

## Connecticut Debate Association

March 5, 2011, Darien High School and New Canaan High School

### **Resolved: U.S. foreign policy should prioritize democracy ahead of stability.**

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#### **Are neocons right about US foreign policy?**

**Opinion: No. Our realism must be realistic, by HDS Greenway**

Global Post, February 15, 2011 18:30 Updated February 15, 2011 18:30

BOSTON — Egypt has set the debate between realism and idealism raging once again. Should the United States promote democracy abroad and denounce anything less when conducting foreign policy? Or should the U.S. accept the world as it is, and go for whatever promises stability and promotes American interests?

Were we wrong to back Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak all these years, autocratic as he was? Or was it right to back a regime that promised to keep the peace with Israel, keep guard against militant Islam, and back us up in ousting Saddam Hussein?

In other words, was it better to back the man who promoted so many of our foreign policy goals? Or should we have denounced him because he was not a democrat?

Conservatives are now crowing, saying George W. Bush was right all along to push democracy promotion to the fore in his foreign policy. “We are all neocons now,” asserted a Wall Street Journal editorial.

It is true that Bush the Second talked the talk, and his secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice wasn’t all wrong to say, as she did in Cairo, that for 50 years we have promoted stability at the expense of democracy, and gotten neither.

But the Bush administration didn’t walk the walk. It backed away from democracy promotion in Egypt, and elsewhere, and the whole concept got conflated with invading Muslim countries — democracy at the point of an American bayonet. Iraq is more than enough to give democracy a bad name.

The neocon dogma was that, with the Soviet Union gone, and capitalism triumphant, the United States should use its sole-superpower strength to tell the world what to do, get on the team and be like Americans. And were anyone, or any land, to try and challenge our pre-eminent position, they were to be crushed.

The neocons, drunk on the example of 1989 in Eastern Europe, assumed that American-style democracy was best for everybody, and would be everyone’s choice if only they had the chance.

The neocons made three great mistakes. The first was to assert that America was so strong following the end of the Cold War that it could ignore everybody else, go it alone and impose its views on the world. The fact was, as Fred Kaplan has pointed out in his book, “Day Time Dreamers,” that with the Soviet Union gone, we needed persuasion and the cultivation of allies all the more because countries were not going to rally to America just to protect themselves from Communism any more. We needed more persuasion and less bullying after the Cold War, not the other way around.

The second mistake was the assumption that democracy could be imposed. Iraq, in neocon eyes, was to be the shining example that would spread democracy through out the Middle East, guarantee us Iraq’s oil, and help Israel because a democratic Iraq would recognize the Jewish state.

None of these came to pass. Iraq’s democracy is a shining example to no one, and Saddam Hussein may be gone, but Iran’s influence is now hugely enhanced. Nobody with any sense is suggesting the example of Iraq promoted Egyptians to rise up.

The third mistake the neocons made was to argue that the United States had the power to accomplish its goals. The brief moment of neocon ascendancy under George W. Bush drained away America’s hard and soft power to a degree not seen since World War II, and discredited both our ideals and our interests abroad.

There is a fourth mistake, which is not limited to neoconservatives. It is senseless to say that America had anything to do with the Egyptian popular uprising and the departure of Hosni Mubarak. It was a purely Egyptian decision, inspired by Tunis, but made in Cairo, in Alexandria, and in Port Said.

Promoting American interests has to be the first priority of foreign policy, but there is a need to be realistic about realism. We have to live in the world as it is, not as we would wish it, and we can work with regimes that are not

perfectly attuned to our ideals. But democracy and human rights are, more often than not, in the service of American interests. If it is a mistake to force democracy on others, so is it a mistake to discourage it.

During the long years of the Cold War we dealt with the Soviet bureaucracy to lessen tensions where we could, and reach understandings to protect us from nuclear war. But at the same time our ideals, student exchanges, our music and our culture was undermining the tyranny the Soviet system represented.

America wasn't wrong to back Hosni Mubarak back in 1981, when he took over after Anwar Sadat's assassination and promised to keep the peace with Israel. But we also should have done more in later years when the Egyptian regime became unresponsive to the will of the people, thereby threatening the long-term stability we sought. But that would have been a long-term process of persuasion and example, not by ultimatums and public gestures.

It is a mistake to think, however, that America's finger on the scales, one way or the other, would have been the deciding factor. The events in Cairo have been an Egyptian show, and what follows will be an Egyptian solution.

Thus I would argue that America was right to back Mubarak after the assassination of Anwar Sadat, at the hands of Muslim extremists. The Muslim Brotherhood may have softened today, but that was not always the case when they made a bid for power. We could have done more to urge Mubarak to loosen up his regime, lessen repression when it was timely to do so, and to allow more voices to be heard. That, too, is realism.

But it would be a mistake to think that America's finger on the scales, one way or the other, was, or would have been, the deciding factor. The deciding factor was the Egyptian people.

