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Article 1.

The Cairo Review of Global Affairs

## **The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Now**

William B. Quandt

Spring 2011 -- The upheaval that shook the Arab world in early 2011 should lead to a fundamental recalibration of American policies in the Middle East. As this debate gets underway, many, perhaps most, will conclude that this is no time for pushing hard for Arab-Israeli peace. They will argue that it is time to let the dust from the Arab revolution settle, to shore up other fragile regimes, and to hope for the best. Certainly the official view from Israel will reinforce such a wait and see attitude. But such a posture, at a time like this, will have the effect of making the United States look marginal to the central developments of the region.

While it is true that U.S. influence has waned in recent years—and that need not be such a bad thing—on the issue of Arab-Israeli peace the U.S. still has a major interest and a major responsibility. So, the Obama administration should take a hard look, screw up its courage, and try for a serious multi-pronged effort to get Arab-Israeli peacemaking onto a promising track. If successful—and the odds are admittedly not good—this would mean that the U.S. was aligning itself with both democracy and peace in a vital part of the world. That would go a long way toward securing American interests. But, is it doable?

The president still has time to make mid-course corrections and start to move in a more promising direction. But time is short and he will have to recognize some of the serious errors he has made if he is to get things right. To have a chance of success, Obama must mobilize a major internationally supported initiative to lay out the broad guidelines, in the form of quite specific principles, for the resolution

of both the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the Israeli–Syrian one as well.

What went wrong? After all, Obama as a presidential candidate in 2008 seemed to be genuinely committed to trying a new approach to peacemaking. And he seemed to understand that Arab–Israeli peace would make a big dent in the intense anti-Americanism that could be found in much of the Arab and Islamic worlds.

Obama got off to a good start in January 2009. He supported the idea of engagement with adversaries, mentioning Iran and Syria by name, and privileging diplomacy over military force. He appointed a respected and experienced former senator, George Mitchell, to oversee the day-to-day conduct of his Arab–Israeli policy. As the national security advisor he named General James Jones, a man with considerable experience with the Palestine issue. In a number of public statements, Obama made it clear that he wanted to move forcefully toward Arab–Israeli peace and he took a particularly firm stand on an issue of great importance to the Palestinians, namely the need for Israel to stop building settlements in occupied territory. Obama’s new approach was aptly expressed in his June 4, 2009 speech at Cairo University, in which he said: “I have come here to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect.”

While all of these steps raised hopes in some quarters that American policy was moving into a new and active phase, there were also some warning signs that events might force the new president to trim his ambitions. First there was the obvious fact that the global economic crisis, which significantly worsened in the months before his election, was bound to occupy much of his time and energy. In addition to pushing a stimulus package and bank bailouts to address the economic crisis, his domestic political agenda included passing legislation on health care. These proved also to be difficult and

divisive tasks, quickly drawing down on the president's political capital.

In the Middle East, two elections also made it more difficult for the president to proceed with his initial strategy. First, in Israel, elections resulted in the return of hard-line Likud leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, to the prime minister's office. He had served as prime minister in the period 1996–1999 and had strenuously resisted U.S. efforts to move forward on Israeli–Palestinian peace talks. To say the least, his reputation in Washington was that of a stubborn and unimaginative leader who was unwilling to take risks for peace.

The other election that damaged the chances for Obama to pursue his plans to engage constructively with adversaries took place in Iran in June 2009 and was widely viewed in the West as a deeply flawed affair that cheated the reformist movement of a possible victory. Instead of dealing with Iranian moderates, Obama would have to deal with a reinstated President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Many Americans were highly skeptical about the wisdom of trying to pursue a policy of engagement with this Iranian regime, especially as it continued to follow a policy of producing nuclear energy that led many to believe Iran was on its way to becoming a nuclear weapons state in violation of its commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

#### The Netanyahu Problem

Obama and Netanyahu did not get off to a very good start. With some effort, Obama did help persuade Netanyahu to express guarded support for the so-called 'two-state solution' to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, but he had a much harder time persuading the Israeli prime minister to stop building settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem. This latter point became a test of wills between the two leaders, and finally in late 2009 Netanyahu gave a partial concession—a moratorium on new settlement construction in the

West Bank (but not east Jerusalem) for a period of ten months. By the time this offer was made, Obama and his political advisors were showing signs of being worried about the prolonged strain in U.S.–Israeli relations. Many seemed to feel that it was time for the president to mend fences and to accept what Netanyahu had offered as a positive first step. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, long attuned to the domestic politics surrounding the management of the relationship with Israel from her time as senator from New York state, was quick to label Netanyahu’s offer of a ten-month moratorium as “unprecedented”—which was not true—and to turn to the Palestinians with demands that they agree to enter negotiations. “If there is indeed still a window of opportunity for a comprehensive Arab–Israeli peace, it may not remain open for long. And if Obama does not try to break the impasse, it is unlikely that his eventual successor will do so.”

During the first part of 2010, there was very little real movement in Arab–Israeli peace diplomacy. Mitchell travelled diligently to the region, but his style was so low-key that whatever gains he made were barely noticed. In mid year, Obama and Netanyahu met in Washington for a carefully staged reconciliation meeting. With Congressional elections on the horizon, Obama presumably did not want to burden Democratic candidates with the charge that the Obama administration was excessively tough in its dealings with Israel. Exactly what happened during the meeting between the two leaders is not clear. It seems that Netanyahu made a strong case for U.S. support in confronting Iran; and in return for U.S. assurances on this score, he agreed to enter “direct negotiations without preconditions” with the Palestinians.

White House Middle East advisors began to talk about a “new Netanyahu,” a strong leader who would be prepared to make concessions for peace. The “old Netanyahu,” a man whose

ideological roots are found deep in the revisionist Zionist tradition which sees all of Palestine as rightfully belonging to Israel, had strongly opposed previous peace agreements that his predecessors had negotiated, and had been a very reluctant participant in any talks with the Palestine Liberation Organization during his previous tenure as prime minister from 1996 to 1999. Whether this more optimistic view of Netanyahu was based on some serious understandings with him or was more in the nature of wishful thinking could not be determined, but it did mean that U.S. efforts turned to convincing the Palestinians to enter into direct negotiations.

By this time, efforts to engage with Syria had just about dropped off the radar screen. Sound strategy suggests that the U.S. should have done much more to open serious negotiations on the Syrian front—and here negotiation is the right paradigm—and there is a substantial record to build upon. If Syria were also on track to achieving a peace agreement with Israel—the terms of which are much easier to define than they are on the Palestinian front—then Syria would have every incentive to use its influence in support of the peace process. But it was only the Palestinian–Israeli front that received sustained attention, at least in public. As the expiration of the Israeli semi-moratorium on settlement building in the West Bank approached, the American side pressed hard to get negotiations started between Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Several meetings did take place, but there was no meeting of minds, and when the settlement moratorium expired the Palestinians suspended their participation in the negotiations. By late 2010, the ‘peace process’ seemed to have reached a stalemate. In fact, it had never gained much momentum at all.

