al Qaeda.” He concluded: “We have to disconnect the battle against terrorism from Islamic fundamentalism.”

■ *Reported by Sarah Miller*

Journalists Struggle to Cover Iraq

When reporters live with the military, they see only through the military's eyes. When they are on their own, they are unsafe without military protection.



Deborah Amos

All the instincts that you bring to any story as a reporter are now blunted in Baghdad,” National Public Radio (NPR) correspondent Deborah Amos told the Camden Conference. Faced with escalating violence, now so severe and pervasive that between 400 and 600 attacks occur each day, journalists are trying to determine how to convey the “true, large picture of Iraq,” a country key to U.S. foreign policy and temporary home to the 130,000 American troops stationed there.

Amos, who has been reporting on Iraq for the past two years, called it “the most dangerous assignment in the world,” adding that private security firms go one step further by referring to it as “the most insecure environment on the planet.” In addition to the estimated 18,000 civilian deaths that have been reported since the military intervention began more than two years ago, Amos said, 62 journalists and media staff members have been killed while on assignment there. “The most lethal five miles of highway lead from Baghdad to the airport,” she added.

Amos, who was headed to Cairo to meet with NPR officials to discuss its coverage of Iraq, said that journalists currently have two options: to embed themselves with the military, or to “go it alone.” Neither one, she added, results in worthwhile coverage. When journalists live with the military, she explained, they don’t have access to the Iraqi people and see the war only through the military’s eyes. When journalists are on their own, it is unsafe to move around the city or country without military protection. “Driving outside Baghdad is a suicide mission,” she said, adding that it is unsafe for reporters to go to cafés or talk to people on the streets, even disguised as Iraqi citizens. Freelancers are no longer attempting to cover the country because the risks to their lives are so high.

These days, news reports reflect the restricted movements of journalists, Amos said. Sources are now limited to govern-

ment or military officials, the details are missing and balanced reporting is nonexistent. She added that there is “barely front-page coverage” of Iraq anymore, and when there is, it is limited to the growing number of American casualties—coverage she described

as the simplest way to cover the war. “You can no longer rely on just one news source,” she said, exhorting Americans who want to keep up with the news in Iraq to read widely, including following the Iraqi and Arab media.

The only reason coverage of the January 30 Iraq elections was possible, she added, was because British and U.S. embassy and military officials “broke every rule” to make sure journalists could interview Iraqi civilians and move around the country; they even provided helicopter rides over violent areas. Amos recounted the story of a cameraman with CBS correspondent Dan Rather, who had traveled to Basrah from Baghdad. Upon arriving, he realized he had left his camera in Baghdad. The military drove the man back to the capital city to retrieve it—an unheard-of gesture at other times.

When Amos first arrived in Iraq in May 2003 to report on the end of Saddam Hussein’s regime and on what was intended to be the positive “transformation of Iraq,” the environment for journalists could not have been better.

“Constraints mean that American media have become almost completely dependent on an Iraqi press corps to gather the news.”

■ **Deborah Amos** covers Iraq and other Middle East hot-spots for NPR. Her insightful reports can be heard on NPR’s award-winning Morning Edition, “All Things Considered,” and Weekend Edition.

Unlike the repressed climate she found when covering the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, Iraqi citizens in 2003 were hopeful and eager to talk and tell stories. “It was an exhilarating assignment,” she recalled. She was supposed to stay only 30 days but remained in Iraq for two months.

Two years ago, Amos said, journalists moved freely throughout Baghdad. At the time, the NPR crew lived in a bed-and-breakfast owned by a former Baath official with a cat named Saddam. Amos traveled daily to Fallujah to report on the insurgency, and journalists were able to hire the best Iraqi interpreters for their reporting.

Gradually the country became more and more dangerous. During the best times for journalists, Amos said, the “early warning signs” had been there. Robberies, mostly of cash and cell phones, took place. Boys, known as “spotters,” would stop cars to clean windows and then report vehicles carrying Westerners to robbers up the road. Even then, she said, she felt safe because she was a woman and therefore protected by the culture. “I felt I was immune,” she explained. “If they tried to kidnap me, I imagined I would say to them, ‘I will tell your mother.’”

That sense of protection faded last fall when Margaret Hassan, the Irish-British-Iraqi citizen who headed Care International in Iraq, was abducted from her car and killed. And Hassan, Amos noted, was a woman who had worked with the poor in Iraq for 30 years and spoke the language fluently.

These days, gunmen, some of them foreign mercenaries, defend the home of the NPR crew, which is located in a “sandbagged building” with “Mylared windows.” The staff works within a metal cage and has access to a vault, should the office be invaded. Male and female news crews dress as Iraqis, dyeing their hair and wearing traditional Iraqi clothing to “blend in” and not look like Westerners. They don’t speak English on the streets. “It is very frustrating, and not what we signed up for,” said Amos. “The lists of don’ts outweigh the list of dos.”

The financial cost to news organizations that have reporters in Iraq has become “astronomical.” Television journalists are the worst off, Amos added, because they are “held hostage” by their security guards, who won’t let them take risks.

Such constraints mean that American media have become almost completely dependent on an Iraqi press corps to gather the news. Amos expects NPR to increasingly hire and train Iraqis as reporters—a job, she said, that is not “rocket science” but requires an inquiring mind most of all. “This major tenet of U.S. policy has to be covered, and the Iraqis can do it,” she said.

“So, why do we do it? Why do we go back?” Amos asked rhetorically before describing the “exhilaration” she experienced while covering the election and sharing insights she and colleagues gleaned about Iraqi culture from their relationships with the Iraqi interpreters they have come to depend on.

“Where democracy is going, I can’t tell you, but the election turnout was overwhelming even for cynical, ‘jackal’ journalists. I wouldn’t have missed it for anything.”

On election day in Iraq, Amos said, she and her colleagues were awake at dawn. Iraqis they had interviewed before that day had shared their fears of being killed if they showed up to vote. A dean of a law school said his family would go to the polls together—and die together if that were to happen. An editor of a newspaper in Basrah told Amos her husband would vote in the morning and she in the afternoon so her children wouldn’t be orphans if one of them was killed that day. Other people were concerned about being killed for having an “ink-stained finger,” the telltale sign they had voted.

Even with this tremendous fear of reprisal, long lines of men and women formed and people waited patiently in line in Basrah, where Amos spent the day reporting. To facilitate voting, the British and U.S. military provided security for Iraqis at the polls. In some cases, members of four generations, including very traditional women, voted.

“It was like a feast day,” recalled Amos. “It was impossible not to be overwhelmed by emotions expressed that day,” she said, adding, “Where democracy is going, I can’t tell you, but the turnout was overwhelming even for cynical, ‘jackal’ journalists. I wouldn’t have missed it for anything. It was an exhilarating moment in the coverage of the Middle East.” It was not a perfect election, she said, “but when was the last time you had to risk your life to vote?”

Before the election, Basrah, Amos said, was a “lively campaign city,” with billboards, posters and campaign songs with refrains, such as, “We are the Shiites, the mighty, mighty Shiites.” Ayad Allawi was the favorite of voters who wanted a separation of religious and secular. As the race got closer and Allawi started making progress, the clerics told voters in no uncertain terms: “Vote for the ‘clerics’ list’ or go to hell.”