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## Realism in international relations

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Realism in international relations theory** is one of the dominant schools of thinking within the international relations discipline. Realism or political realism prioritizes national interest and security over ideology, moral concerns and social reconstructions. This term is often synonymous with power politics.

Realist theories tend to uphold that:

- The international system is in a constant state of antagonism.
- There is no actor above states capable of regulating their interactions; states must arrive at relations with other states on their own, rather than it being dictated to them by some higher controlling entity.
- In pursuit of national security, states strive to attain as many resources as possible.
- States are unitary actors each moving towards their own national interest. There is a general distrust of long-term cooperation or alliance.
- The overriding national interest of each state is its national security and survival.
- Relations between states are determined by their levels of power derived primarily from their military and economic capabilities.
- The interjection of morality and values into international relations causes reckless commitments, diplomatic rigidity, and the escalation of conflict.
- Sovereign states are the principal actors in the international system and special attention is afforded to large powers as they have the most influence on the international stage. International institutions, non-governmental organizations, multinational corporations, individuals and other sub-state or trans-state actors are viewed as having little independent influence.

In summary, realists believe that mankind is not inherently benevolent but rather self-centered and competitive. This perspective, which is shared by theorists such as Thomas Hobbes, views human nature as egocentric (not necessarily selfish) and conflictual unless given the right conditions under which they can coexist, contrasts with the approach of liberalism to international relations. Further, they believe that states are inherently aggressive (offensive realism) and/or obsessed with security (defensive realism); and that territorial expansion is only constrained by opposing power(s). This aggressive build-up, however, leads to a security dilemma where increasing one's security can bring along even greater instability as the opponent(s) builds up its own arms in response (an arms race). Thus, security becomes a zero-sum game where only *relative gains* can be made. There are no universal principles which all states can use to guide their actions. Instead, a state must always be aware of the actions of the states around it and must use a pragmatic approach to resolve the problems that arise.

## Democratic peace

Democratic peace theory (or liberal democratic theory[1] or simply the "democratic peace") holds that democracies, for some appropriate definition of democracy, rarely, or even never, go to war with one another.

The wording "democratic peace theory" is often disputed since, even if the theory is accepted, it does not imply that the "peace" has the key characteristics of a "democracy" among countries. Some critics argue that it will be more accurate to label it the "democracies do not fight each other" hypothesis.[2]

Several explanations have been offered why democracies rarely fight with each other: that the claim is a statistical artifact, explicable by chance; that democratic leaders must answer to the voters for war, and therefore have an incentive to seek alternatives; that such statesmen have practice settling matters by discussion, not by arms, and do the same in foreign policy; that democracies view non-democracies as threatening, and go to war with them over issues which would have been settled peacefully between democracies; and that democracies tend to be wealthier than other countries, and the wealthy tend to avoid war, having more to lose.

## Wilsonianism

**Wilsonianism** or **Wilsonian** are words used to describe a certain type of ideological perspectives on foreign policy. The term comes from the ideology of United States President Woodrow Wilson and his famous Fourteen Points that he believed would help create world peace if implemented.

Common principles that are often described as "Wilsonian" include:

- Advocacy of self-determination by ethnic groups
  - Advocacy of the spread of democracy
  - Advocacy of the spread of Capitalism
  - Anti-isolationism/ Anti-Imperialism, in favor of intervention to help create peace and / or spread freedom
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## There's No Such Thing as a Bad Election

*Events in Iran prove that even a little bit of democracy is a powerful thing.*

By Anne Applebaum, Slate: foreigners. Posted Sunday, June 14, 2009, at 4:31 PM ET

Once upon a time, *democracy* was a synonym for motherhood and apple pie, a thing of unchallengeable value. More recently, the word has lost its luster. The Bush administration spoke a lot about democracy in principle but found democratic ideas, not to mention democratic institutions, hard to promote in practice. Elections the United States wanted in Palestine led to the victory of Hamas. In Iraq, elections organized with U.S. assistance produced a weak and divided government at a time when strength and unity were required. Meanwhile, authoritarian Russian, Central Asian, and other regimes spent the last decade learning how to manipulate elections, giving themselves bogus legitimacy and producing a new form of "managed democracy": authoritarianism camouflaged in democratic rhetoric.

The result was a backlash—if not exactly against democracy, then against its promotion. In part because they intuitively disdain anything that President George W. Bush admired, in part because they doubt its efficacy, the Obama administration has quite deliberately stayed away from the whole idea of promoting democracy in general and elections in particular. In discussing Afghanistan, they initially spoke about "clear and attainable goals," not democracy. In his Cairo speech, President Barack Obama himself—speaking to an audience that included Egypt's undemocratic leaders—prefaced his short comments on democracy with the enthusiasm-killing phrase, "I know there has been much controversy. ..." I am reliably informed that within the White House and State Department, jobs with "democracy promotion" in the title are not eagerly sought after.