#### Avoidable Errors

Several things seemed to be wrong with Obama’s strategy. First, whatever the wisdom of deciding to make a freeze on settlements his

top priority, Obama should have realized that Netanyahu would resist, and that much would depend on who was seen to win this initial test of wills. If Obama were seen to back down on this first issue of contestation, that would damage his reputation for being a strong leader. And back down he did.

Second, Obama did not seem to fully appreciate the importance of having a strong alter ego to serve as his primary diplomat on Arab–Israeli affairs. All prior U.S. successes in Arab–Israeli diplomacy had involved a strong president working closely with an empowered secretary of state, both backed by an experienced team of advisors. This was the model that worked for Nixon–Kissinger, Carter–Vance, and Bush I–Baker. But Obama chose to work with George Mitchell, a low-key technocrat—a man of undoubted ability, but not someone known to be especially close to the president. Hillary Clinton, who might have also played a significant role, seemed stand-offish toward Arab–Israeli issues, at least during her first year as secretary of state. Recent presidents have allowed a certain amount of chaos to reign among their Arab–Israeli policy group. This was definitely the case for Clinton and Bush II, and it also has been true of Obama. While Mitchell was supposed to be his primary advisor, others were also in the game, often sending rather different signals. There was his first chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, with close personal ties to Israel; there was his outspoken vice president, Joe Biden, a former chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; there was his national security advisor, James Jones; and, on at least one occasion, there was General David Petraeus, then head of the U.S. Central Command, on the importance of Arab–Israeli peace to the U.S.’s strategic interests in the Middle East.

And then there was Dennis. In Middle East circles, if you mention the name Dennis it is immediately clear that you are referring to Dennis Ross. No one has logged more hours working on Arab–Israeli

issues—starting back in the Reagan administration and then throughout all of Bush I and Clinton. Ross had made an appearance during the campaign as an advisor to Obama on Middle East affairs, but in the initial round of appointments he had been given responsibility at the State Department for a vaguely defined “central region” of the Middle East that seemed to mean Iran and the Gulf region. In any event, with his strongly pro-Israel views, and his reputation for endlessly promoting the “process” part of the peace process, he was not widely seen as the right person to help steer Obama in the new direction that the president seemed to be pursuing. One of his former colleagues described him as a “down in the weeds kind of guy,” good for managing the day-to-day diplomacy, but not for charting a new course.

But as U.S.–Israeli relations deteriorated, Ross was called upon to help patch things up with Netanyahu. And by late 2010 he was back in an undefined role at the White House with responsibility for some aspects of Arab–Israeli diplomacy. In short, apart from the president himself, who would have the final word, it was not clear which of his many advisors was key to his plans for getting Arabs and Israelis to make peace.

A third misstep by Obama was to define the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in terms of a dispute that could best be resolved by direct negotiations between the parties. Previous administrations—Clinton and Bush II in particular—had been in the habit of saying that “we cannot want peace more than the parties to the conflict,” and that the U.S. would never impose a solution. The U.S. would facilitate, urge, nudge, and persuade, but that was about it. Only in his last month in office did Clinton finally put forward specific proposals. And Bush II, even when he learned that Israelis and Palestinians had made surprising progress in secret talks late in his second term, was unwilling to step in to help clinch the deal.

Obama seemed torn between two paradigms. One saw the Arab–Israeli conflict in strategic terms—its continuation had adverse consequences for U.S. national interests, it weakened moderate forces in the region, gave voice to radicals who whipped up anti-American sentiment, and ultimately made it harder to deal with emerging challenges from countries like Iran or issues like jihadi extremism. Obama himself had expressed this view as candidate in 2008 and again in 2009 after his election. From this standpoint, the U.S. could and should place a high priority on solving the conflict, and to do so should use tough-minded diplomacy, including pressures and inducements, to get the parties to move toward compromises. This could be done in cooperation with other powers, the United Nations and regional players, but U.S. power had to be on display for it to work.

There was some reason to believe at the outset of the Obama administration that the president was setting the stage for this type of forceful American-led diplomacy. But somewhere in his second year, Obama seemed to buy into a different paradigm. Like his predecessors, he said frankly that the U.S. could not want Arab–Israeli peace more than the parties themselves. Obama’s ambivalence was perfectly captured on April 13, 2010, when he stated that Arab–Israeli peace was a “vital national security interest of the United States,” and then also said: “And the truth is, in some of these conflicts the United States can’t impose solutions unless the participants in these conflicts are willing to break out of old patterns of antagonism. I think it was former Secretary of State Jim Baker [sic] who said, in the context of Middle East peace, we can’t want it more than they do.” While this latter point sounds reasonable on the surface, it is in fact a vapid shibboleth. Taken literally, it means that if one party is reticent, that party will set the pace for diplomacy.

But the Arab–Israeli conflict has never been about which party wants peace most. Each community is internally divided over these issues, which are, after all, existential, and many individuals are divided in their own beliefs. They want peace, but they fear the price that they may have to pay to get it. They often seem to want peace in the abstract, but only on their own terms or not at all. This is not the frame for successful face-to-face negotiations. Instead, it suggests the need for a powerful third-party mediator to help structure the negotiations and shift the calculus of gains and losses.

Even with two strong leaders such as Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat, both of whom doubtless wanted peace on certain terms, it would have been counterproductive for the U. S. to sit back until the two parties had narrowed their differences to the point where the U. S. could step in and help them cross the finish line with a few gentle nudges and reassurances. Had Carter and Vance accepted this model, there would have been no Camp David Summit and no Egyptian–Israeli peace (at least not in 1979).

Perhaps Obama began to focus on getting the parties into direct negotiations as part of a strategy of building American domestic support for a more forceful American role further down the road. But by fall 2010, it sounded very much as if direct negotiations were an end in and of themselves. Many analysts who have studied the Israeli–Palestinian conflict carefully are dubious about the possibility of resolving the conflict through direct negotiations alone. Such a model assumes a degree of parity that does not exist. Israel is in a far stronger position, while the Palestinians are weak, divided, and occupied. The big “concession” made by the Palestinian leadership has been to give up their claim to some 78 percent of historic Palestine and to agree to build their state in the remaining 22 percent. Having come to this point, most Palestinians do not feel there is much more room for concessions on their side. And they continue to

insist that their capital must be in east Jerusalem and that some satisfaction must be given, if largely symbolic, to the Palestinian refugees who lost their homes in the 1948 war.

Just as the matter of recovering all of Sinai was never an issue for negotiations in the mind of Anwar Sadat, so also the Palestinians consider these points as fundamental to the question of whether or not a peace agreement is at all possible. Any significant deviation from them will mean peace is an illusion. Where they are prepared to show more flexibility is in the timeline for implementing an agreement; the precise delineation of boundaries, provided that land swaps result in fair compensation for any parts of the west bank that Israel keeps; and on security issues, where the Palestinians are prepared to accept that their future state will never be heavily militarized.