In addition to history-making events like the election, Amos continues to go to Iraq because of the stories she can’t cover—the personal ones that reflect her relationships with Omar, Abdullah, Isra and other Iraqi translators who have given her a glimpse into and an appreciation of the Iraqi culture. “They are what we love about the place,” she added.

Now that the election is over, the story about Iraq is becoming even more complicated, and violence has risen to the same level as before the election. “Part of me thinks Americans want to change the channel, that it is time for a new series,” she said in conclusion.

■ *Reported by Elizabeth Banwell*

Israeli and Palestinian Perspectives

Resolving the Irresolvable

Yossi Alpher and Rami Khouri

The clock is ticking on the two-state solution.

This animated session brought together Yossi Alpher, formerly of the Mossad, Israel's intelligence service, and co-editor of *bitterlemons*, the web-based Israeli-Palestinian political dialogue magazine, and Rami Khouri, a Palestinian author and the executive editor of the Beirut-based *Daily Star*. The speakers decided to change the session's format, each boiling down his presentation to leave more time to engage with the audience. If only the parties in the region could follow their lead! The following blends the speakers' presentations with their responses to questions from the audience.

Alpher cited three elements influencing Israel's current approach: 1) an increasing willingness to operate unilaterally; 2) a switch in its chief strategic concern to relations with Iran rather than with Palestinians; and 3) an Israeli political system that isn't adequate to deal with the depth of the Palestinian problem. Alpher elaborated on unilateralism, explaining it as partly a consequence of ineffective outside mediation, partly a consequence of a "failed peace process."

Why the tip toward Iran? According to Alpher, Israelis see that the immediate territorial threats posed by the Palestinians are not as dangerous over the long run as the threats from demographics and generalized terrorism. Iran is poised to be the primary Muslim influence in the region due to its size and wealth and the age of its population. This strategy is already evident. Alpher pointed out that for the first time in its history, Israel's current defense minister is an air force veteran, rather than—as is traditional—someone from the army. And unlike the Palestinian situation, Iran is an area where Israel's government is actively looking for partners.

Alpher introduced the idea, and later referred to it several times, that Israel's system of government is not adequate to handle the Palestinian problems. Even though a majority of Israelis (probably around 70%) desire peace

with the Palestinians, every government over the last 20 years has had the same result after dealing with even one piece of the puzzle: It has fallen. In a parliamentary, multi-party system, even small parties representing special interests can make or break a coalition, with the system in self-perpetuation.

Alpher used the settlers in the occupied territories as a key example of weight beyond numbers. Possibly as a consequence of this, and possibly as a result of internal Palestinian issues, every Israeli offer of terms for a peace settlement that has been turned down by the Palestinians has been followed by lesser offers, making success less and less likely. This is, in Alpher's words, a "delicate house of cards" for both Ariel Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas as each "faces huge obstacles with no guarantee of success" over the coming six months, which are likely to be filled with trau-

"Jews will be shedding Jewish blood as the issue of ending settlements comes to a head." —Yossi Alpher



■ **Yossi Alpher** is Co-Editor of *bitterlemons.org*, a web-based Israeli-Palestinian political dialogue magazine, and *bitterlemons international*, a web-based "Middle East Roundtable." He is former

director of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University and a former senior adviser to Prime Minister Ehud Barak. He served in the Israel Defense Forces as an intelligence officer, and in the Mossad.

Photograph by Michael Simon



Mid-debate: moderator Rushworth Kidder, left, Alpher and Khouri

matic internal pressures for both leaders. For the first time, Alpher predicted, “Jews will be shedding Jewish blood” as the issue of ending settlements comes to a head.

Alpher believes that there is no peace process on the horizon, only a stabilization process: conflict management rather than conflict resolution. Surprising many in the audience, Alpher referred to the Camp David meeting as a setback, where both sides were shocked to discover the depth of feelings and positions the other held, especially Yasser Arafat’s disavowal of any historical connection of the Jews to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

On the questions of the right of return for the 1948 refugees, Alpher pointed out that granting such a right would make Israel implicitly guilty, would be admitting that the state of Israel was “born in sin,” would question the validity of Israel as a country and would call into question the whole idea of a two-state solution. This is part of what leads Israel to a “go-it-alone” philosophy of simply creating “facts on the ground.” “Both sides burned their hands when they touched [these issues] in July 2000 at Camp David,” Alpher said.

The United States remains a major unknown. Although there are strong Jewish and Christian lobbies, both staunch supporters of Israel and Sharon, Alpher wonders what will happen if Mahmoud Abbas succeeds in reducing the violence and asks President Bush to deliver on his promises to support the creation of a Palestinian state. Alpher briefly mentioned the security fence, which he says makes sense everywhere but in Jerusalem, where it will divide about 200,000 Palestinians from their countrymen.

In concluding, Alpher asked three critical questions: First, can Mahmoud Abbas “pull a Sadat”? That is, can he emerge from Arafat’s shadow and take a major turn, as Sadat did with Nasser’s policies? Second, how far can Sharon change regarding settlements and territory? He has changed some, but how far is he willing to go, and how far will Israeli politics let him go? And third, if Mahmoud Abbas is successful but Sharon pulls back, what will George Bush do?

Rami Khouri began with a perspective that startled the audience. The conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, he said, has entered “biblical proportions.” While the fighting has lasted only about a hundred years, “the Palestinian exile—57 years—is now longer than the Jewish exile in Babylon, which was 54 years.” Effectively, Khouri said, this means four generations of Palestinians have no sense of belonging, no sense of a home. In his view, the Palestinians’ time frame is, “Who will be around after the tenth generation?” He sees both sides as feeling abandoned, fighting endlessly, with neither able to win or willing to surrender. While there are majorities on both sides who want peace, he is afraid that the reaction to Israel’s leaving the Gaza settlements will be similar to the response after Israel pulled out of Lebanon—“We have driven the Jews out”—and that fighting is therefore the only possibility.

Khouri’s key points were simple, yet their implications make them challenging. In the course of history, land changes hands, but what about the right of return? Palestinians have always insisted that refugees from the 1948 war establishing the State of Israel, and their descendants, must be able to go home. How can this be reconciled with “the facts on the ground”? New solutions, requiring “far more courage from both sides and a far larger role played by outsiders,” are needed, he said, calling for a “fair, legitimate, acceptable negotiation where both sides recognize the history, offer some return, some payment and the resettlement of Palestinians in their own state.”

With this new courage from both sides, Khouri said, a radical new definition of rights is required, one that measures the line between absolute and relative rights, full and attainable justice. Both sides must examine the phenomenon of four million Palestinians living outside their histori-

“The Palestinian exile—57 years—is now longer than the Jewish exile in Babylon, which was 54 years.”

—Rami Khouri



■ **Rami Khouri** is Executive Editor of the Daily Star newspaper in Beirut, Lebanon. He is a Palestinian-Jordanian and U.S. citizen. An internationally syndicated political columnist and

book author, he spent the 2001-02 academic year as a Nieman Journalism Fellow at Harvard University, and is currently a member of the Brookings Institution Task Force on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World.