Which leaves us with the peculiar conundrum of Iran. For Iran is a classic example of managed democracy—if it can be called a democracy at all. Iranians are not guaranteed freedom of speech or of the press. Political parties are heavily restricted. A small group of unelected clerics holds a monopoly on real political power, supervising elections as well as candidates. The latter can be rejected for belonging to the wrong religious group, for "indecent acts," or simply for failing to participate in Friday prayers with sufficient enthusiasm. Overzealous campaigners can be beaten up by police patrols, and in recent weeks, some were. The central purpose of elections is not to choose a president—that is generally done in advance—but to reinforce the dubious legitimacy of the clerics' chosen candidate. For that reason, Iranian dissidents, both inside and outside the country, usually call upon their supporters to boycott elections altogether.

And yet—the elections Iran held June 12 also proved just how powerful, and just how ultimately uncontrollable, even the most heavily managed elections can be. Iran's elections might not have been free or fair, but they did, as an Iranian

friend of mine put it, expose a "serious factional divide that could not be dealt with behind the closed doors of the ruling oligarchy." They might not have presented society with two radically different candidates (Mir Hossein Mousavi, the "reformer" in this election, presided over the mass murder of political prisoners when he was prime minister in the 1980s), but merely allowing the public the chance to vote against President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad inspired the largest turnout anyone can remember. The press might not have been able to report everything that happened, but Iranians did attend electoral events in unprecedented numbers, hissing and cheering. The votes might not have been counted correctly, but the whiff of fraud has sparked the biggest wave of demonstrations anyone has seen for a decade.

Yes, this was a highly managed, deeply illiberal election, and it didn't even change the composition of the Iranian government: After all that, Ahmadinejad is still president. But the voting process did open a crack where none had existed before, the possibility of choice did inspire what had seemed to be a passive society to protest, and the campaign rallies allowed people to shout political slogans in front of the police without the police reacting. One could argue—and many Iranians do—that the poll was farcical. But Iran goes to show that a bad election is better than none at all.

What comes next? As I write, the Internet rumor mill says that Mousavi is under arrest. By next week, he may be president—or he may be in prison. But that, too, is the point: The impact of democracy—even halfway, tentative, incomplete democracy—is unpredictable. Which is, of course, why dictators try to control it in the first place.

*Anne Applebaum is a Washington Post and Slate columnist. Her most recent book is Gulag: A History.*

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## **Western Ignorance**

by Elias Bejjani, Arutz Shava, Israeli National News, 2-21-11

The west, for reasons that are not understood yet, is abandoning all its Middle East allies under the pretext of the two false slogans of democracy and freedom. Read the real history of Western stupidity here.

On January 31/2011, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei posted this statement on his website: "there is no doubt that based on realities envisioned by God, a new Middle East will be formed and this Middle East will be an Islamic Middle East."

Apparently, the western world and its US leadership are walking blindly through a field of explosive mines in the entire Middle East.

This questionable and confusing path is seen by many Arab, Israeli and Lebanese analysts and politicians as a self destructive act due to the fact that all the pro-western regimes are falling one after the other, while the west itself is paving the way and preparing the milieu for Islamic fundamentalist groups to take over.

Sadly, it makes no difference if western policies are executed intentionally or unintentionally because they are advocating for the model of the two axis of evil regimes, Syria and Iran, which operate using Hezbollah and Hamas as their terrorist militias. The perplexing western acts of hostility toward their own allies by characterizing them as oppressive and not respecting the will of their own people, are portraying these two evil regimes as substitutes for all the pro-western ones.

It is strongly believed that the western cowboy-like policies are completely detached from the Middle East realities and alienated from all its social and religious norms. The policies of the west if not reassessed will definitely lead to more chaos, anarchy, disasters and losses in the whole Middle East.

The west, for reasons that are not understood yet, is abandoning all its Middle East allies under the pretext of the two false slogans of democracy and freedom. Western leaders ignore the deeply rooted fact that the majority of the Middle Eastern people comprehend these slogans in a very different way than to western societies. The criteria for norms in the Middle East and the western world are not only different, but at times completely contradict each other.

One wonders why suddenly the west has decided to get rid of its number one ally in the Middle East, Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak after toppling their other loyal ally, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia. There is no doubt Mubarak is a very bad ruler. But if he is compared to the Muslim Brotherhood organization's leadership, who might now get their hands on Egypt and turn it into another Iran, Mubarak looks like a guardian angel. It is worth mentioning that Ayman Muhammad Rabaie al-Zawahiri, the number two man in Al Qaeda's hierarchy, is an Egyptian and not much different from his Muslim Brotherhood organization counterparts.

Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood organization is the oldest and largest radical Islamic group, the grandfather of Hezbollah, Hamas, and al-Qaeda. Its main objective is to erect a Muslim regime in Egypt and all other Muslim countries and impose Islamic Sharia law. Dr. Walid Phares, a well known terrorism analyst and writer, has studied the Muslim Brotherhood. Phares says its history shows that the group is not secular and not moderate. "The Muslim Brotherhood is the mothership for the jihadi ideologies and thinking. And therefore one can say today's Al Qaeda, and

today many other jihadists, are off shoots of the Muslim Brotherhood.”

One also questions the western wisdom in keeping a blind eye on what is happening in Turkey whose current Islamic leadership is gradually changing their secular country into another fundamentalist Iran, while still receiving western aid worth billions of dollars. The same Turkish scenario is gradually unfolding in Yemen, Tunisia, Algeria, and Sudan.

The same question applies to the Baathist Syrian regime, the most notorious dictatorship in the world. The USA, and all the European countries are appeasing and cajoling this murderous regime and allowing its merciless leadership to sabotage its neighboring countries Iraq and Lebanon. Syria is given free reign to interfere in their internal affairs through terrorism and murder. Syria's President Bashar Assad was again last month given the West's blessings to abort Lebanon's Cedar Revolution, topple its unity government, and appoint a pro Syria-Iranian PM to form a new anti-Western government. It seems also that the pro-western Jordanian monarchy is on its way to face the same Mubarak fate.

Since the early seventies and up until today the bizarre and questionable policies of the USA and the majority of the European countries have been offering wrong predictions and calculations in regards to all the radical Islamic regimes in the Middle East. Looking thoroughly and objectively in some of the dramatic unfolding events since 1970 we learn with great disappointment that all the Islamic radical regimes were brought in power by the USA and Europe on the account of their pro western allies. The sequence of the following events show plainly this problematic trend:

In year 1975: Arab countries, Europe, and USA gave Syria's notorious butcher and dictator Late Hafez Al Assad the green light and full support to invade and occupy Lebanon, the only multi-cultural, democratic country in the Arab world. In 2005 the Lebanese Cedars Revolution forces Syrian troops to leave Lebanon. Last month Lebanon fell again a prey to Syria and Iran and again with the blessing of western countries.

In 1979, the USA brought to Iran Ayatollah Khomeini and his Islamic revolution on the account of its strong and powerful ally Shah Reza Shah Pahlevi. The Iranian Islamic Revolution under the late Khomeini and his current his successor, Supreme Leader, Sayyid Ali Khamenei oppressed its people, murdered or muffled all opposition groups' and individuals. Iran is now working hard on owning an atomic bomb, destabilizing Arabian Gulf Emirates and kingdoms through terrorism, demonizing the USA as a satanic regime, and is terrorizing the Middle East through its armed militias Hezbollah and Hamas. Meanwhile, the west has turned a blind eye to Iran establishing a mini-state in Lebanon through its armed militia, the terrorist Hezbollah..

In 2003, the USA invaded Iraq and toppled Saddam Hussien's regime and replaced it by a pro Iran-Syrian one that have massacred the Christians and forced most of them to leave Iraq in fear for their lives.

In Afghanistan the USA nurtured and created the monster Al-Qaida and its devil Ben Laden, who orchestrated and executed the 911 terrorist attacks that instigated the western invasion of Afghanistan. Meanwhile the USA and Europe support and finance the most notorious fanatic and oppressive regimes in the world including Pakistan, Syria and others.

Elections and democracy are not always the road for freedom and liberation. No one should forget that in 1932 Adolf Hitler through structural elections took over Germany and created the worst dictatorship in history.

In this same western kind of mentality and wrong calculations, Ehud Barak's Israeli government abandoned its Lebanese loyal allies in south Lebanon in the year 2000 and handed south Lebanon without any fight to Hezbollah.

In June 2007, Ehud Olmert's government watched silently as Hamas took over the Gaza strip without giving its Palestinian allies any help.

Iran's President Ahmadinejad, Syria's dictator Bashar Al Assad, Hezbollah's leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, Hamas' leadership, and Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez among many leaders supporting terrorism allege that the West is a coward when it comes to confrontation, does not have the guts to fight, and always abandons its allies after using them. Well, the recent events unfolding in the Middle East make these allegations credible.

In conclusion, we believe that the western world has an obligation to help its Middle Eastern allies to gradually adopt a kind of democracy that is tailored to the culture, beliefs, traditions and history of their societies. They should not take any role in toppling them and help the Islamic fanatics to take over.

Hopefully, the Western policy makers will wake up soon to the reality that they are playing with fire in the Middle East, because as we say back home in Lebanon, " He who plays with fire ultimately burns his fingers".

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## **Muslims offer mixed views on Hamas, Hezbollah, reject al Qaeda**

*Editor's Note: This report comes from the CNN Wires desk, December 3, 2010*

Muslims in many parts of the Islamic world overwhelmingly reject al Qaeda, support a large role for their faith in government and believe democracy is preferable to any other kind of political structure, according to a new survey released by Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project.