Not surprisingly, Israel sees things very differently. For over forty years, Israel has been in control of east Jerusalem and the West Bank. It sees any relinquishment of these territories as a concession, and no Israeli politician to date has ever publicly accepted the principle of withdrawing to the 1967 lines, including in east Jerusalem. Indeed, many Israeli politicians, including most of the current government, believe in expanding Jewish settlement on the West Bank—a policy interpreted by the Palestinians as intended ultimately to squeeze them out of their homeland. Even the most moderate Israeli leader imagines that some of the West Bank and east Jerusalem will remain under Israeli control indefinitely. And no Israeli leader has said much in public about how Palestinian refugee claims could be addressed. There is very little reason to believe that the parties, given the power imbalance, could bridge the gaps in their positions through direct negotiations. And yet such negotiations have been, as during previous administrations, the centerpiece of American diplomacy.

A fourth mistake, if reports from fall 2010 are true, was that Obama apparently offered some very big inducements to Netanyahu in order to get a mere three-month extension of the settlement moratorium. And even then, Netanyahu refused to comply. This was a sign of Obama's weakness. By prematurely putting some very big chips on the table for very minor purposes, he insured that the price for much bigger moves would soar. This was simply bad bargaining technique. Fortunately, the president seemed to realize his error and was unwilling to put the offer in writing. It was then dropped altogether, along with the demand that Israel cease settlement activity. This left American policy in early 2011 as consisting primarily of the effort to get the parties back to the negotiating table. But this cannot be the sum total of a strategy meant to succeed, especially in the aftermath of the upheaval in Egypt and its regional spillover.

While Obama has little to show for his first two years of Arab–Israeli diplomacy, it is not axiomatic that he cannot make mid-course corrections and start to move in a more promising direction. Surely the popular uprisings in the Middle East have raised understandable questions about whether this is possible right now, yet those upheavals make it all the more important that the U.S. aligns itself with both democracy and peace in a vital part of the world.

#### Plans for the Third Year

Some have argued that the significant Republican gains in the mid-term elections in November 2010 will make it harder for Obama to govern. On the domestic front this is doubtless so. But Congress is less a factor in setting the broad lines of foreign policy, although there will certainly be some very strong and uncritical pro-Israeli voices elevated to senior positions in Congress. Still, most of what Obama needs to do to improve the odds of success in the Arab–Israeli arena does not depend primarily on Congress.

The President needs to take the following steps:

1. He would need to start making the case immediately that Arab–Israeli peace is in the national interests of the United States. The American public needs to hear a convincing rationale for devoting time and resources to the seemingly hopeless task of breaking the Arab–Israeli impasse.

2. He needs to decide who is going to be his principal spokesman on Arab–Israeli issues. For better or worse, in the current line up of policy advisors, Hillary Clinton is the only person who has the clout to play this role. Mitchell, while genuinely liked and admired, is not viewed as having much real clout by the parties to the dispute.

3. This way of thinking may not be part of the mainstream Washington consensus, but it is frequently expressed behind closed doors, even in the capital. It leads to the conclusion that if there is to be peace, there may be only one last chance and one last policy option: Obama must develop a new American initiative that proposes the outlines of an Israeli–Palestinian accord, as well as a comprehensive Arab–Israeli peace agreement, and mobilize international support behind it. Arab countries moving towards democracy will seek greater purposefulness and fairness in the U.S. diplomatic role in their region, and Obama’s failure to anticipate and understand their reasonable expectations will dangerously erode American credibility further at this critical juncture.

The building blocks are all there—the Clinton parameters of December 2000, the outline of an agreement discussed by the then Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Abbas in fall 2008, the terms of an Israeli–Syrian agreement discussed in detail during 1998–2000. In short, the U.S., with support from others in the international community, would state its support for an agreement that would establish a Palestinian state on the territories of the West Bank and Gaza, with east Jerusalem as its capital. The borders of the state would be based on the 1967 lines, with small agreed adjustments and

equitable land swaps. The Palestinian state would recognize Israel and would agree to far-reaching security arrangements, including perhaps international peacekeeping forces at key locations. The hard tradeoff for the Palestinians would be that in exchange for recognition of their state, they would forego the literal “right of return” of refugees to Israel proper, accepting instead some token repatriation and generous compensation for the rest. On the Syrian front, Israel would be expected to withdraw to the June 4, 1967 line, but the Golan would be demilitarized, agreements on water would be worked out, and Syria would be expected to use its influence to help promote a comprehensive Arab–Israeli peace. With these principles clearly spelled out, Arab states would be asked to endorse them and to promise to recognize Israel and establish relations with it as peace with the Palestinians and Syrians goes into effect.

Now, this type of initiative will of course be controversial, particularly among partisans of Israel, who have long maintained that the U. S. should not try to impose its views on the parties. But these points do not really go much beyond what previous American administrations have supported. One could imagine that a fairly impressive bipartisan array of former U.S. officials would support the main outlines of this approach, as would European allies, the so-called Quartet partners (European Union, Russia, and the UN) and the Arab League. One would expect many Palestinians to be generally receptive, although Hamas and other factions will be opposed or skeptical. One should not minimize the difficulty of getting Palestinians to accept the watered-down principle on refugee rights.

The Netanyahu government, and perhaps others in Israel as well, would react negatively at the outset and would try to mobilize opposition to this approach. This is where the test for Obama would begin. Could he convince significant numbers of Israelis that this

outline was the best path to a secure, predominantly Jewish democratic state at peace with its neighbors? Could most Israelis be convinced that by accepting this framework, and then negotiating hard on the details and side payments—this is when Obama should be prepared for some major positive inducements—that Israel would be better able to face whatever threat might be posed by Iran? If Obama is unwilling to see this diplomatic initiative through, he would be better off not launching it. But if he genuinely believes that American national interests are at stake, something along these lines needs to be part of his strategy. We will learn a lot about the president and about American politics by how Obama sets his priorities in the coming months. If there is indeed still a window of opportunity for a comprehensive Arab–Israeli peace, it may not remain open for long. And if Obama does not try to break the impasse, it is unlikely that his eventual successor will do so. The odds of success are not good, based on his efforts of the first two years, but diplomacy is not about playing games with good odds. Occasionally, as now, it would mean tackling a strategically important, difficult issue where both the payoff and risk are high. It is for tackling and successfully resolving such issues that we should bestow the title of statesman. Obama may have won his Nobel peace prize, but if he is to really earn it he should use the undeniable power of the United States to promote the kind of peace agreement outlined here.

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Article 2.