Israeli and Palestinian Perspectives

cal lands. Both sides must understand territoriality as a context of the solution as well as a viable redress of wrongs serving the interests of both sides—that of Israel’s remaining a predominately Jewish state (currently Israel is 80% Jewish) while satisfying the Palestinian demands of the right of return, even if it is in name only. After all, Khouri pointed out, just as most Jews of the world don’t live in Israel (about 40%), most Palestinians won’t live in Palestine.

Another significant obstacle is that both sides have to recognize the other’s rights simultaneously. Neither side can afford to be first. Khouri spoke extensively about the lack of charismatic leadership, including the United States in its role as mediator. Strong leaders are required to resolve the major issues—Jerusalem, the refugees, the settlements and terrorism. Khouri likened the Palestinian view of the Israeli settlements to the Israeli view of terrorism: Both are seen as threats to their very existence. In a statement that stopped the breath of much of the audience, he said, “One of the consequences of the failure of leadership on all sides is that we now have beheading rooms in the Middle East.” He stated that “every possibility and opening must be explored.”

Alpher, on the other hand, disagreed, saying, “We can’t afford to fail.” In some ways, Khouri is looking over the heads of the leaders to the people and mass movements

for peace on both sides: “People make peace when the pain is too great to be endured.” Among the leadership, he senses “mutual exhaustion, like two old boxers in the ring, taking a rest.”

In response to a question about the settlements being treated simply as Israelis living inside the boundaries of Palestine, Khouri made the distinction between expatriates living in another country and what the Palestinians see as colonization and appropriation of land. He sees a qualitative difference between those who have an historical association with the land and those making a modern enterprise.

While Alpher did not agree that this represented colonization, he noted that there was no future in an agreement whereby Israelis could remain only under Palestinian laws. Twenty years after the treaties with Egypt and Jordan, he said, not a single Israeli had moved permanently to either country under similar requirements.

Khouri, like Alpher, ended his presentation with compelling questions: Is Israel going to be subject to the dictates of international law and morality? Are the United States and Israel the rogue states of the world? When will the basic decency evident among the majorities be translated into workable possibilities? When will the rights of the Palestinian refugees be negotiated in a fair and equitable manner?

■ *Reported by Jan Rosenbaum*

U.S. Perspective

Ambassador Edward “Skip” Gnehm Jordan and the Levant

A two-state solution is critical for stability in the region.

Professor Edward “Skip” Gnehm told the Camden Conference he would speak as a “practitioner” reflecting his 35 years in the Foreign Service, not as the academic he has recently become. Describing himself as “cautiously optimistic,” he took the audience on a tour d’horizon of Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria.

Jordan is one of the two Arab countries that have signed a peace agreement with Israel, and Gnehm pointed out how the peace process, and that treaty, are “strategically important” for Jordan, for when Israel signed the treaty, it was, in effect, recognizing Jordan as a country. This countered the philosophy of some Israelis, once expressed but since renounced by Sharon,

that “Palestine already exists, just on the other side of the Jordan River.”

Jordanians have watched the security barrier going up, in some places inside Palestinian territory; the expansion of the settlements; and the growth



■ **Edward (Skip) Gnehm**, former U.S. Ambassador to Jordan and Kuwait, is Visiting Professor of International Affairs and Co-Director of the Undergraduate Program in International Affairs at George Washington University’s Elliot School of International Affairs.

of the Palestinian population, all without a peace process in place. The Jordanians' "worst fear," Gnehm said, "is that at some point Israel will have to get rid of the Palestinian population," which means into Jordan. That would be extremely destabilizing, he warned, and would change the very nature of their state.

So it remains in Jordan's interest to see the two-state solution come into being.

Egypt is the other country that has signed an agreement with Israel. That agreement, Gnehm said, is often referred to as a "cold peace," in contrast to the warmer peace with Jordan. Lately, Egypt, like Jordan, has become more engaged with the Palestinians. Like Jordan, it has assisted in training Palestinian security forces. And, Gnehm believes, Egypt is prepared to get more involved in the Gaza situation. At the same time, President Hosni Mubarak has been more active in reaching out to Ariel Sharon.

Lebanon once had an agreement with the United States and Israel, which was signed in May 1983 but abrogated a year later under Syrian pressure. Lebanon's southern border and the Syrian-backed Hezbollah party are still big issues for the United States and Israel. The recent assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri has raised a great deal of suspicion about Syria's role in it.

"The Jordanians' worst fear is that at some point Israel will have to get rid of the Palestinian population, which means into Jordan."

—Edward Gnehm

To speak of Lebanon is to lead to a discussion of Syria. Gnehm pointed out that last September, the UN Security Council called for a complete withdrawal of Syria's troops from Lebanon. Our relationship with Syria has been troubled for a long time, although there have been interludes of cooperation when Syria sent troops to help in Kuwait and, immediately following 9/11. But there remain many issues: the fact that Syria is a state sponsor of terrorism; its involvement with Lebanon; its failure to secure its border with Iraq; and its continued efforts to acquire WMD. So, Gnehm concluded, Lebanon's relationship with the United States has been "mostly down."

■ *Reported by Lucia Hatch*

Iran, Iraq and the Persian Gulf

Judith Yaphe



Gulf Arabs are concerned most about their own religious and political divides.

■ **Judith Yaphe** is Distinguished Research Professor at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, the National Defense University,

Washington, D.C. She is a specialist in Middle Eastern political analysis, with a focus on Iraq, Persian Gulf, Arab, Islamic and regional issues. She is the editor and contributor to *The Middle East in 2015: the Impact of Regional Trends Trends in U.S. Security Planning*. Ms Yaphe spoke at the 2004 Camden Conference on "U.S. Foreign Policy for the 21st Century."

Judith Yaphe is "cautiously optimistic" about success in Iraq, she said, adding, "We don't give the Iraqis enough credit for learning how to think and act politically." The three issues in the Gulf area that she considers most important for the United States are "the Arab-Israeli peace process; political reform or democracy; and Iran."

Yaphe declared that people in the Gulf don't worry that much about Palestine. They worry about the failure to find the solution, and about the impact of yet another failure on "the Arab street." Above all, they want an end to violence. They do want reform, "but they don't worry about it."

U.S. Perspective

What they do worry about in Iraq, she said, is a Shia government that could encourage their own minority populations to rise up. As Juan Cole demonstrated, the geographic arc that goes from Lebanon to Iraq to Kuwait to Saudi Arabia to Bahrain is heavily Shia and therefore seen as a threat

The Gulf Arabs worry that “the spillover” of political Shia will precipitate changes that they can’t control.” From their perspective, Yaphe explains, they already have their own type of democracy that they are comfortable with. Their version is called shura, meaning consultation: anybody can go see the rulers. There is some voting, but for municipal councils only. Benefits accrue only to the native-born; all immigrants are second-class citizens, or less.