The study also found falling support for suicide bombings, as well as mixed attitudes towards Hamas and Hezbollah, Islamic groups designated as terrorist organizations by Western governments but which operate extensive social services networks in parts of the Muslim world.

The survey, conducted this spring in Jordan, Lebanon, Nigeria, Indonesia, Egypt, Pakistan and Turkey, found that only in Nigeria did Muslim populations have anything approaching a favorable view of al Qaeda, with 49 percent expressing positive views and 34 percent holding an unfavorable opinion.

At least seven in 10 Muslims had unfavorable views of the group in Egypt, Turkey and Lebanon, as did lesser majorities in Jordan and Indonesia, according to the study.

But views of Hamas and Hezbollah were more mixed. Both groups got favorable ratings from a majority of Jordanian Muslims, with 60 percent supporting Hamas and 55 percent holding favorable views of Hezbollah, Pew reported.

Hezbollah received a narrow 52 percent favorable rating in its home base of Lebanon. But that slim majority belies deep divisions across Islamic sects in Lebanon, with 94 percent of Shia supporting Hezbollah and 84 percent of Sunnis looking on the group unfavorably.

Muslims in every nation but Turkey expressed a positive feeling about Islam's influence in their nation's politics. More than nine in 10 Indonesian Muslims said its influence is positive, as did more than eight in 10 Egyptian and Nigerian Muslims. In Jordan, 76 percent of Muslims approved of Islam's influence, as did 69 percent in Pakistan and 58 percent in Lebanon.

In Turkey, 38 percent had a positive opinion of Islam's influence in political life.

At the same time, majorities of Muslims in every country but Turkey said they were concerned about Islamic extremism in the world and their own countries.

Democracy was favored by a majority of Muslims in every country but Pakistan, although even there it received the largest share of responses. Lebanese Muslims were most favorable toward democracy, followed by those in Turkey, Jordan, Nigeria, Indonesia and Egypt.

Support for suicide bombing had also fallen by double digits since 2002 in every country except Turkey, where it was never well-received among Muslims, according to the study.

The survey also found support for gender segregation in the workplace in Pakistan, Egypt and Jordan and positive views of harsh punishments for various crimes in Egypt, Jordan and Pakistan.

The survey was conducted April 12 to May 7. In each of the countries except Pakistan, the sample was nationwide with a 4 percentage point sampling error. In Pakistan, respondents were predominantly urban and the sampling error was 3 percentage points.

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## **From Tunis to Cairo to Riyadh?**

By Karen Elliott House, *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 February 2011

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia -- In any authoritarian regime, instability seems unthinkable up to the moment of upheaval, and that is true now for Saudi Arabia. But even as American influence recedes across the Middle East, the U.S. soon may face the staggering consequences of instability here, in its most important remaining Arab ally. While a radical regime in Egypt would threaten Israel directly but not America, a radical anti-Western regime in Saudi Arabia -- which produces one of every four barrels of oil world-wide -- clearly would endanger America as leader of the world economy.

Thirty years of visiting Saudi Arabia, including intensive reporting over the past four years, convinces me that unless the regime rapidly and radically reforms itself -- or is pushed to do so by the U.S. -- it will remain vulnerable to upheaval. Despite the conventional wisdom that Saudi Arabia is unique, and that billions in oil revenue and an omnipresent intelligence system allow the regime to maintain power by buying loyalty or intimidating its passive populace, it can happen here.

The many risks to the al Saud family's rule can be summed up in one sentence: The gap between aged rulers and youthful subjects grows dramatically as the information gap between rulers and ruled shrinks. The average age of the kingdom's trio of ruling princes is 83, yet 60% of Saudis are under 18 years of age. Thanks to satellite television, the Internet and social media, the young now are well aware of government corruption -- and that 40% of Saudis live in poverty and nearly 70% can't afford a home. These Saudis are living Third World lives, suffering from poor education and unable to find jobs in a private sector where 90% of all employees are imported non-Saudis. Through new media the young compare their circumstances unfavorably with those in nearby Gulf sheikhdoms and the West.

As Cairo was erupting in revolution in recent weeks, Saudis were treated to a glaring example of government incompetence as the kingdom's second largest city, Jeddah, flooded with sewage and rainwater for the second time in 14 months. This, despite promises from King Abdullah after the first flood to punish those responsible for leaving most of Jeddah without proper sewage or drainage. The combination of revolution in Cairo and government ineptitude in Jeddah produced widespread Saudi cynicism and anger on the Internet.

One Saudi depicted the nation's flag -- two crossed swords over a palm tree -- as two crossed mops over a stack of buckets. Another depicted Tunisia's ex-dictator, to whom the Saudi regime gave asylum, above a caption stating that the Saudi kingdom is a garbage can for dictators.