Foreign Policy

## **The United States' heavy-handed efforts to help Israel at the [REDACTED].**

Colum Lynch

APRIL 18, 2011 -- In the aftermath of Israel's 2008-2009 intervention into the Gaza Strip, Susan E. Rice, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, led a vigorous campaign to stymie an independent [REDACTED] investigation into possible war crimes, while using the prospect of such a probe as leverage to pressure Israel to participate in a U.S.-backed Middle East peace process, according to previously undisclosed diplomatic cables provided by the anti-secrecy website WikiLeaks. The documents provide a rare glimpse behind the scenes at the [REDACTED], as American diplomats sought to shield Israel's military from outside scrutiny of its conduct during Operation Cast Lead. Their release comes as the issue is back on the front pages of Israel's newspapers, following the surprise recent announcement by Richard Goldstone -- an eminent South African jurist who led an investigation commissioned by the [REDACTED]'s Human Rights Council -- in a Washington Post op-ed that his team had unfairly accused Israel of deliberately targeting Palestinian civilians. The new documents, though consistent with public U.S. statements at the time opposing a [REDACTED] investigation into Israeli military operations, reveal in extraordinary detail how America wields its power behind closed doors at the United Nations. They also demonstrate how the United States and Israel were granted privileged access to highly sensitive internal [REDACTED] deliberations on an "independent" [REDACTED] board of inquiry into the Gaza war, raising questions about the independence of the process. In one pointed cable, Rice repeatedly prodded [REDACTED].

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to block a recommendation of the board of inquiry to carry out a sweeping inquiry into alleged war crimes by Israeli soldiers and Palestinian militants. In another cable, Rice issued a veiled warning to the president of the International Criminal Court, Sang-Hyun Song, that an investigation into alleged Israeli crimes could damage its standing with the United States at a time when the new administration was moving closer to the tribunal. "How the ICC handles issues concerning the Goldstone Report will be perceived by many in the US as a test for the ICC, as this is a very sensitive matter," she told him, according to a Nov. 3, 2009, cable from the U.S. mission to the United Nations.

Rice, meanwhile, assured Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman during an Oct. 21, 2009, meeting in Tel Aviv that the United States had done its utmost to "blunt the effects of the Goldstone report" and that she was confident she could "build a blocking coalition" to prevent any push for a probe by the Security Council, according to an Oct. 27, 2009 cable.

Israel launched a three-week-long offensive into Gaza in late 2008 in an effort to prevent Hamas and other Palestinian militants from firing rockets at Israeli towns. The Israel Defense Forces killed as many as 1,400 Palestinians. Thirteen Israel soldiers were also killed during Operation Cast Lead, and a number of █████. facilities faced repeated attacks. The military campaign raised calls at the █████. for an investigation into reports of war crimes. In response, Ban commissioned a top █████. troubleshooter, Ian Martin, to set up an independent █████. board of inquiry into nine incidents in which the Israeli Defense Forces had allegedly fired on █████. personnel or facilities. The █████. probe -- which established Israeli wrongdoing in seven of the nine cases -- was the first outside investigation into the war, with a mandate to probe deaths, injuries, and damage caused at █████. locations. The board's 184-page report has never been made

public, but a 28-page summary released on May 5 concluded that Israel had shown "reckless disregard for the lives and safety" of civilians in the operation, citing one particularly troubling incident in which it struck a ██████-run elementary school, killing three young men seeking shelter from the fighting. Israel denounced the findings as "tendentious, patently biased," saying that an Israeli military inquiry had proved beyond a doubt that Israel had not intentionally attacked civilians. But the most controversial part of the probe involved recommendations by Martin that the ██████ conduct a far-reaching investigation into violations of international humanitarian law by Israeli forces, Hamas, and other Palestinian militants. On May 4, 2009, the day before Martin's findings were presented to the media, Rice caught wind of the recommendations and phoned Ban to complain that the inquiry had gone beyond the scope of its mandate by recommending a sweeping investigation.

"Given that those recommendations were outside the scope of the Board's terms of reference, she asked that those two recommendations not be included in the summary of the report that would be transmitted to the membership," according to an account contained in the May 4 cable. Ban initially resisted. "The Secretary-General said he was constrained in what he could do since the Board of Inquiry is independent; it was their report and recommendations and he could not alter them, he said," according to the cable.

But Rice persisted, insisting in a subsequent call that Ban should at least "make clear in his cover letter when he transmits the summary to the Security Council that those recommendations exceeded the scope of the terms of reference and no further action is needed." Ban offered no initial promise. She subsequently drove the point home again, underlining the "importance of having a strong cover letter that made clear that no further action was needed and would close out this

issue." Ban began to relent, assuring Rice that "his staff was working with an Israeli delegation on the text of the cover letter."

After completing the cover letter, Ban phoned back Rice to report that he believed "they had arrived at a satisfactory cover letter. Rice thanked the Secretary-General for his exceptional efforts on such a sensitive issue."

At the following day's news conference, Ban flat-out rejected Martin's recommendation for an investigation. While underscoring the board's independent nature, he made it clear that "it is not my intention to establish any further inquiry." Although he acknowledged publicly that he had consulted with Israel on the findings, he did not say it had been involved in the preparation of the cover letter killing off the call for an investigation. Instead, he only made a request to the Israelis to pay the [REDACTED] more than \$11 million in financial compensation for the damage done to [REDACTED] facilities. When contacted about the cable by Turtle Bay, a [REDACTED] spokesman, Farhan Haq, declined to comment on its contents, noting only that the original investigation was designed only to resolve a dispute with Israel over the damage done to its facilities and seek restitution. But the issue was far from over. The [REDACTED] Human Rights Council, which the United States has long criticized for singling out Israel for censure, had already established its own commission headed by Goldstone. Goldstone agreed to take on the assignment after he revised the terms of reference to allow for investigation into both Israel and Hamas. The Goldstone investigation coincided with U.S. efforts to reinvigorate the Middle East peace process. Israel was livid over the development, warning that it could undermine peace prospects. In a Sept. 16 meeting with Rice, Danny Ayalon, Israel's deputy foreign minister, called the Goldstone Report, which had been released the day before, "outrageous," according to a diplomatic cable, adding that it would give Hamas a "free pass" to smuggle

weapons into Gaza. Rice agreed, calling the report deeply flawed and biased. But she also saw its release as an opportunity to convince Israel to pursue a U.S.-backed peace process. She asked Ayalon to "help me help you" by embracing the peace process and highlighting Israel's capacity to hold its own troops accountable for possible misconduct. She underscored that the Goldstone Report could be more easily managed if there was positive progress on the peace process, according to the cable. She also advised Israel that it "would be helpful" if it would emphasize its own judicial process and investigations" into the matter.

Rice reinforced that position a month later in a meeting with Lieberman, but the foreign minister was skeptical about the prospects for peace in the Middle East. "Israel and the United States had a responsibility not to foster illusions. A comprehensive peace was impossible," said Lieberman, who "cited Cyprus as an example that Israel might emulate, claiming that no comprehensive solution was possible, but security, stability and prosperity were."