Yaphe thinks that the Arabs are aware that they must broaden the participation in society, liberalize their economies, eliminate corruption, reduce religion in the school curriculum and get rid of entitlements for the ruling families. But it’s hard to do this, she pointed out, when “you’re talking about members of your own family,” or about the clerics you have empowered.

There is Shia spillover within Iraq, which has been a “training ground and safe haven” for extremists since Saddam fell. Yaphe believes “we sometimes lose sight of the fact that most attacks in Iraq are against Iraqis,” against those who have volunteered to work for the military and civil authorities, for the U.S. embassy, for journalists as translators.

Yaphe also pointed out that the Sunni religious extremists are “learning their tradecraft” in Iraq and are then able to “go home and practice in Saudi, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman.” All of these states have recently had cells uncovered and plans disrupted..

The Iraqis are working on creating their new system. They are learning how to negotiate among themselves. Under intense provocation, they have not succumbed to civil war, and Yaphe doesn’t think they will. The reality, according to her, is that Islam will be “a, or perhaps the, source of law.” But Iraqis don’t believe that clerics should

have a role in government; Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani has said that, and the likely prime minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, has said that too.

Yaphe emphasized that “Iraq is not Iran.” Many may worry that a Shia theocracy will emerge in Iraq, controlled by Iran, but “that is not likely to happen.” There is no love lost between the Iraqis and the Iranians. Even those Iraqi dissidents sheltered in Iran for 20 years aren’t overly fond of Iranians. They went there only because they didn’t have the means to flee to London or Paris.

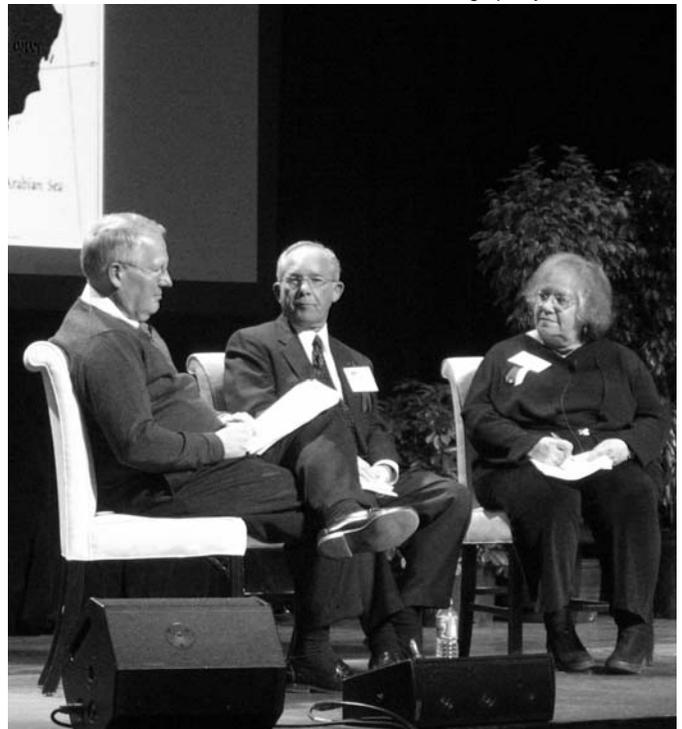
Yaphe also pointed out that the two main Shia opposition groups in Iraq don’t like each other. The Dawa Party was created in Iraq and doesn’t support the rule of clerics. The Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq was invented in Iran, and Iran has supported all Iraqi Shia parties, which have taken its money but used it as they wish. Reminding the audience that there is a 1,200-kilometer border with Iran, Yaphe pointed out that Iraq will have to have good relations with Iran no matter who’s in charge.

The West worries about a nuclear-armed Iran. The experts Yaphe has consulted tell her that there are signals that Iran does want a nuclear weapon at some time, but no one really knows how close it is to achieving that. The Gulf Arabs are not worried about a nuclear-armed Iran; they don’t see themselves as a target. What Iraqis fear, Yaphe said, is that they will have no choice but to stand with the Americans, should they go to war in Iran.

“It’s a very uneasy time and will remain unsettled, she said. “My worst nightmare is a failed Iraq that we will not be able to repair.”

■ Reported by Lucia Hatch

Photograph by Michael Simon



Moderator Kidder, left, with Gnehm and Yaphe

“People in the Gulf don’t worry that much about Palestine ... they worry that the spillover of Shia will precipitate changes that they can’t control.”

—Judith Yaphe

Gnehm and Yaphe: The Audience Asked...

Q: What influence does Iran have over Iraq?

A: Gnehm agreed with Yaphe about Iran's influence in Iraq: The head of state in Iraq, whoever he is, "won't be interested in taking orders from Iran." He will want to keep the price of oil up. "The Shia in the south, the Kurds in the north and the Sunnis in the middle all want access to the oil revenues."

Q: What role will the Sunnis play in the December elections?

A: It will be to the advantage of the Shia and the Kurds that the Sunnis be a part of the process for the next election in December, said Gnehm. "Otherwise, the Shia and the Kurds will inherit the insurgency."

Q: Are the Gulf Arabs concerned about Iran's plans?

A: Unlike Yaphe, Gnehm thinks that the Gulf Arabs are very worried about Iran. He told the audience that he used to use a South Georgia weather analogy to explain the differences between Iraq and Iran to his American colleagues: "Iraq is like a brief summer afternoon thunder-shower; Iran is like a heavy days-long frontal system"

For Iraq's weather analogy, "the sky has been clear all day, and all of a sudden it gets as black as night and just pours; an hour later, the sun is out and it only steams."

For Iran, "the front comes in and hangs heavy; it lasts for days or even weeks."

Q: Did the Iraqis who did not vote in January not believe in the system?

A: They do believe in the system, Yaphe said, but they "don't know how to make it work." She sees some signs that the Sunnis are trying to find a way to get into the process.

"If Iraq succeeds," Yaphe said, "it will be because they want to, not because of what we do. I am optimistic about this."

Yaphe illustrated her optimism by referring to the woman sitting next to Laura Bush at the State of the Union speech, who was the daughter of a Shia tribal sheik murdered by Saddam. She is an "ardent Arab nationalist," Yaphe said, married to an "ardent Kurdish nationalist" who is Sunni. They have a son—"What is he?" In fact, Yaphe said, there is no history of communal fighting between Sunni and Shia. Even Saddam's family has Shia members. There is a history of inter-marriage and living together for hundreds of years. Consequently, "Iraq cannot be split into three convenient spaces."

Q: Aren't the Jordanians still divided on the matter of the treaty with Israel?

A: Gnehm agreed—11 years later, he said, it is still called "the king's peace." It was King Hussein who was behind the peace, and he is revered. But in the immediate aftermath of the treaty, Gnehm said that Jordanian citizens visited Israel, took

their kids to the beach and intermingled freely with Israelis. A more permanent result of the treaty, he said, has been the establishment of Qualified Industrial Zones in Jordan. "With a percentage of the input from Israel and from Jordan, goods produced there can come to the United States duty-free and quota-free." In 1997, Jordan sent less than \$9 million worth of goods to the US; last year, it was more than \$660 million. That trade continues, Gnehm said.

