



The Faces of Contemporary Islam: Practice, Theory, and Foreign Policy
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Morning Keynote Address: Who Speaks for Islam? Letter to President-Elect Obama

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Moderator: **Gail Kitch**, Women's Foreign Policy Group Board

Gail Kitch: Good morning, everyone. I'm Gail Kitch, the Vice Chair of the Women's Foreign Policy Group Board, and it's an honor and a privilege to welcome everyone. It's a bit of a cold morning but thanks for making it over. It's wonderful to have you here today for the Women's Foreign Policy Group Islam conference with Carnegie scholars. This conference is part of the Carnegie Corporation of New York Islam Initiative to promote better understanding of Islam. Through the support of the Foundation, the Women's Foreign Policy Group has been able to hold several programs in Washington and New York which have highlighted the important and timely work of the Carnegie scholars, whose work is notably in-depth and nuanced, and which addresses historical, cultural, and political aspects of Islam. The Women's Foreign Policy Group has been very proud of these programs through the years, which have helped enhance the dialogue on these important issues.

For this reason, we are very excited to welcome a very impressive group of scholars here today, for this important dialogue amongst themselves, and with the foreign policy community. We are delighted to have some of our Board members here today and I'll introduce them later. Some diplomats and State Department officials will also be joining us a little bit later. We are especially pleased that our colleagues from the Carnegie Corporation of New York: Patricia Rosenfield, Director of Carnegie Scholars Program; Hillary Wiesner, Director of the Islam Initiative; and Ambika Kapur, Program Assistant on the Journalism Initiative are here. We're so happy they could join us, and they've been so helpful in making this initiative a success. This is really the group that has made this such a success. It's a really special program.

It is now my pleasure to introduce our keynote speaker for the conference, Dr. John Esposito, Professor of Religion and International Affairs and of Islamic Studies, and

Founding Director of the Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. He is Editor-in-Chief of the four-volume *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, the *Oxford History of Islam*, the *Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, *The Islamic World: Past and Present*, the six-volume *Islamic Encyclopedia of the Islamic World* at Oxford Studies Online. His more than 35 books include: *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think*; *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*; *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*; *Islam and Politics*; *Political Islam: Radicalism, Revolution, and Reform*; *Islam and Democracy*, with John Voll. His writings have been translated into more than 28 languages. The former President of the Middle East Studies Association of North America and the American Council for the Study of Islamic Societies, he's currently an ambassador for the UN Alliance of Civilizations and member of the World Economic Forum's Council of 100 Leaders.

Professor Esposito is the recipient of the American Academy of Religion's 2005 Martin Hardy Award for the Public Understanding of Religion and Pakistan's Kai Azim Award for Outstanding Contribution in Islamic Studies. He served as a consultant to the US Department of State and to governments, corporations, universities, and media. In 2003, he received the School of Foreign Service of Georgetown University's Award for Outstanding Teaching. Please join me in welcoming Professor Esposito.

John Esposito: Thank you, neither of the qualities that got me the award nor some of the other awards will be evident this morning, but... I'm extraordinarily conflicted today because I was saying to somebody that I had sort of prepared my comments on one of my innumerable plane rides, and so I felt very secure about it. So I got up about 4:30 this morning and thought, Well, I'll just take a little look at this, cut it back. Well, the net result from 4:30 to 7:00 is that it seemed to get longer, rather than shorter, but fortunately the way I look at it is that I made the print larger, so hopefully I can do this in a reasonable amount of time.

One of the depressing things – and I think I should say this because it will show another conflict, which is that I'm suddenly aware of the fact that I think I'm getting older – is that one of your participants, and I won't name her, I remember when I first got into the field in the early '70s, and my wife and I were buying carpets in Damascus. And there was a couple with their cute little kids, and when they left I went and looked at the sign-in, and the sign-in had the name Ibrahim Abu-Lughod and his wife Janet, and they were like heroes to me, and I thought, "Gee, I should have met them." And their little kids grew up. And it's kind of depressing. I mean, I think it's great that some people grow up, but the idea that I have to deal with that... It's as bad as this young coed that came in the other day and said, "My mother said I should come in and see you, she studied with you 40 years ago." And I snapped at her and said, "Don't you ever say that to me again, or say it in front of other people."