The release of the cables comes as Rice is very publicly sticking with her position taking on the Goldstone Report. "The United States was very, very plain at the time and every day since that the Goldstone report was deeply flawed, and we objected to its findings and conclusions," Rice told the House Foreign Affairs Committee last week. "We didn't see any evidence at the time that the Israeli government had intentionally targeted civilians or intentionally committed war crimes."

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Article 3.

The Washington Post

## **Time to up the ante on Egypt**

David Ignatius

April 19 -- Samuel Johnson famously observed that the prospect of hanging concentrates the mind. The same could be said about America's current budget crisis: It should force some hard decisions about foreign policy priorities — so that we spend more to support the democratic revolution in Egypt and less to seek a military solution in Afghanistan.

Today, the United States is allocating about \$110 billion annually for the Afghan war, about \$3.2 billion for military and economic aid to Pakistan, and about \$150 million in special assistance to help Egypt's democratic revolution. In terms of U.S. national interests, those spending levels don't make sense. The pyramid is upside down. President Obama should seize this budget-crisis moment of to change national security spending for the next fiscal year. The rationale for the shower of cash in Afghanistan is to prevent future attacks by al-Qaeda. But, frankly, a successful, democratic Egypt will be a more potent counter to the spread of Islamic terrorism than a stable Afghanistan. And a prosperous, democratic Pakistan would be the best safeguard of all.

This is not an argument for pulling the plug in Afghanistan, especially at the start of this year's "fighting season." The United States should stick to its broad timetable for transferring responsibility to the Afghans in 2014. But we should spend less, going forward, as we move along the exit ramp. This will mean a smaller military footprint, more use of paramilitary forces and more emphasis on diplomacy.

The time is right for this pivot. Recent weeks have brought new outreach to the Taliban. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Feb. 18 announced a “diplomatic surge” and subtly shifted what had been preconditions for Afghan peace talks so that they were instead “necessary outcomes.” And she hired Marc Grossman, a veteran diplomat who strongly favors negotiation with the Taliban, as her new Afghanistan representative. The quiet, low-key Grossman may have better luck facilitating this process than did his high-voltage predecessor, the late Richard Holbrooke.

There’s new momentum from Afghanistan and Pakistan as well. Pakistani Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani visited Kabul last weekend to meet with President Hamid Karzai. They upgraded plans for a “joint peace commission” that, crucially, will include Gen. Ashfaq Kayani and Lt. Gen. Ahmed Shuja Pasha, the chiefs of Pakistan’s army and intelligence agency, respectively, who accompanied Gillani to Kabul. The message is that Pakistan wants to help broker a peace deal, now.

Another push for the Af-Pak peace train is coming from Britain, which also wants a prompt start for negotiations. The British are working several possible contacts with the Taliban and are circulating a plan that they are calling, in classic Anglo-speak, a “non-paper.” The awkward question, of course, is whether the Taliban are ready to play. Some intermediaries have been saying yes, but Grossman wants more clarity about who’s on the other side. The U.S. wants a Taliban representative who can make decisions, who is connected with Mohammad Omar, the Taliban leader, and who will work toward a settlement that would include America’s three “outcomes” of renouncing al-Qaeda, halting violence and respecting the Afghan constitution. Grossman hasn’t yet found such a negotiating partner, but he’s looking — with British, Afghan and Pakistani help.

Gen. David Petraeus, the U.S. military commander in Kabul, favors negotiations in principle, but wants more time to squeeze the Taliban for leverage. Petraeus has supported the recent negotiating feelers. In the meantime, he's hoping to disarm enough low-level Taliban fighters that Omar will have trouble fielding a robust insurgency. Petraeus surely won't win a military victory before he is expected to hand off command this fall, but it's intriguing to ponder how he might oversee the coming phase, which may lean more on paramilitary forces, if he should become the next CIA director. The CIA will also remain the key point of contact with Pakistan, which is the decisive battlefield for combating al-Qaeda.

Which brings me back to support for Egypt's democratic revolution. Simply put, there is no greater priority for U.S. counterterrorism policy than helping the Tahrir Square revolutionaries build a strong new country that can lead the rest of the Arab and Islamic world toward a better, saner future. The Egyptians are going to need help, big-time, to repair their damaged economy and their demoralized police.

America needs to put its money where its interests are. That's the unifying link between the Arab Spring and Af-Pak: The promise of the former must lead us to change our spending mix for the latter, and the time is now.

Article 4.

The National Interest

## **Samantha and Her Subjects**

Jacob Heilbrunn

April 19, 2011 -- HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION—the conviction that American presidents must act, preemptively if necessary, to avert the massacre of innocents abroad—is steadily acquiring a new prominence in the Obama administration. For America’s foreign-policy elite, it is a precept that provides a way to expiate the sins of the past, either bellicose action (Vietnam) or complacent inaction (Rwanda). It not only holds out the expectation of protecting endangered civilians but also the promise of acting multilaterally to uphold international laws.

Yet the consequences of such intervention have rarely been more vexing. As the world’s leading military power—it devotes more to defense than the next ten biggest-spending countries combined—America finds itself lurching from conflict to conflict, often with little idea of how they will end, other than the hope that the forces of righteousness will prevail, even as Washington becomes progressively more enmeshed in local disputes. In its quixotic quest to create a global and irenic order by force, it is flouting Shakespeare’s admonition that it is best to “fling away ambition: By that sin fell the angels.”

This is particularly so in the Middle East, where the Obama administration and, to a lesser degree, Europe face nothing less than a potential cataclysm of engagements, until the entire region is in tumult. The result is a self-reinforcing doctrine of permanent revolution. In creating, or abetting, chaotic conditions, it becomes necessary to intervene again and again, all in the name of averting further chaos.

These incursions embrace the idea—some more, some less—of humanitarian intervention. The conceit is that when America intervenes, it is not doing so on the basis of sordid national interests but, rather, on the grounds of self-evidently virtuous human rights or, in its most extreme case, to prevent genocide. This development—to call it a mere trend would be to trivialize its true import—has been a long time in the making.

Indeed, in an essay published in *The National Interest* (now reprinted in *The Neoconservative Persuasion*), Irving Kristol contended that human rights had become a kind of unquestioned ideology. Kristol traced its origins back to the debates between William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli over intervention in the Balkans, when the Turks massacred some twelve thousand Bulgarians. The realist Disraeli, who sought to check Russia, was unmoved by Gladstone's humanitarian appeals to endorse self-determination for the Balkan states. But perhaps an even earlier instance came in the lead-up to British involvement in the Crimean War, revolving as it did around the "Eastern Question"; the Turks and Russians could fight it out for influence in the Mediterranean—and the French could get in their squabble over Catholics, without much bother to the Brits. As liberal politician John Bright argued on March 31, 1854, in his great speech to Parliament against squandering power in foolish adventures abroad:

How are the interests of England involved in this question? . . . it is not on a question of sympathy that I dare involve this country, or any country, in a war which must cost an incalculable amount of treasure and of blood. It is not my duty to make this country the knight-errant of the human race, and to take upon herself the protection of the thousand millions of human beings who have been permitted by the Creator of all things to people this planet.

