

Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad
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Thank you very much, Amy, for that very, very kind introduction. I would also like to thank Howard Friedman and AIPAC for inviting me to be here this afternoon. And I'm delighted that I had the chance to meet Howard Kohr as well. Today I would like to talk about the challenges of the broader Middle East and I look forward then to take your questions.

The future of the broader Middle East is geopolitically the defining issue of our time, the same way that managing the European balance of power was geopolitically the most important challenge of the 19th century and early 20th century. And that managing the Cold War was the focus of a generation.

There is a struggle going on for the future of this region. At the center of this struggle is a crisis within Islamic civilization. Between those who adhere to traditional or moderate views of the faith and those who argue that only an extreme and intolerant vision of Islam is true to the Koran and that Muslims who do not agree with them have somehow abandoned their religion. This struggle between moderates and extremists is about what it means to be a Muslim, what it means to be successful in this world, and how Muslims relate to others in their midst or in other societies.

The extremists blame the problems of the Muslim world on the United States and other Western powers and on the Muslims who do not follow their extremist interpretations of Islamic doctrine. Their doctrine demands that there can be no peace until they are dominant using persuasion, provision of social services, intimidation, and violence to try to obtain control of Muslim or mixed societies. They believe their climb to power will be accelerated by provoking a clash between Islamic society and the rest of the world. These extremists are a minority phenomenon in the region as a whole, but dominate parts of it.

They have gained global prominence in recent years, largely because of their terrorist tactics. We see this struggle within Islam throughout the broader Middle East. In Afghanistan where President Karzai's moderate government is challenged by extremists who have killed thousands of innocent Afghans; in Pakistan where extremists shelter Al Qaeda terrorists and impose their intolerant views on the country; and in Iraq where Sunni and Shi'a extremists seek total power for themselves and are tearing their society apart. We see it in Lebanon where the moderate government that was elected after the

Cedar Revolution now faces a threat of Hezbollah, which seeks dominance through violence and intimidation.

We see it in Gaza where the extremist Hamas, which is hostile to peace with Israel and opposes the more moderate President Abbas, has taken over the area; and in Iran where the regime imposes a rigid and narrow vision of Islam on a society that has a rich tradition of learning, diversity, and tolerance. And this regime supports extremists in other countries of the area.

There are many factors that provide oxygen to extremists. The dysfunctional politics in the broader Middle East both within and among States create dangerous opportunities. When governments fail to deliver in terms of basic government services, security, or social, political, and economic progress, the stagnation leads to a kind of despair where extremism appears a rational option. When political systems are closed and leave no space for free debate or for moderates to organize, the paralysis benefits extremists who operate by clandestine means to offer themselves as alternatives to both undemocratic leaders and democratic aspirants.

In a rapidly changing and uncertain world, religion can be a solace and a vulnerability. Religious movements that define themselves in unambiguous extremist terms such as Al Qaeda, prey on those searching for explanation. When regional conflicts remain unresolved and produce widespread suffering these consequences provide a pretext for extremists to justify their violent acts and rivalries among states further inflame instability as rivals exploit the religious appeals to recruit proxy forces to go into neighboring states. We and the rest of the world cannot be indifferent about the future of the broader Middle East. The evolution of this region will have a profound impact on the future of the world.

We are living in a global community and the problems of one part of the world affect other parts as we saw on 9/11. Therefore the rest of the world has a profound interest in helping the Muslim world come out of this crisis in a good way. This is especially true for the United States given our global interests and responsibilities and for Israel given its location and its history. The overall goal of our policy is and must remain to contain and weaken the extremists, cultivate and empower moderates and encourage a normalization of this region. Of course the normalization of this region is primarily the responsibility of local moderates, but we must help them as they transform that region from one beset by instability and violence to one characterized by peace and progress. This cannot be done quickly or rashly or easily or cheaply; it will not be done solely or even principally by military means. It will require work on many fronts and a comprehensive strategy for the long-term. This afternoon I would like to highlight

three priorities in the effort to support that transformation and outline how we can advance those objectives.

First we must remain committed to success in Afghanistan and Iraq even as we make necessary adjustments in our strategy, plans and military posture. As Ambassador in Afghanistan and Iraq, I worked with the locals with a simple formula. We were there to help Afghans and Iraqis establish systems based on universal values but understood that the constitution and institutions that would give these values life would be colored by Afghan and Iraqi history, culture, and yes, religion. Today we must continue to help stabilize these countries. Any other outcome other than stability in these two countries will embolden Al Qaeda and other extremists and create new and potentially bigger dangers. In Afghanistan, the United States as well as the rest of the international community needs to do more to create a productive partnership with President Karzai and moderate political forces. This partnership must re-accelerate state-building and reconstruction, help create a robust agricultural sector that will reduce the incentives to grow opium and mobilize the political forces in Afghan society that want to recreate the stable and moderate society that Afghanistan was before the Soviet invasion in 1979.

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If we truly want to stabilize Afghanistan, more must be done by the Afghan leaders in partnership with the international community to address these issues.