Gnehm also pointed out just how close Jordan is to Israel. "At night, you can see the lights of Jerusalem shimmering like stars. On a clear day, you can even see the minarets on the Mount of Olives." So Israel is not an abstraction for Jordanians; "it's real."

Gnehm believes that in spite of the continued opposition to the treaty in his country, when King Abdullah stands firm and explains why it is still important, he will get criticism, but it will stand.

Q: How will success be judged in the region?

A: Both Yaphe and Gnehm cautioned that we have to let the countries involved work things out. In the United States, Yaphe said, "every administration defines success the way they want to, when they are ready to. The elections were important, but they were all about Iraq, not about us."

In Search of a Consistent Middle East Policy

We are far from the goal of encouraging moderate Islamic governments.



Ambassador Richard W. Murphy

Ambassador Richard Murphy views our present Middle East policy through the lens of more than 30 years of service as a career foreign officer in the region with stints in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Jordan. He began by observing that stability in the Middle East now depends on “whether it will be possible to forge a creative, persuasive and united Western policy toward the region. We are a long way from that.”

Part of the reason, he pointed out, has been the direct effect of 9/11 on American polity. It has distanced us from our European allies (for whom the event was less extraordinary) and led us into a bout of Saudi and Muslim bashing that hurt us with important potential Middle Eastern allies. Our stridency in the period leading up to the Iraqi invasion didn’t help either. “Since those days,” Ambassador Murphy said, “the Bush administration has expounded at length about its twin overarching goals in foreign policy: to spread freedom and democracy. If one stays at that level of abstraction, as the President did in his Inaugural Address and the State of the Union message, who can fail to salute those goals?”

The ambassador then went on to worry about an administration that seems to consider being “reality-based” a criticism, and that faults its detractors for failing to appreciate “the central importance of what the Bush team had grasped early on ... that America is strong enough to create new realities of its own.” He sees that the United States is now mired in what he calls “old-fashioned realities,” such as “limits both in military manpower and the amount of blood and treasure it is willing to expend to achieve its policy goals.”

Ambassador Murphy cautions that it a bit early to claim, as the Bush administration has, that the elections in Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq have really “transformed” the Middle East and/or moved it down the road to freedom and democracy. In Afghanistan, for example, it is becoming clear that the goals spelled out in the Bonn agreement are not close to being reached, and that it will

be five years or more before the international forces in that country can begin to disengage.

After 25 years of war, at least there is progress away from the harsh rule of the Taliban and the warlords, but the government now in place is ineffectual and increasingly hostage to al Qaeda. Women and some ethnic minorities have only a minor role in public life. The government has some legitimacy, but the old-fashioned realities still exist, including drought, economic stagnation and drug trafficking. Worse, its fate seems less and less in its own hands. Ambassador Murphy posits that the ultimate success of the Karzai government “may depend not on whether it is democratic or what it accomplishes domestically, but on whether ways can be found by outside powers to reduce regional tensions, especially the threat that Pakistan feels from India.”

For both Palestinians and Iraqis, the period running up to the election was problematic, affording the voters no opportunity to understand in detail what they were about to do, and no respite from violence and occupation. Nor were the political platforms of the candidates and parties articulated or debated. Ambassador Murphy observed that “the death of Yasser Arafat may prove to have been more important than the Palestinian elections in opening a new chapter in the peace process,” since the Israelis now seem ready to negotiate with the Palestinians, something they couldn’t do before.

The U.S. administration appears to have acknowledged that it must have a role in the Israel-Palestine peace process, but indebted as it is to the Christian Right, the ambassador questions how aggressively it would pursue

■ **Richard Murphy**, former U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines and Saudi Arabia, spent 34 years as a career foreign service officer. His assignments included Country Director for the Arabian Peninsula and Director of Personnel for the Near Eastern Bureau from 1968-71 and Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs from 1983-1989. During that period he was particularly active in the Israeli-Arab peace process.

“The United States is mired in such old-fashioned realities as limits in military manpower and the amount of blood and treasure it is willing to expend.”

standings and agreements to resolve the crisis would entail, but Washington has shown a reluctance to “impose” a solution on the conflict.

“Personally, I remain impatient,” Ambassador Murphy said. “Today, in addition to there being a new Palestinian leadership and a new idea in Sharon’s Gaza withdrawal plan, both sides appear genuinely tired of violence. This argues for a vigorous shove by Washington.” What might stand in the way of such action, he said, was the recent electoral success of Hamas. He predicted that the United States will find it awkward to engage Hamas and will be particularly impa-

that role, since adherents of the Christian Right “tend to share the view that Israeli policymakers operate under some degree of divine guidance. This tends to inhibit debate and challenge.” A consistent policy toward the Middle East would require tight focus on the Arab-Israeli confrontation. Over the years of negotiation, all have come to understand what a package of under-

tient if Mahmoud Abbas’s attempt to co-opt Hamas proves unsuccessful: “Our impatience could lead us to return to minimal American participation in the process. This would be a mistake,” he said.

The ambassador pointed out that “our destruction of Saddam Hussein’s regime produced a major gain for Iran by upsetting the former balance of power between Iran and Iraq. At least in the short run, the [Iraqi] elections have accelerated the growth of Iran’s influence in Iraq. If the West is unable to build a more cooperative relationship with Iran, we may see Tehran interested in and able to manipulate post-election developments in Palestine and Afghanistan as well.”

The ambassador concluded with a look at U.S. relations with other Western nations in pursuing Middle East policy. Despite President Bush’s recent so-called charm offensive in Europe, there is still uneasiness among traditional U.S. allies over Bush’s “Jacobin [unilateralist] tendencies.”

The real challenge, Ambassador Murphy observed, is to look beyond the recent mutual frustrations between Europe and the United States over Middle East policy and to determine whether or not our basic goals are all that different: “We all would like to encourage the dominance of moderate Islamic governments and destroy, or at a minimum neutralize, our enemies among the radical Islamists. Neither of us yet seems to have figured out how best to assure this outcome.”

■ *Reported by Tom DeMarco*

The Long War of the 21st Century

The U.S. must change its strategies if it wants to win the battle of beliefs.

“The present war we’re in,” declared former CIA director R. James Woolsey, is often mischaracterized as the Global War on Terrorism. Time will prove, he predicted, that this involvement will be unlike traditional wars, and more like the Cold War, which lasted 45 years and involved many ideological contests as well as occasional fighting. The correct name for the current engagement, he suggested, would be “the long war of the twenty-first century.”

Woolsey, who was the director of the CIA from 1993 to 1995 and who worked on security issues under presidents from Nixon to Bush, defined three principal enemies of the



R. James Woolsey

United States: 1) the totalitarian secular movements, particularly the Baathists; 2) Islamist fundamentalists from the Shiite side of Islam, not the bulk of the Shiite religious population but what Juan Cole called the “religious dictator” of Iran, the Grand Ayatollah Feyyed Ali Khamenei, the vilayet-I-faqi (supreme cleric); and 3) Islamist fundamentalists from the Sunni side of Islam, al Qaeda and affiliated organizations.