Transforming the United States into a knight-errant, though, is at the heart of liberal internationalism. As in nineteenth-century Britain, so in modern America; just as with Gladstone, the current manifestation of this impulse first became apparent in the Balkans, when NATO established a no-fly zone there, during the bombings of 1995. And so a new generation of liberal hawks emerged, overcoming the discomfiture associated with the use of force in Vietnam, seeing themselves as divine intervenors for mistreated ethnic minorities abroad. It amounted, in some ways, to a multicultural foreign policy, or at least one that sees America as key to creating a new democratic order. Madeleine Albright, for example, announced during the Clinton administration, “If we have to use force, it is because we are America. We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall, and we see further than other countries into the future.”

The hubris of ascribing a unique percipience to the United States was hardly confined to Albright. It also amounted a fortiori to the credo of the George W. Bush administration, which witnessed a fusion of neoconservatives and liberal hawks. “Damn the doves,” Christopher Hitchens announced in the conservative London Spectator in 2001 as the United States readied to topple Saddam Hussein. While in Dissent, Michael Walzer declared that the Left was being “stupid, overwrought, grossly inaccurate” and should accept America’s imperial status, modeling any opposition to the Iraq invasion on the Little Englanders during the Boer War.

Then, as the insurgency developed, the alliance melted away. A notable defector was Peter Beinart, who first wrote a book calling for a nationalistic Democratic Party, then issued a second one taking it all back.

Now the alliance between liberal hawks and neocons is returning, epitomized in an open letter sent to the White House in February 2011 by the Foreign Policy Initiative (successor to the Project for the

New American Century), demanding that President Obama act to avoid a humanitarian disaster in Libya. Signed by Paul Wolfowitz and William Kristol as well as Martin Peretz and Leon Wieseltier, the old gang was back together again. Robert Kagan declared Obama's speech on Libya to be "Kennedy-esque," the ultimate term of neocon approbation. Intellectuals as a class have become habituated to demanding military action to make up for America's failure to prevent various atrocities and genocides. As David Rieff observed with vexation:

This war—let us call it by its right name, for once—will be remembered to a considerable extent as a war made by intellectuals, and cheered on by intellectuals. The main difference this time is that, particularly in the United States, these intellectuals largely come from the liberal rather than the conservative side.

No doubt the Obama team was itself torn on the issue of intervention. It entered office emphasizing realist tenets. Now it is jettisoning them. The intellectual incoherence of the White House was epitomized by a statement from Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes:

What we are doing is enforcing a resolution that has a very clear set of goals, which is protecting the Libyan people, averting a humanitarian crisis, and setting up a no-fly zone. Obviously that involves kinetic military action, particularly on the front end. But Washington is not "getting into an open-ended war, a land invasion in Libya."

The plan, however, seems to be for America to act as an arsenal of freedom rather than to promote its own domestic welfare. Today this Wilsonian doctrine is sold as a form of atonement for past wrongdoings—that, unless we intervene decisively in what is often a civil war to tip the balance of the scales to one side, America will

once again have blood on its hands. Never again, in other words, will become ever again.

IT WOULD be hard to think of a more ardent promoter of this doctrine than Samantha Power. Power is not just an advocate for human rights. She is an outspoken crusader against genocide. She has referred self-deprecatingly to herself as the “genocide chick.” She has made it her life’s mission to shame American statesmen into action and to transform U.S. foreign policy. And as she seeks to create a new paradigm, she is becoming a paradigmatic figure. She is a testament to the collapse of the old foreign-policy establishment and the rise of a fresh elite. This elite is united by a shared belief that American foreign policy must be fundamentally transformed from an obsession with national interests into a broader agenda that seeks justice for women and minorities, and promotes democracy whenever and wherever it can—at the point of a cruise missile if necessary. The same century-long progressive expansion of the democratic franchise that has taken place at home is also supposed to occur abroad. She is, you could say, the prophet armed.

Along with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and UN Ambassador Susan Rice, Power has become closely—and publicly—identified as one of the advisers most responsible for pushing Obama to intervene in Libya. It is a stunning turnabout. Power served then-Senator Obama as a top aide on foreign policy, taking a leave of absence from the Kennedy School at Harvard. But during the presidential campaign, Power announced that Hillary Clinton (not yet in Barack’s employ), who had been relentlessly bashing her boss, was a “monster.” A furor erupted. Power resigned. Her career with Obama was over.

Only it wasn’t. The late diplomat Richard Holbrooke, a close friend, called her “mesmerizing.” Once Obama was elected, she landed a post as a senior adviser on the National Security Council, where she

has become an increasingly influential and distinctive voice. Her rise there is even more astonishing given that National Security Adviser Tom Donilon was a deputy to Warren Christopher in the Clinton administration—and Power bitterly assailed that secretary of state for his dithering over Bosnia.

Power, unlike many liberal hawks, was an opponent of the Iraq War. When I hosted a panel with her in 2004 at UCLA that included journalist James Mann and scholar Chalmers Johnson, I asked how she was able to reconcile her espousal of humanitarian intervention with failing to put a stop to Saddam Hussein's depredations. Her response? The Bush administration was not acting multilaterally and Saddam's actions, at that point, didn't meet the definition of genocide even if they had in the past. It is an answer that I never found fully satisfactory, at least for someone who was otherwise championing the cause of stopping mad and bad dictators around the world.

Indeed, absent Power, Obama may not have intervened in Libya. Obama now uses arguments to justify the intervention that are somewhat redolent of Bush's about Iraq. Power has almost single-handedly revived the alliance between liberal hawks and neocons; as one of the chief promoters of the Iraq War, Fouad Ajami, declared in the *Wall Street Journal*:

In Bosnia, as in Libya a generation later, the standard-bearer of American power had a stark choice: It was either rescue or calamity. Benghazi would have been Barack Obama's Srebrenica, the town that the powers had left to the mercy of [General] Ratko Mladic.

An icon among the human-rights lobby, she has made it her personal crusade to ensure that American presidents act decisively to forestall, impede or halt the murder of civilians abroad. When President Obama gave his speech at the National Defense University in March, he explained military action in Libya protected the innocent; he was channeling Power:

To lend some perspective on how rapidly this military and diplomatic response came together, when people were being brutalized in Bosnia in the 1990s, it took the international community more than a year to intervene with air power to protect civilians.

In fact, a few hours before Obama's speech, Power herself told an audience at Columbia University, in words that anticipated Obama's, that "in the Balkans it took three years for the international community to use air power to prevent heavy weapons from firing on civilians. In Libya it took a little more than a month."