Turning to Iraq, we face a conflict where both Sunni and Shi'a extremists use sectarian violence as a basis to achieve their own dominance. Al Qaeda in Iraq has sought to foster a sectarian war in order to offer itself as a protector of the Sunnis in the hope not only of pushing the United States and the coalition out but also in the hope of taking over part or all of Iraq. Shi'a extremism in turn seeks to present themselves as protectors of their communities and impose a Shi'a-dominated order in the country in alliance with Iran. To address this challenge we're working with responsible elements in both communities to bring about national reconciliation through agreement on key issues such as how to share resources like oil, organize the country, and deal with members of the former regime. The strategy is to build up moderates and marginalize extremists and some progress has been made.

The Sunni Arabs who rejected participating in politics in the earlier stages after our forces went into Iraq are now participating in the political process and are helping fight Al Qaeda in places like Fallujah and Ramadi. Al Qaeda has been substantially weakened in Iraq. The signs in terms of security in Baghdad are encouraging as well, and I believe that the population security strategy pursued by

General Petraeus is having positive effects, but unfortunately the most important development—political progress at the national level has been slow.

Recently the United Nations Security Council voted unanimously to expand UN involvement in Iraq to help tackle such tasks as national reconciliation, regional engagement, and humanitarian issues. The UN has a lot of experience with such situations in other countries and so therefore they can bring that expertise to the table in Iraq. Also because they operate under a neutral banner, they can play a third-party role and talk to key players outside the reach of the United States.

By bringing the UN in and encouraging others to support Iraq we are adding to what we are able to do on our own and further internationalize the effort. The United States supports this forward-leaning approach in order to achieve our own goal of enabling Iraq to become a stable country, one that will be a responsible partner in the international community and a force for moderation in the region.

Our second priority is to increase efforts to resolve regional conflicts in the Middle East. Looking back at history, we helped France and Germany, countries with a profound and enduring enmity to overcome their differences. In July the President announced that he would convene an international meeting before the end of the year to achieve the vision of two states—Israel and Palestine next to each other as a way to deal with the long-standing conflict between Israel and the Arab States in the Middle East. There are three parts to this renewed U.S. effort. First there is the re-invigoration of the political process. Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas have met six times since June and recently formed teams to work on a joint statement that could lay the foundation for a serious negotiation on the establishment of a Palestinian state. The international meeting planned for later this year in Annapolis will aim to advance that political process. Secretary Rice is working hard to help the parties make the progress needed on a framework and guidelines before the meeting. Second, there are steps being taken to move forward with the institution and capacity building track and these are being led by Tony Blair's own efforts on the ground to work on creating the institutions of a Palestinian state. It takes governance and capacity and capability; to that end the ad hoc liaison committee met in New York in September, and we're looking forward to a donor's conference in December to provide tangible support for a Palestinian national development agenda.

And third, we're continuing to work to achieve meaningful progress on the ground to give hope to the people on both sides that things are going to get better and to build confidence between the

parties and to generate support for progress on the other two tracks. Ultimately the establishment of such a state can only come through a Palestinian government that accepts the fundamental principles of peace, including recognition of Israel's right exist as a Jewish state, the renunciation of violence and terrorism, and acceptance of all previous agreements.

The current Palestinian Authority government and their President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad is committed to those principles of peace, and represents the best Palestinian partner we or Israel has ever had. We are committed to seizing this opportunity and working together with the parties to achieve meaningful progress on a successful path to Palestinian statehood and an end to this conflict.

Another key factor shaping the future of the region will be whether Iran persists in its dangerous and destabilizing policies. The Iranian regime has opted to stand against the community of nations, by pursuing nuclear weapons capabilities, supporting militants opposed to the peace process, re-arming Hezbollah, and engaging in Holocaust denial. On the nuclear issue, the international community through the Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency has given the Iranian regime a choice. On the one hand the Iranian leaders can work towards diplomatic resolution of this issue, comply with international obligations and benefit from widened engagement and cooperation. On the other hand, if Iran continues to reject this offer it will pay a steady increase in price in terms of financial hardship, the diplomatic isolation, and further erosion of its standing in the world. It's up to the Iranian regime whether it cooperates with the diplomatic effort, but it's also up to other members of the international community, particularly the permanent members of the Security Council to do what is needed to incentivize Iran to comply with its obligations. The Security Council has been engaged in this issue since February of 2006 and has adopted three Resolutions under Chapter 7, two of which unanimously impose sanctions on Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs. Nevertheless, Iran refuses to comply with the Council's demands. When the Foreign Ministers representing P-5 plus Germany met last month in New York at the opening of the General Assembly they agreed to reaffirm their dual track strategy on Iran, support negotiations but pursue a third UN Security Council Sanctions Resolution unless Iran abides by its Security Council obligations.

In addition, the IAEA is engaged in discussions with Iran aimed at resolving outstanding questions and concerns. The P-5 plus one Foreign Ministers agreed that unless Dr. Solana of the European Union and Mr. ElBaradei of the IAEA report a positive outcome of their efforts

in November, they will bring a third Sanctions Resolution to vote in the Security Council.