“These three movements,” Woolsey said, “have been at war with us for some time.” The Sunnis surrounding Iraq are worried about the so-called Crescent of Shia, and our Sunni “friends” in the region have dissuaded us from working too

closely with the Shia. “Our Shia-phobia over the decades has been most ill-advised.”

We are perceived in the region as having backed secular despots against the interest of a Shia population, and this is largely correct, Woolsey said. “So we’ve put ourselves in a bad position in the Middle East. Our apparent wish for the people of the region was that they be polite filling-station attendants, pumping gas for our SUVs and otherwise not bothering us. All we really wanted was the oil, and we more or less ignored the rest. I think we have to change that attitude radically.”

Woolsey sounded other warnings. “I believe it’s clear beyond any reasonable doubt that the Iranian regime is working, and working hard, on a nuclear weapons program It would not have gas centrifuges and other enrichment material just for the fuel cycle. It is putting together the entire set of materials that you need to do the job.”

In our efforts to contain the Sunni Islamists as well as the vilayet-I-faqi, he suggested that we would do well to concentrate on the rights of women: “The mullahs of the theocracy in Iran, the Wahabis [a puritanical Saudi Islamic sect founded by Mohammad ibn-Abd-al-Wahab in the 18th century that regards all other sects as heretical] and those whose ideology in some way underlies the Islamists from the Sunni side of Islam are even crazier about eros than they are about demos. Their treatment of women is at the heart of the totalitarian spirit they have brought to the government of Iran, to the terrorist movements that are affiliated with it and to the Sunni Islamist terror movements.”

Al Qaeda and its affiliated infrastructure, the third of our principal enemies, is the one Woolsey worries about the most. The movement is extraordinarily wealthy because of funding from the rich families of Saudi Arabia. Islamists on the Sunni side “are dreaming of a worldwide caliphate, and they want to reestablish the caliphate for all Muslims, and then for all regions which were once Muslim (Spain) and finally for the whole world.” Woolsey compared the appeal of this ideological belief for some young and unemployed men in the streets of Riyadh or Cairo to the attractiveness that Hitler’s thousand-year Reich had for unemployed young Germans, or that the dream of worldwide Communism had for those who made the Communist revolution.”

The influence of the Wahabis on this movement he found particularly disturbing. The House of Saud, in the early 70s,

■ **James Woolsey** is a former CIA Director, U.S. Ambassador to the Negotiation on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), Vienna, Under Secretary of the Navy (1977–79), and General Counsel to the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services. He was also appointed by the President as Delegate at Large to the U.S.–Soviet Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) and Nuclear and Space Arms Talks (NST), and served in that capacity on a part-time basis in Geneva, Switzerland, 1983–1986.

became simultaneously “very, very wealthy and very, very frightened, frightened by emerging Shia power in Iran and even within Saudi Arabia.” This has led the Saudis into what former Secretary of State George Shultz has called a “grotesque protection racket.” The Wahabis have profited to the extent of some \$85 billion to \$90 billion since the 1970s to spread their beliefs around the world. Woolsey described an 80-page document (available from freedomhouse.com) produced by the Wahabis to spread their thinking to mosques in the United States and elsewhere. Distributed by the Saudi government, the document refers to Jews as “pigs and monkeys,” asserts that it is the obligation of all true Muslims to hate Christians and Jews and claims that “American women routinely sleep with their fathers and brothers, that incest is a common way of life in the United States and that just shows how rotten the Americans are.”

Why are we at war with these three movements? Why did they decide that they wanted to be at war with us? In part, Woolsey said, they thought that the United States was basically too much of a coward to stand up to them. He cited the following events as fueling this belief:

- In 1979, hostages were seized, and what did the American do? They tied yellow ribbons around their trees.
- In 1983, Hezbollah blew up the American embassy in Beirut and what did the Americans do? They left.
- In the rest of the 80s there were numerous terrorist attacks against the Americans in the Middle East, and what did they do? They sent in the lawyers to try to bring charges against the perpetrators.
- In 1991, President George H.W. Bush encouraged an armed uprising by Kurds and Shiites that was succeeding in most of Iraq, and what did he do? He signed a cease-fire agreement with Iraq and then watched while the Iraqis flew in with armed helicopters and slaughtered the Kurds and Shiites.
- In 1993, Saddam tried to assassinate President Bush, and what did the United States do? They bombed a deserted Iraqi intelligence building at night.
- Also in 1993, in Mogadishu, Osama shot down their helicopters and what did the Americans do? They left.

What do we have to do at home and abroad to fight this war? First, we must understand that there will be trade-offs between liberty and security, said Woolsey, referring to Justice Robert Jackson’s observation that the U.S. Constitution is not “a suicide pact.”*

Second, we must focus on the huge numbers of networks on which we depend (electrical, oil and gas; LNG

*In 1949, Justice Jackson finished a fiery dissenting opinion in *Terminiello v. City of Chicago* with these words: “There is danger that, if the court does not temper its doctrinaire logic with a little practical wisdom, it will convert the constitutional Bill of Rights into a suicide pact.” —T. DeM.

“Our Shia-phobia over the decades has been most ill-advised.”

ports; the Internet, etc.), all designed for openness and ease of use “without a single thought about security.” When complex networks go wrong, they are subject to cascading failures. He cited a recent example of a tree branch in Ohio falling on a power line and causing much of the East Coast to be powered down for several days, adding, “The really bad news is that terrorists are smarter than tree branches.”

Finally, Woolsey said, “The key point is that we cannot meet something with nothing.” He allowed that he was “probably as close to a neo-con as you’ll get at this conference,” and, from that perspective, he faulted as far too timid our latter-day U.S. policy vis-à-vis Slobodan Milosevic in the Balkans, and our hands-off approach to the decline of progress in Russia. He said that the standard we should be trying to instill in most of the world is not just balloting but a system of decision-making through broad consultation and “public reason.” Countries that adopt this standard are true democracies and less likely to go to war, to fall into civil war or to self-destruct. “We need to help countries ... draw upon their own traditions

to move forward, with guarantees of rights of minorities, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, rights of women.”

The majority of Muslims today live in democracies, Woolsey reminded us. Only three of the last hundred or so new democracies formed since World War II were brought about by American force of arms. This trend is unstoppable, he concluded, and we need to be part of it. “This direction is in the interests of peace and economic development, and of the American people and the rest of the world. Will it be hard? Of course. Will it happen quickly? Of course not. Must it be done with respect for the religious and other traditions of many parts of the world? Yes. Mongolia and Mali are both perfectly fine functioning democracies today. Neither one looks anything like our Constitution. But they work. They work in a Mongolian and a Malian way.”

As we pursue this policy, Woolsey said, we will be criticized by the governing elites all over the world as interfering busybodies who don’t understand their cultures—that is, the cultures where the elite get to make all the decisions. “Our response to this ought to be, ‘Mr. King or Mr. Dictator, you’re basically right to be worried. Because we’re finally awake, and we’re on the side of those whom you most fear: your own people.’”

■ *Reported by Tom DeMarco*

Wrapping Up Questions for All

Whatever their position on the future of the Middle East—cautiously optimistic, cautiously pessimistic, or somewhere in between—all agreed it would be a “long, hard slog.”