The invocation of Bosnia was not adventitious. It has become the siren song of liberal interventionists. Part of the legend of Power is her first mission to Bosnia, where she filed reports for the Boston Globe and other publications about Serbian belligerence and Western inaction. Power became the anti-Rebecca West—where West lionized the Serbs standing up to fascism in the 1930s in her book *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, Power became a heroine chastising America and Europe for their lassitude in confronting contemporary fascist impulses from West's former freedom fighters. This was, at bottom, a new Spanish Civil War for Power and her cohort—a chance to choose sides, to experience good and evil, not vicariously but up close, and to denounce it. It is important to remember that when Power traveled to Bosnia, she frequently met with and chastised government officials, including Ambassador Peter Galbraith, for not doing more against Serbian iniquities (a favor he returned as Obama hesitated about intervention in Libya). Not for her the Weberian *Wertfreiheit*, or objectivity, that American newspapers inculcate. Power epitomizes an older model—the crusading journalist.

BUT POWER'S journalistic triumphs were a dress rehearsal for her next career as a professor and author of "A Problem From Hell": *America and the Age of Genocide*, which won a Pulitzer Prize.

It is a bold effort. Stylishly written, packed with vignettes and sharp portraits, it essentially rewrites much of twentieth-century American history in the shadow of genocide. She observes that, again and again, Western powers looked away from massacre. The problem, she famously declared, wasn't that America's policy failed. It was that it worked. Reticence about protesting mass murder was a constituent part of America's hard-nosed, realist approach to foreign affairs. What is missing from Power's work, however, is a political context. There seems to be the assumption that Washington can always be on the right side of history—that American presidents can ignore domestic and international considerations simply to plunge into conflicts on the side of the beleaguered whenever they feel like it.

It is also notable that Power, in her extended case studies of genocide, ignores some of the biggest examples of the past century. There is no mention of Stalin's man-made Ukrainian famine. There is no mention of Mao's Cultural Revolution, which killed tens of millions.

Perhaps this is because these cases don't quite fit with her theory that the American government's deliberate indifference has invariably been key in the failure to stop mass deaths. Rather, many on the American and British left were bedazzled by what they saw as Communist dictatorships greatly leaping forward, whatever the human toll might be. It was active blindness on the part of these intellectuals, a shameful historical legacy that nothing can efface. As Saul Bellow once observed, "A great deal of intelligence can be invested in ignorance when the need for illusion is deep."

The true strength of Power's book is as a literary work, a ringing and idealistic call to arms. It does not merely recount. It instructs its reader what is to be done. Power's work begins with a bang—the 1921 assassination in Berlin of Mehmed Talat, the former Turkish interior minister who presided over the massacre of Armenians. It

was one of the few actions, as Power notes, taken to punish the Turks. Woodrow Wilson, eager to remain neutral in World War I, had resisted the calls of his ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, to protest the killings of Armenians. Power castigates Wilson for refusing to “declare war on or even break off relations with the Ottoman Empire.” She would have taken America onto the European battlefields—and into the bloodbath—far earlier. In going to war against Germany, Wilson told Congress, “it seems to me that we should go only where immediate and practical considerations lead us and not heed any others.” According to Power, “America’s nonresponse to the Turkish horrors established patterns that would be repeated.”

What Power does not discuss is Wilson’s conduct of the war, namely his decision to intervene after he had promised Americans he would not. If anything, Wilson, who promised the war to end wars, was wildly idealistic, anything but a hardened realist, someone who was bamboozled during the Paris peace negotiations by his French and British counterparts, the champion of the League of Nations, whose headquarters in Geneva became a testament to fecklessness during the 1930s. It seems peculiar to condemn Wilson for not having been idealistic enough.

When it comes to World War II, Power has a far stronger case to make. The wartime Allies, confronted with the crime of the century, focused on battling Nazism rather than exposing its genocidal campaign against the Jews and other ethnic and religious minorities. Her hero is the Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin who invented the neologism “genocide.” He was pivotal to the new United Nations’ adoption of a convention declaring genocide a violation of international law, though America refused to sign it for four decades. Now it provides a basis for military intervention.

Which returns us to Bosnia yet again. Power does an excellent job of limning the reluctance of the George H. W. Bush administration to intervene. As then-Secretary of State James Baker famously put it, “We don’t have a dog in this fight.” Instead, to quell charges of its heartlessness, the White House sent American troops to Somalia in a humanitarian venture—a disastrous decision that got America bogged down in a bloody civil war. Next, the Clinton administration came under fire for doing the same sort of hand-wringing over Bosnia as its realist predecessor—surely the Left could be counted on for compassion? Yet then it remained reticent about Rwanda, allowing the Hutus to conduct mass killings of hundreds of thousands of Tutsis.

Power’s verdict is withering:

The real reason the United States did not do what it could and should have done to stop genocide was not a lack of knowledge or influence but a lack of will. Simply put, American leaders did not act because they did not want to. They believed that genocide was wrong, but they were not prepared to invest the military, financial, diplomatic, or domestic political capital needed to stop it.

Power hopes to once and for all turn the tide against American lassitude, against the Democratic slogan propounded by presidential hopeful George McGovern in the 1972 campaign—“Come Home, America.” Liberals were then opposed to Ronald Reagan’s support for the Nicaraguan contras, even though he portrayed that partly as a humanitarian venture, pointing to the human-rights abuses perpetrated by the Sandinistas. Reagan, for all the bellicosity, was loath to send American troops into combat, withdrawing them from Lebanon after the bombing of the Marine Corps barracks in 1983. What Power overlooks, or minimizes, is the political context of a country in which the term “no more Vietnams” carried, and continues to carry, great political weight. It is these old thought patterns that

Power wants to refashion, turning the United States into a nation that wields force wherever it deems fit—not for security, but for the betterment of others, secure we will not squander resources because of the justness of our cause.

Power has a penchant for dramatizing history through people rather than considering broader forces. She states in the acknowledgments to “A Problem From Hell” that a friend from Hollywood advised her to create a drama by telling the story through characters. And that is what she did.

AS HER other tome about the United Nations official Sergio Vieira de Mello—*Chasing the Flame: One Man’s Fight to Save the World*—makes clear, however, Power champions her own kind of great-man history in which a lonely hero stands up for truth, justice and the international way. She produces a morality play rather than a conventional history. In a sense, Power, you could argue, is addicted to hero worship, beginning with Raphael Lemkin and ending with Obama. In fact, in her acknowledgments, she observes that she offered “whatever help I could to Barack Obama, the person whose rigor and compassion bear the closest resemblance to Sergio’s that I have ever seen.”

This seems excessive. Vieira de Mello was a Brazilian United Nations bureaucrat. He served the UN in a number of hot spots—East Timor, Rwanda, Cyprus, Cambodia, Lebanon and the Balkans (where Power first met him in her capacity as a journalist). He was a UN high commissioner for human rights and was murdered along with twenty other members of his staff in August 2003 when he was the secretary-general’s special representative in Iraq. He served bravely. Perhaps he would have become secretary-general. But to elevate him, as Power does, into the stuff of legend defies credulity. For her Vieira de Mello serves as a beacon, a symbol of what true internationalism might accomplish.