As I said it's up to the Iranian regime whether it cooperates with the diplomatic efforts but it's also up to other members of the international community particularly the permanent members of the Security Council whether they do what's appropriate on the diplomatic front, so diplomacy can succeed because those that do not cooperate with diplomacy with additional sanctions bear some responsibility should Iran not cooperate and should other measures be applied.

Iran is also one of several of Iraq's neighbors that is pursuing destabilizing policies, facilitating violent actors by providing them with funding or other lethal support and allowing them to cross their borders into the country. Syria is another. We can work with the Iraqis to help them establish constructive relations with their neighbors. In this effort we will need the support—we will need the support of responsible regional States and the United Nations.

Several Chapter 7 Security Council resolutions prohibit this kind of support to terrorists and arms smuggling whether in Iraq or in Lebanon. For example, we continue to work on the full implementation of Security Council Resolution 1701 which mandates that all governments including Syria and Iran refrain from transferring arms into Lebanon without the consent of the Lebanese government and cease and desist from activities that impinge upon the country's sovereignty. We're working unilaterally and collectively to prevent the flow of arms and finances from Iran to groups who seek to disrupt the fragile Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Our third priority is that in our own engagement with our friends in the region, that currently have non-democratic or weak governments, we must pursue carefully collaborated policies to create political space in which moderate forces can organize and become self-sustaining and to prepare for a transition to democracy when conditions are right. The struggle we face against extremists is partly a military conflict because terrorists seek to attack us and our allies. In response, we have taken offensive and defensive steps, but this struggle is also largely a political struggle. There are moderates throughout the broader Middle East who reject intolerant views and the use of violence. Like people everywhere they wish for a life of opportunity for themselves and for their children. They want their nations to become successful, normal countries in which the people have basic security, decent jobs, and the ability to send their children to school, where one generation does better than its predecessor and the following does better still.

But most citizens of this troubled region do not live in states that offer these opportunities. They do not enjoy the rule of law. Generally

speaking they suffer from one of two unhappy models—a weak State or an authoritarian State, each one opposes moderates. Authoritarianism creates breeding grounds for extremism because extremists feed off of anger and frustration and are willing to organize on a clandestine basis. In weak states extremists operate more openly, preying on moderates who lack protection by strong state organs. How do we help shrink the operating space for extremists? Each model requires our engagement and pressure; we must help and push authoritarian States to open up their political processes. We must support and strengthen weak states so they can regain a monopoly on the use of force and use that authority wisely. We must also encourage and help them build their capabilities and effectiveness in addressing the needs of their societies.

But in addition to our traditional work with governments, we must also do more throughout the region to cultivate and strengthen moderate individuals and groups—what we think of as civil society, so they are capable of fostering and taking advantage of political openings. The challenge is to do this in a way that does not undermine them with their own people. We have to find better ways in my view to engage individuals and groups seeking a normal and functioning Middle East. We must foster and strengthen them and help them network with each other and like-minded groups around the world. The extremists have well-funded, high capable, transnational networks that are organized; they have local cadres in each country. We need to develop a comparable capability to engage and mobilize those who share universal values—values that are neither Western nor Muslim but values that the world has in common. Different societies will have their own approaches colored by their own history and culture yet we can help them.

We did this in the Cold War through Radio Europe, Radio Liberty, exchange programs, and many other means. Think of the great successes that we had in Poland near the end of the Cold War with support by American unions of Solidarity or by the effect of the Catholic Church in that society. Think of the positive effect of American civil society organizations in the color revolutions of the last 10 years. We need to identify and support analogous efforts that are appropriate to the broader Middle East. As we move forward we need to remember that sometimes too rapid a transition to democracy can create the risks that only the extremists are politically prepared for elections. We should engage the leaders of our allies to think through the stages of transition beginning with political openings that enable moderates to organize, followed up with political dialogue and processes that help elements of the current order create relationships with moderates to

support a stable transition, and culminating in agreed steps towards an ultimate transition to a representative government.

I spoke of the competition for the Middle East. This competition—this struggle for the future of the broader Middle East will be the work of generations requiring patience, determination, and sustained cooperation with like-minded leaders and groups not only throughout the Middle East but also throughout the world. Our alliance with Israel has to be a cornerstone for moving forward. All responsible states of the world have a profound interest in achieving a sustainable lasting peace in the broader Middle East and we must work together. Harnessing the potential for cooperation among like-minded nations from Europe and Asia and beyond to help moderates oppose extremists in the broader Middle East and assist the people of this region to make the region a functioning system is a focal point of our global strategy. We and the generations that came before us prevailed in previous struggles—not just because of our material resources, our military might or the sacrifice of so many lives—when we prevailed it was not merely a triumph of one great power over another; it was a triumph of a concept of humanity that vindicated the dignity of every individual.

With that I'll be happy to take your questions. Thank you very much for your warm welcome.