But in any case, here we are today. Let me preface this by saying that from my point of view, I'm a very strong supporter of President-elect Obama. However, whatever the disasters of the Bush Administration, and there are a legion, it doesn't mean that we're

out of the woods. I have some serious concerns about how things will play out with regard to the Muslim world in general, and particularly with regard to the Middle East. And we can get to that at some point.

But I want to give you a sense of how I see the context of post-9/11 and what I would be saying to the President-elect with regard to how he should be looking at the Muslim world and dealing with the Muslim world. Post-9/11, the aftermath dramatically underscored for some the sense of the conflict between the United States and the Muslim world; and some described it also, and do describe it, as a conflict between Christianity and Islam. Now, many of us will say that's beside the point. But the point is, we have people out there who say that. We have militant evangelicals; we have militant Muslim preachers, who will play up not just the Muslim world and West dimension, but that it has to do with Islam and Christianity.

And there are two contending and, I believe, distorted positions that emerge. One is an American perception of a war on global terrorism, constituting this as a kind of global war; and on the other hand, a perception in many parts of the Muslim world, of a war against Islam and the Muslim world. A key question, and a challenge for the new administration in crafting its foreign policy, in order to have one that's more effective and will restore America's moral stature. I prefer "stature". I always used to say "moral authority", but the problem with that is, you can just work that through. Part of the problem is that we think we have authority, let alone moral authority but America's moral stature is an awareness of what went wrong.

Well, in addition to Bernard Lewis going wrong in terms of a lot of the advice he gave to the administration – and, to show you I'm open-minded, my seminar on Islamic global terrorism is reading Bernard's book today, *What Went Wrong*¹ – but the question is, what really went wrong? And I think part of what really went wrong is that the dominant voices, and influences have in fact been neocons, militant Christian right, the terrorists themselves, authoritarian Muslim regimes, lobbies, etc. We have even, I think, more critically, in this post-9/11 world, and I see this hopefully as disappearing in the new administration, a McCarthyite context in which to dissent is to be unpatriotic, and the pressures that go with that, both in terms of the academy, in terms of government, and certainly in terms of media coverage.

But even more significant is what I call the battle of the experts. And this puts your average policy maker, your average citizen, in a very tight spot. What do you do when you have people with stellar credentials taking diametrically opposed positions? That's an issue. And clearly it's an issue when you have a president who's not informed to begin with, or interested in international policy. How does he then decide, when Powell and Rumsfeld disagree, let alone when Bernard Lewis and others disagree. Part of the problem is there really was no looking at the other side, often, for the Administration.

Also, it's the voices and the messages of the religious extremists and the terrorists that capture the headlines, capture attention, and often come to represent who Muslims are

¹ *What Went Wrong?: Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*

and what they want. And so when we often say, why do they hate us, or why the anti-Americanism, it's often geared to, well, we know what the answer is. They hate everything we stand for, and how do we know that? And so we key in selectively to what some extremists said. It's as much as keying in to Reverend Parsley and John Hagee in terms of taking a position on where the Christians stand.

Who's missing? And who has been missing? And who must not be missing if we're going to formulate a foreign policy that can be sensitive to the realities of the Muslim world? The vital missing piece is indeed the majority of Muslims. What do the majority of Muslims think and say? We consistently have people talking about "them," rather than going directly to "them." And we make the same problem when we deal with Islamic movements. We don't talk to Islamic movements. If we have conferences, half the time we can't invite them, and we don't think we should. Better to have people talk about them, and never have them at the table.

And in fact, people talk about them who've never met them. There is a somewhat prominent person who's written a book on Hamas and who's an expert in Washington with a major think tank, and who has interviewed two Hamas people. Both of them were in Israeli prisons. So he writes an expert book on Hamas, and is invited to testify in a trial about zakat committees, and acknowledges that having been in the West Bank and Gaza, he never bothered to visit or interview anybody on a zakat committee. So this battle of the experts, I think, is really important.