As Power portrays it, Vieira de Mello is everything the United States was not under George W. Bush—dignified, restrained, attentive to local conditions, eager to negotiate with foreign tyrants. His death in the bombed-out Canal Hotel serves as a sign of the blundering malignancy of the land of the free. Obama, like Vieira de Mello, is supposed to personify the better side of America. He represents patience and understanding, and a readiness to negotiate with authoritarian leaders when necessary rather than refusing to deal with them at all.

But as Michael Massing observed in an incisive review in the June 9, 2008, issue of the *Nation*, Vieira de Mello actually reflected many of the worst traits of the UN. According to Massing:

While she presents him as embodying the UN system at its best—its dedication to humanitarianism, multilateralism and dialogue—a strong case can be made, based on the evidence she presents, that he represented the UN system at its worst—its timidity, mediocrity and zeal for self-protection.

Instead of being a crusader, Vieira de Mello was ready to compromise. For example, Power writes that when it came to protecting the rights of Vietnamese boat people, he could have gone to greater lengths to use his pulpit at [the UN's refugee agency] UNHCR to try to ensure that the Vietnamese were more fairly screened in the camps and were better treated en route back to Vietnam. This was the first of several prominent instances in his career in which he would downplay his and the UN's obligation to try to shape the preferences of governments. By the 1980s he had come to see himself as a UN man, but since the organization was both a body of self-interested governments and a body of ideals, he did not seem sure yet whether serving the UN meant doing what states demanded or pressing for what refugees needed.

Such tentative statements, as Massing observes, are acutely at odds with the fire-breathing Power of “A Problem From Hell.” There she denounced statesmen for doing what Vieira de Mello did. This raises the question of whether Power is willing to make any accommodation necessary to cater to her own new boss.

Nor did the role that Vieira de Mello played in Bosnia turn out any better. It’s hardly a secret that the UN disgraced itself in the Balkans, where it served as a de facto accomplice to the Serbs. Power recounts that Vieira de Mello was touring the former Soviet Union while Serbian General Ratko Mladic

presided over the systematic slaughter of every Bosnian man and boy in his custody, some eight thousand in all. When the Serb mass graves were discovered six weeks later, Vieira de Mello was stunned. “I never thought Mladic was this stupid,” he said, projecting his own reverence for reason onto one who clearly observed different norms. “The massacre was totally unnecessary.”

(What massacre, incidentally, is necessary?) In this telling, Vieira de Mello, who sought to curry favor with leading Serbs, sounds less like an international statesman than a gullible technocrat. Power’s implicit criticisms of Vieira de Mello suggest, as Michael Massing notes, that she is wrestling with the contradictions of espousing an idealistic credo and implementing a policy. (Such would seem to be the case, for example, when she defends Obama administration policy on Guantánamo Bay, wildly at variance as it is with the president’s promises circa 2008 to shutter the detention facility promptly.)

Power recounts other less-than-inspiring episodes. She notes that in 1999, after the Washington Post reported that several UN weapons inspectors in Iraq were sending information to the Clinton administration, Vieira de Mello almost resigned. Fabrizio Hochschild, his special assistant, thought that some kind of *démarche* to Richard Butler, the head of the UN inspections team, was required.

But he was, Power reports, “taken aback when he saw Vieira de Mello greet Butler on his next visit as if nothing had happened. No matter how great his outrage, Hochschild noted, Vieira de Mello remained as reluctant as ever to make an enemy.” There can be no doubting that Vieira de Mello’s extensive experience in war zones would have made him a valuable adviser, if the Bush administration had been disposed to listen to his advice, which it was not. He had, as Power observes, frequently “watched as promising postwar transitions collapsed because of a failure to fill the security void.” Power’s assumption appears to be that given the right approach, Iraq might not have degenerated into sectarian warfare. There can be no doubting that the Bush administration botched the occupation. But it is unclear such interventions ever turn out well. It is not just the hubristic evildoers on the right who fail to build up new and better societies in the wake of war; incursions of this sort may simply be doomed. Doesn’t Iraq, in fact, cast further doubt on the efficacy of so-called humanitarian ventures?

NOW POWER is behind the rush to fill the security void in Libya. As Secretary Clinton told ABC News in March:

We learned a lot in the 1990s. We saw what happened in Rwanda. It took a long time in the Balkans, in Kosovo to deal with a tyrant. But I think . . . what has happened since March 1st, and we’re not even done with the month, demonstrates really remarkable leadership. Power provided the tutorials these past years, both to Obama and to an entire class of liberal hawks. She may be the most influential journalist-turned-presidential-adviser since a young Walter Lippmann drafted the Fourteen Points for Woodrow Wilson, only to become a chastened realist after the Treaty of Versailles made a mockery of Wilsonianism and the internationalist dream.

Perhaps Power’s next destination is to become United Nations ambassador. Maybe she will follow in the footsteps of Madeleine

Albright and ultimately become secretary of state. In his memoir, *The Audacity of Hope*, Obama observed that Power “combed over each chapter.” Now she has begun to exercise the same influence over his approach to foreign affairs. Obama entered office, like George W. Bush, promising to repudiate the arrogance of his predecessor, only to be seduced by the lure of militant democracy.

Power’s argument that there is a coincidence between humanitarian intervention and American national interests marks a profound shift in justification for military action. Rhetorically, she espouses a move away from fighting Islamic terrorism to battling aggressors under the banner of humanitarian intervention. This is supposed to mark a fundamental break with the Bush administration, whose approach to confronting terrorism she denounced in a lengthy essay in the *New York Times* in 2007. Whether it amounts to one in practice is another matter.

Even Obama didn’t try to argue that genocide was taking place in Libya. Instead, this was a preemptive strike (ah, how redolent again of the 2003 Iraq invasion) against a potential massacre, one that would have profound implications for the region. It was in America’s national interest to intervene. And so he plunged the United States into a new conflict. Where does Power draw the line? The bar for preventing genocide may well have been set too high in the past, as she argues. But she, in turn, may be setting it too low, providing an ideological smokescreen for the use of American military force in dubious circumstances, something she never adequately addresses. She runs the risk of exposing America to the charge of hypocrisy for not intervening in countries where brutal mistreatment of the local population is taking place, as in Zimbabwe, while providing a validating and dangerously palatable logic for American overextension. Power’s solution to the conundrum that has bedeviled the Democratic Party since Vietnam—when to sanction the use of

force abroad—is to support wars of national liberation. This is likely not a solution at all.

In a speech in 2006, Power told graduating students at Santa Clara University Law School “to demand that our representatives are attentive to the human consequences of their decision making.” The new round of engagements abroad by the Obama administration may well come to be seen as the last glimmerings of American hubris.

“Kings can have subjects,” George F. Kennan once observed, “it is a question whether a republic can.”

It would be no small irony if, in her zeal to reshape American foreign policy in the image of liberal internationalism, Power were to usher in its demise.

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