Even state television carried pictures of Saudi women angrily berating a senior prince over Jeddah's flooding. Most surprisingly, King Abdullah -- widely respected for his modest reform efforts by most Saudis, who blame problems on those around him -- was pictured in an Internet posting (shown to me by a gloomy senior prince) with a huge red X adjacent to his photo and the words, "Why do you give them all this power when they all are thieves?"

The traditional sources of stability in Saudi Arabia have been the royal family and the Wahhabi religious establishment with which it is closely intertwined. These twin pillars were losing credibility and legitimacy even before events in Egypt.

Al Saud legitimacy rests largely on personifying, promoting and protecting Islam -- indeed, the Saudi monarch refers to himself not as king but as "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques." Yet the royal family increasingly is seen by its subjects as profligate, corrupt and unable to deliver efficient government.

The religious establishment, even as it enforces its uniquely austere brand of Islam, is increasingly seen as prostituting itself by using religion to support whatever the ruling family wants. "We are hypocrites tricking each other, lying to each other as the government has taught us to do," one deeply devout imam tells me. "We are not Islamic."

Over the years, the royal family -- now numbering nearly 7,000 princes -- has come to pervade every corner of Saudi life, but it has lost public respect in the process. Almost every Saudi business, key ministry and mayoralty is headed, or figure-headed, by a prince. A royal family that once was relatively unified when decisions were made by a handful of senior brothers now is so large and fractured that different branches pursue conflicting agendas.

Exacerbating the problem is that the royal rulers are old, infirm and largely out of touch. King Abdullah has been out of the kingdom for three months receiving medical treatment in the U.S. and Morocco. Crown Prince Sultan, 85 years old and ill with cancer and Alzheimer's, rarely is seen in public. Rounding out the ruling trio is the deputy prime minister, Prince Naif, who is 77 and suffering from diabetes and osteoporosis.

After them? No one knows. What scares much of the royal family and many ordinary Saudis is that the succession, which historically has passed from brother to brother, soon will have to jump to a new generation. That could mean that only one branch of the family will have power, a prescription for potential conflict as 34 of the 35 lines of the founder's family could find themselves disenfranchised.

All this is reminiscent of the dying decade of the Soviet Union, when one aged and infirm Politburo chief briefly succeeded another -- from Brezhnev to Andropov to Chernenko -- before Gorbachev took power with reform policies that proved too little too late.

As events in Cairo have played out, some worried younger princes have privately acknowledged the need to curb corruption, better serve citizens, and reform the dysfunctional government bureaucracy. Still, to a man, even these princes stress the inevitability of al Saud rule. "We united Arabia and we remain the glue that holds it together," says one.

What these reform-minded princes fail to understand -- or at least acknowledge to foreigners -- is the degree to which many young Saudis no longer respect or fear the royal family. Rather, they increasingly resent the indignity inherent in having to beg princes for favors that should be a public right.

Frustrated by these daily indignities, young Saudis experiment with drugs, steal cars and vandalize government property. Saudis at all levels of society are becoming increasingly lawless, emulating their leaders in doing whatever they can get away with. A recent target of youthful ire is a new camera system that tickets speeders. The system has been repeatedly vandalized by youth who claim that their fines enrich the Minister of the Interior, who is also responsible for the kingdom's invasive intelligence agencies. In choosing this target, young Saudis protest both royal corruption and state intrusion into their lives.

Still, most ordinary Saudis do not crave democracy. They fear that traditional tribal divisions, coupled with a lack of social and political organizations, would lead to mayhem -- or to even greater domination by the conservative religious establishment that is well-organized through the kingdom's 70,000 mosques. If in Egypt the Muslim Brotherhood is considered a potential threat, its Saudi equivalent already dominates Saudi society.

What Saudis hunger for are standard services provided by far less wealthy governments: good education, jobs, decent health care. They also want to be able to speak honestly about the political and economic issues that affect their lives. Yet when a professor of religion at Imam University dared in November to suggest on the Internet that Saudis be permitted to take public their private discussions on succession, he was jailed.

"The gap between reform here and the demands of our young is widening," warns a senior prince. "It is a race against time because the young are tired of the status quo, tired of talk." Saudi Arabia is not Egypt. But even in this most shrouded and supposedly most stable of Arab societies, time is running out.

Ms. House, a former publisher of The Wall Street Journal and 1984 Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter for her coverage of the Middle East, is researching a book on Saudi society.

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## **What other dictators does the U.S. support?**

*Aside from Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, here are the other most controversial leaders propped up by the U.S.*

By Justin Elliott, Salon.com, Wednesday, Feb 2, 2011 07:30 ET

As Egyptian pro-democracy protests rage on, media attention has suddenly focused on the U.S. alliance with the country's authoritarian rulers. American support for the Egyptian government -- to the tune of \$60 billion in aid over the last 30 years -- garnered virtually no regular attention before the protests began.