The 2005 Conference ended on Sunday morning with a panel discussion that included Yossi Alpher, Juan Cole, Rami Khouri, Ambassador Richard Murphy, Olivier Roy, R. James Woolsey, Judith Yaphe and General Tony Zinni. First the panelists answered questions from the audience. Then they all addressed moderator Rushworth Kidder’s question, “What is the key message of the conference?”

Q: Polls indicate the great degree to which the American public is misinformed about events like 9/11 and Saddam Hussein and weapons of mass destruction. Given this crisis in the quality of public information, how can there be responsible debate on the issues?

A: According to journalist **Rami Khouri**, the media—both Arab and America—is greatly to blame. There has been a “cataclysmic lack of real analysis” of 9/11 and of the reasons why the Arab world is so critical of

the United States, Khouri said, as well as a “massive abdication of responsibility in the public sphere.” For Khouri, this is a prime example of one of the flaws in American democracy: The system of checks and balances is not working.

Juan Cole shared Khouri’s opinion of the media’s role: “Something is peculiar and badly wrong with the American information system.” Cole attributed this to two major factors: Media consolidation and the degree to which this can successfully manipulate public opinion; and the responsibility of corporate media to its stockholders. To counter the first, Cole, said, “we can pressure our congressmen” to support antitrust measures and to fight against letting one media entity control all the media in one town, whether it be George Soros or Rupert Murdoch. As for the profit motive, he added, “reporters who wear American flag pins in their lapels are afraid to get out ahead of the public.”

For **General Zinni**, an educational system that does not encourage young people to be curious or interested is at fault. He tells his students to draw on a broad range of resources—liberal and conservative news outlets in the United States, the United Kingdom and the Arab world—and then talk about what they have read. “I urge them to think for themselves.”

The information made available to the public has been not only marginalized but even politicized by the intelligence community within the Pentagon, **Judith Yaphe** said, and a connect-the-dots theory has contributed to the crisis. There was absolutely no evidence that Saddam Hussein was linked to al Qaeda or 9/11, she said. As for the weapons of mass destruction, “it was hard to believe that Saddam had given these up. He loved the WMD—they were his favorite toys. But the intelligence community was guilty of linear think-

ing: If he had them then, he has them now. A plus B equals C.” As with the Bible or the Koran, Yaphe added, “in 15 years of intelligence you can find whatever evidence you want.”

Not for the first time during the conference, **James Woolsey** broke ranks with his colleagues. The administration strategy in 2002 was not to “rampage around the world overthrowing dictatorships,” Woolsey said. Instead, it was based on three points: the “horrible nature” of the dictatorship, ties with terrorism and ties with the WMD—and the Saddam Hussein regime met all three criteria. While the public may have been wrong about specifics, he said, “they were right in the generic sense.”

Q: Isn’t the United States constrained in this situation by what it realistically can or cannot do?

A: The realist tradition has generally focused on nationals’ interest in a physical and balance-of-power sense, **Woolsey** said, and not on the nature of governments. In this world, he added, “it is important to take a much stronger interest in the nature of governments and help people move toward democracy and the rule of law.” This is not a position traditional realists believe in, he added, “but I believe in it, and I think the President and an awful lot of Americans—though perhaps not the majority at this conference—believe in it.”

Q: How do you see the formation and evolution of a viable Iraqi government without the speedy removal of

American troops, which is what all factions in Iraq seem to want, and why do you think withdrawal would result in failure?

A: Calling the view “dismal,” **Yossi Alpher** predicted that the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq would probably be followed by the release of Saddam Hussein from prison and result in something even worse than the status quo. Speaking for Israelis who are glad to see the United States dealing with some of its worst enemies, he added, “most of us don’t have very high hopes for the long-term stability of Iraq one way or another. But how in the world can the United States withdraw and leave something that doesn’t look like a total shambles?”

While **Ambassador Richard Murphy** believes most factions do not want the United States “out today,” he thinks the sentiment will be stronger and more unified as Iraq’s constitution takes shape and its leadership grows stronger. “Our presence will turn into a burden on the leadership of Iraq by the end of this year,” he added, “and I hope we are out of there in the next 18 months.” Looking back on “one victory after another—the January elections, the referendum and the constitution,” he said, “we’ll be able to say, We’re out of here, we’ve done our job.”

The issue is not about the speedy withdrawal of U.S. troops but about building an army, said **Olivier Roy**. Iraqi soldiers were seen as mercenaries, with a questionable allegiance to a provisional government, he added. “Now that there is an elected government, many soldiers are finding loyalty and motivation, so we may see an increase in the capability of the Iraqi army, which is the key to any withdrawal.

Q: Defining democracy as government of the people, by the people and for the people, when will this American export come to the people of Afghanistan and Iraq?

A: As far as Afghanistan is concerned, **Roy** said, “The elections were legitimate.” Even if the people were not convinced that democracy would come “the next day,” he added, they understood that they were voting to establish a long-term commitment and contract. President Hamid Karzai cannot become a dictator. Whether democracy will work in the long term is another story, but it is a good thing not to go too fast.” On the other hand, Roy said, “In Iraq, the United States did too much. They wanted to build from scratch,” when there should have been more concentration on giving power to the people sooner.

Democracy, women’s rights and a crackdown on al Qaeda may not all be attainable at the same time, according to **Cole**. “We can’t always have truth and beauty both. I think we will see a big retrenchment of women’s rights in Iraq, and I don’t think we’ll see big advances in women’s rights in Afghanistan.” Democratization does not always include the values some American policymakers would like to see, he added.

Q: Why do we call the struggle to suppress terrorism a “war”?

A: “This is my theory on why we go to ‘war’ on drugs, illiteracy, poverty, terrorism or any problem that confronts us,” **General Zinni** replied. After World War II, “the good war,”

neither the country nor the military could ever live up to what we inherited. “There were no good wars—we had the Haitis, the Koreas, the Vietnams, the Somalias, the Bosnias, the Iraqs and everything else. We keep trying to make them into good wars. We had an ideologically perfect metaphor for everything we did, and we’ve applied it to what confronts us now.” But whatever it’s called, he added, what confronts us must be engaged “full force.” There are arguments on all sides: for more force, more balance, more diplomacy, more emphasis on social, cultural and economic elements. “What you call it doesn’t matter,” General Zinni said. “What is important is that you not start measuring it in terms of ‘body count’—how many leaders you’ve killed, how many financial institutions you’ve influenced to cut funding, how many cells you’ve taken down.” In doing that, he added, “you may be winning at the tactical level and losing at the strategic level if it ... becomes the only way to vent political, social and economic frustration.”

General Zinni emphasized that he believes terrorism as the tactic of radical Islam is “a bankrupt ideology, gone in a decade if we apply Islamic principles to reform and change. For the vast majority of Muslims, this is the struggle.”

Q: How can we continue to tolerate conditions in the Gaza refugee camps? Why has nothing been done to improve them?

A: “I have been in all the refugee camps,” **Khouri** said, “and there isn’t any one reason why no one has helped.” The Arab countries, in fact, have done a great deal to help, he added. For the Palestinians, however,

the refugee camps are highly symbolic. “They don’t want to fix up the camps and live in them permanently,” Khouri said. “They want to go back home, or to be part of an equitable solution that ends their status as refugees.”