There are now reports of anti-American sentiment among the Egyptian protesters, who are angry about U.S. support for Hosni Mubarak over the years and about the Obama administration's hesitance to throw its full support behind the movement. A powerful symbol has emerged in tear gas canisters bearing "Made in the USA" labels that police have fired into the crowds.

So this is a good moment to take a look at where else in the world American taxpayer dollars are helping to prop up dictatorships with poor human rights records. The below examples are the most controversial ones, though not a comprehensive accounting.

### **Saudi Arabia**

While the U.S. does not provide direct military aid to oil-rich Saudi Arabia, it maintains extremely close ties to the government, a monarchy led by King Abdullah. The Obama administration announced last November it is seeking a massive \$60 billion, 20-year weapons sale to the Saudis, which would reportedly include 84 F-15 fighter aircraft and almost 200 helicopters, as well as trainers, simulators, generators, spare and repair parts, and other related elements of program support, according to CNN. The final details of that deal are still being worked out.

Meanwhile, the Saudi government has maintained an abysmal human rights record. Human Rights Watch summarized the situation in its annual report: "Authorities continue to systematically suppress or fail to protect the rights of nine million Saudi women and girls, eight million foreign workers, and some two million Shia citizens. Each year thousands of people receive unfair trials or are subject to arbitrary detention. Curbs on freedom of association, expression, and movement, as well as a pervasive lack of official accountability, remain serious concerns."

### **Jordan**

The United States gave Jordan, another Middle Eastern monarchy, \$300 million in military aid in 2010. In response to recent protests, King Abdullah II of Jordan this week dismissed his cabinet and appointed a new prime minister. And, according to Human Rights Watch, violations of basic freedoms are not uncommon in Jordan. The group said in its annual report: "Torture, routine and widespread in recent years, continues, in particular at police stations, where complaints about ill-treatment increased in 2009 and again in 2010." There is also no freedom of speech in Jordan, with steep penalties for criticizing the king or the government.

### **Turkmenistan**

The Obama administration, like the Bush administration before it, has been pursuing closer ties with Turkmenistan, which both borders Afghanistan and has some of the largest proven gas reserves in the world. The United States sends supplies for the Afghan war through Turkmenistan, which is part of the northern corridor into Afghanistan, a crucial alternative to dangerous supply routes through Pakistan. Turkmenistan received \$2 million in military aid in 2010, up from just \$150,000 in 2009. Because of its strategic importance in Central Asia, the country has been graced by visits from top U.S. officials, including Gen. David Petraeus.

It seems not to matter to U.S. policymakers that Turkmenistan is run by one of the most repressive regimes in existence. Its current president, Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov, was the dentist of the previous president-for-life,



who died in 2006. The regime, alternatively described in the press as "Stalinist" and "hermit-like," presides over the following impressively long list of human rights violations, according to a 2009 State Department report:

citizens' inability to change their government; reports of torture and mistreatment of detainees; incommunicado and prolonged detention; arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of due process and fair trial; arbitrary interference with privacy, home, and correspondence; restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association; restrictions on religious freedom, including continued harassment of religious minority group members; restrictions on freedom of movement for some citizens, including increased restrictions on those intending to study abroad; violence against women; and restrictions on free association of workers.

The issue of human rights, however, did not figure prominently when Hillary of Clinton met with Berdymukhamedov in 2009.

### **Uzbekistan**

Like Turkmenistan, this Central Asian nation is important to the United States because of its border with Afghanistan and its energy resources. Its president since 1991, Islam Karimov, was reelected in 2000 with 92 percent of the vote and again in 2007 with 88 percent; political opposition has been repressed. Torture is common, and the Guardian reported in 2003 that two prisoners were even boiled to death.

The Bush administration began to woo Karimov as an ally after Sept. 11 and the invasion of Afghanistan, including with aid to the police and intelligence service. The U.S. imposed sanctions after a 2005 massacre of protesters by Karimov, but they were lifted a few years later, and the Obama administration has sought to repair the relationship. The country is currently a key supply route to Afghanistan from the north.

Here's what Human Rights Watch says about Uzbekistan's human rights record: "Authorities continue to crackdown on civil society activists, opposition members, and independent journalists, and to persecute religious believers who worship outside strict state controls. Freedom of expression remains severely limited. Government-initiated forced child labor during the cotton harvest continues."

### **Equatorial Guinea**

President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo has ruled Equatorial Guinea since he took over in a coup in 1979. Starting in the 1990s, American companies discovered large oil reserves in waters belonging to the West African nation. The Bush administration presided over a concerted effort to improve relations with Equatorial Guinea, including high-level meetings between Obiang and Bush and the reopening of the American embassy in the capital city of Malabo. Seen as an alternative to Arab oil, Obiang won praise from Condoleezza Rice in 2006 as a "good friend" of the United States. While Equatorial Guinea does not receive direct military aid, it has taken part in the American International Military Education and Training program.

Human Rights Watch reports that Guinea is "mired in corruption, poverty, and repression under the leadership of" Obiang and that "the government regularly engages in torture and arbitrary detention." Oil revenues are distributed to the president's family and allies, with his son reportedly spending more on luxury goods between 2004 and 2007 than the country's annual education budget.

The Obama administration has not substantially changed course on Equatorial Guinea. A smiling Obama posed for a picture with Obiang at an event at the Metropolitan Museum in New York in 2009, and the picture now holds a prominent place on the official website of the government of Equatorial Guinea. (The regime, by the way, also retains the services of Washington lobbyist Lanny Davis.)

As I mentioned above, this is my no means a comprehensive list. The Center for Public Integrity did a useful project looking at U.S. military aid and human rights around the world a few years back. Much of that report is still relevant today.

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## **Do Dissidents Matter?**

By **BRET STEPHENS**, *The Wall Street Journal*, July 28, 2009

*You are either for or against apartheid and not by rhetoric. You are either in favor of evil or in favor of good. You are either on the side of the oppressed or on the side of the oppressor. You can't be neutral.*

—Desmond Tutu, 1984

Make a list of the most inspiring figures of the last 50 years, and it's sure that political dissidents will weigh heavily at the top of it: Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Nelson Mandela, Lech Walesa. Now make a list of the most consequential

figures of the same period and those same names will also appear. So why is the Obama administration borderline Nixonian when it comes to making common cause with today's dissidents?

In his memoirs, Henry Kissinger once recalled his opposition to the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which linked trade privileges for communist countries with their emigration policies. "If [the Kremlin] made the concession [on emigration]," wrote Kissinger, "there was literally no telling what would happen to the Soviet Union."

Mr. Kissinger's fear was that too much hectoring could put the policy of détente in jeopardy. In a sense he was right: Jackson-Vanik became law, persecuted minorities were allowed to go, human rights was put at the center of the superpower agenda, and the Soviet Union collapsed on the weight of its own moral bankruptcy.

Fast forward to Sunday's interview of Hillary Clinton by NBC's David Gregory, in which the newsman asked the secretary whether negotiations with Iran's government wouldn't betray the country's democracy movement.

"I don't think so, David," she answered. "We have negotiated with many governments who we did not believe represented the will of their people. Look at all the negotiations that went on with the Soviet Union. That's what you do in diplomacy. You don't get to choose the people [you negotiate with]. That's up to the internal dynamic within a society."

Mrs. Clinton is certainly right that presidents of both parties negotiated with the Soviets: There's a 40-year record of Soviet treaty violations to prove it. Meanwhile, people like Vaclav Havel and Andrei Sakharov lingered in detention or prison while their respectable jailers cut their deals with the West.

But here's a thought experiment for Mrs. Clinton: If parleying with the Soviet Union then or with Iran now was (or is) the right thing to do, was the Reagan administration also right when it sought a policy of "constructive engagement" with P.W. Botha's apartheid government in South Africa? What would Mrs. Clinton have to say to Bishop Tutu? That he sounds too much like George W. Bush?

Of course the bishop was right. Of course, too, opposing the apartheid regime was not only morally right but smart, since nothing good could have come of persuading black South Africans, as we nearly did, that the U.S. stood by their white oppressors while the Soviets backed the African National Congress.

But the biggest "of course" was that the most important power in South Africa at the time wasn't Botha but rather the old man on Robben Island chipping away in a lime quarry. Just so, the ultimate future of Iran doesn't lie with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei but with his opponents now in Tehran's Evin Prison, just as Burma's future lies with its elected Prime Minister Aung San Suu Kyi and not the ruling junta, just as Russia's future lies with its brave band of opposition activists and not with Vladimir Putin or Dmitry Medvedev.

Today, these opposition activists may be little more than uncomfortable reminders of the nature of the people with whom the administration wishes to break bread. Someday, however, they (or their children) will be in power, and they will hold the U.S. to account for whether it helped or hindered the cause of their freedom.

Yet there again was Mrs. Clinton in Thailand last week, suggesting the U.S. was willing to make deals with the Burmese junta in exchange for Ms. Suu Kyi's freedom—never mind that a woman who once refused an offer of release to be with her dying husband isn't about to take the same offer at a price of giving the junta an opening to the West. President Obama did better in Russia this month by meeting with some of the opposition. But how do you press the "reset" button with a regime that enforces a rule of terror in Chechnya, where human-rights activist Natalia Estemirova was recently murdered?

In Hong Kong last week, I had breakfast with Martin Lee, the city's best known democracy activist. What keeps him going? "If everyone is holding a candle in the middle of the night, and I blow mine out, then everyone else will blow theirs out," he explained. The best U.S. foreign policy is the one that helps those like Mr. Lee cradle that candle.

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