In international terms, **Alpher** said, the Palestinian refugees are the only ones whose affairs are managed by a dedicated agency, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). “This has succeeded in defining the Palestinian refugee issue as unique in the world, and as one in which refugee status is passed on from generation to generation—and is now in the fourth or fifth generation, and a situation increasingly difficult to solve.” If there is to be a resolution, he said, “we must go back to 1948 and what the international community did with the refugees then, and redefine some of the basic terms of reference of this issue.”

“There is no pride in degradation or poverty among the Palestinians,” **Ambassador Murphy** said. Given the continuing violence among Israelis and Palestinians, UNRWA has not done damage to the situation. On the contrary, it has been the life support of many of the refugees within those camps, he said, adding, “It’s quite true that there have been Arab countries and Arab leaders who have tried to make political capital out of preserving the symbolism of the camps and the misery of the Palestinians.”

The problem with UNRWA and the “incredible” prospect of endless refugee status, **Woolsey** said, is that no Arab country, with the exception of Jordan, has offered citizenship to the refugees. Today there are mass movements of refugees taking up residence in Europe, the Middle East and elsewhere, he added, “and if the surrounding Arab states had offered citizenship to the Palestinian refugees, as has happened pretty much everywhere else throughout the world, we would not have most, or possibly any, of these camps.”

In a lighter-hearted moment, **General Zinni** compared the Palestinians and the Israelis “to a family. They will go at each other’s throats, but they know they are a family, that the Semitic blood is there, and that eventually they must live together.”

Q. What was the key message of this conference?

A. The eight participants in Sunday morning’s panel discussion were in agreement on one thing: It will be what **Woolsey** called a “long, hard slog.” They also agreed that the role of the United States in these developments will be vital as to whether there is success or failure.

Success is not possible, according to **Alpher**, without a thorough reassessment of post-9/11 U.S. policy regarding Iraq and Iran and the conflict between Palestine and Israel. For example, Alpher said, American planners didn’t consider the effects of putting the Shiites in power and the possibility this raises for their forging a stronger alliance with fellow Shiites in Iran, another country that threatens the security of the United States. “The Arab world is in great disunity,” he added. “It is weak, incapable of responding in a united way to provocation. And the strongest countries in the Middle East—Iran, Turkey, and Israel—are non-Arab.” As for the interaction between Israel and Palestine, Alpher continued, “we are talking about stabilization, not about a peace process.” Alpher also believes that in its Middle East considerations, the United States is “much less preoccupied” with the Arab-Israel conflict.

“We can’t make friends by a military occupation—opinion is always affected,” said **Cole**, and whatever the United States’ intention in being in Iraq, it is seen by many as a military occupation. One of the reasons

behind 9/11 was Arab resentment of the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, he added. “And now we have the occupation of Iraq.” We continue to fall out of favor in countries like Egypt and Indonesia that used to have a good opinion of the United States, Cole said. “We haven’t made any friends in the last ten years.”

Calling charity a “bitter fruit,” **Yaphe** cautioned that the United States should not expect “gratitude and admiration. And we have to get over just walking away from what we don’t like. We can’t leave Iraq worse than we found it.” Yaphe stressed the importance of developing and implementing an exit strategy before U.S. troops leave Iraq, whenever that may be. “We must be careful that we don’t create democratic institutions without empowering the people,” she said.

Woolsey, who earlier called the war with Iraq “right in the generic sense” in that the administration under Saddam Hussein met all the requirements for an enemy of the United States, agreed with Yaphe that we must not expect to be a welcome presence. “The rules of law and democracy are worth promoting, and even fighting for, if we have to,” he said, and our purpose in supporting democracy in Iraq is to “foster peace and economic development. We are not in Iraq as occupiers,” Woolsey added, “but the agents of change are often hated. If you want gratitude, go buy a cocker spaniel.”

The Islamic world is “far more complex than we understand,” said **General Zinni**. “It disturbs me to hear simplistic answers like ‘More force’ or ‘Demand more democracy tomorrow.’” General Zinni urged the audience to think of the Islamic world in terms of its history. “They are going through an unbelievable transformation,” he said. “Our role is to give support and help in getting

through this, and there will be debate about how to proceed. But we will play a major role in this transition.”

“Time is not proving friendly to settlement of the Arab-Israeli problem or to our dignified departure from Iraq,” **Ambassador Murphy** said. As for reform, he added, “hard as it is, try to get away from being the clear voice of inspiration speaking from our shining city on the hill. It’s very offensive.” Instead, he continued, we must work with people who are already active in reforming those societies and stop “preaching at them.”

Several things are important in reaching the peace, prosperity and stability we all want, **Khoury** said. First, “consistency matters. When the United States embraces freedom and democracy with such vehemence, the first question most of us in the Middle East ask is, Where were you over the last 30 years when we were pushing for this and you were feeding the tyrants? If freedom matters, it should matter for people everywhere.” Second, he said, “people make mistakes, and people can overcome them. The first step is acknowledging them. And that brings me to my third point: We all need an awful lot more humility,” Khoury said. “The consent of the governed is the fundamental underlying principle of good governance, and if we want to promote democracy and the rule of law, we must do it together.”

Democratization is the test of credibility, **Roy** said, and “dictatorships are in trouble and should be in trouble.” But what comes after? Roy asked. How does religion fit with democracy, and why does religious fundamentalism work? The big issue of this generation, he added, is whether this means a long war, or a problem of transition and differences among generations. “I think it is a transitional problem,” Roy concluded, “and that’s why I am a cautious optimist.”

■ *Reported by Carolyn Marsh*

About the Camden Conference

The Camden Conference, established in 1987, is an occasion for experts and interested individuals to share knowledge and concerns on issues of global importance. Each year a topic is selected and a series of related events are held in Maine communities from Rockland to Bar Harbor, culminating in a weekend conference in February at the Opera House in Camden, Maine.

Community events include lectures, short courses and symposia; group discussions of selected books, journal articles and news reports; and films, art and other cultural occasions. All events are open to the public and most are free. They are led by scholars and other well-informed residents of the area. The events leading up to the 2005 Conference were attended by more than 2,500 people.

Speakers at the Conference come to Camden from government, business, the media and academia. Each speaker addresses an aspect of the year's topic, answers questions from the audience and participates in an exchange of ideas. The speakers stay for the entire weekend, challenging each other, publicly and informally.

In the years since the Conference was founded, programs have examined "The Making of American Foreign Policy ... Myth and Reality"; "The Influence of the News Media in Shaping U.S. Foreign Policy"; "Two Worlds Under Pressure: The Growing Crisis of Population and Movement"; and "U.S. Foreign Policy for the 21st Century: Seeking a Balance." In other years, the focus has been on specific areas of the world.

The Camden Conference is a Maine federally tax-exempt, not-for-profit 501(c)3 corporation. The board of directors includes members from seven mid-coast towns, all of whom volunteer their time and talent to manage these events.

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Photograph by Michael Simon



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