And on the other hand, the not knowing what the majority of Muslims think. Well, our polling data from a variety of groups, including Pew and the Gallup organization, provide us with a far more comprehensive view. Gallup has the most comprehensive, systematic study of Muslim opinion across the world. It includes more than 35 countries and more than 50,000 one-on-one interviews. And it's face-to-face interviews done in local languages, and embraces young and old, educated and illiterate, female and male, urban, village, and rural. The random sampling represents the voices of 90% of the world's Muslims, so roughly one billion Muslims. And much of that data is looked at and analyzed in a book that Dalia Mogahed and I did called, *Who Speaks for Islam?*².

But let's take a closer look at the policy issue: what the data tells us and what the implications are. First of all, the account is a good example of conventional wisdom, what people, for example, get. Experts say, how do Muslims feel about democracy, and then they answer it right away. You remember, they said, why do they hate us? They hate our democracy, our human rights, our gender equality, etc. We always like to assert, we lead with our ideals, sometimes not what our realities and practices are. So, who are the extremists? Do Muslims desire democracy? What about women's rights? What do women really want?

Well, we really don't need to talk a lot to women to know that; we ask experts and then we interview westernized elite women within a society like Iraq, because they can speak in front of the camera and they speak English, and they tell you how women feel some

² *Who Speaks For Islam?: What a Billion Muslims Really Think*

reform is going to be disastrous. Nobody bothers to ask how representative they are. Because obviously if they're dressed like us, they look like us, and they talk like us, they must be enlightened. It's a slight exaggeration, but leave it to Mediterranean hyperbole.

Now we have statistical evidence, the voices of a billion Muslims, not individual experts or extremists, to look at the actual scene. What's the most important insight? The most important insight is an obvious one but still one that a lot of people try not to acknowledge: that the primary issue, the primary clash is not about religion and culture, it's about policy. And here I think the report that was put out about a month ago that was put together by a variety of organizations, a bipartisan committee, was right on the mark, in talking about the fact that it's foreign policy, it's not religion and culture.

It's not that religion and culture don't play a role. We all frame, if we're religious people, what we do and legitimate it in the name of religion. And if we're not, we do it in the name of some other ideology. But the reality of it is, if you look at Osama bin Laden's statements and others, they talk about political and economic grievances and then they legitimate them and mobilize by appealing to religion.

We have to look at, what are the grievances? Let's look at the question, of, "Why do they hate us". The first thing to realize is that we conflate hatred for America with anti-Americanism. That becomes a problem. Terrorists hate us. Terrorists want to kill us. The majority of people who are anti-American, not only in the Muslim world, but in Europe and the rest of the world, don't hate us. They often admire us, sometimes envy us, but see us often as not living up to our principles and values, or fear our notion of a global order, or what looks to them like neocolonialism.

We can condemn the French notion of the mission to civilize, and the white man's burden of the British, but somehow it's okay – as Max Boot and others tell us, and Bernard Lewis – to feel as if we have this God-ordained mission to promote democracy. If you look at *The New York Times* when Condoleezza Rice was interviewed, it was astonishing. You have a president who has a 20% rating; we have a country that's in incredible debt; we're mired down in wars; and we're reassured that a major contribution of the Administration was promoting democracy, and there's even a link, and a happiness, that it's our promotion of democracy that brought Kuwaiti women their right to vote. It's an absolutely fascinating read of history.

That's part of our problem, not being able to distinguish between the anti-Americanism and the hatred, because if we make that distinction, then we can ask, more correctly and more constructively, why the anti-Americanism? Because at the end of the day, when you say why do they hate us, people who hate us, as far as I'm concerned, most of them are beyond the pale. But the anti-Americanism, which is broad-based and goes outside the Muslim world, begins to tell us as Americans that it's not simply something that is culture-specific or religion-specific, and that there are deeper reasons.

What we see is, first of all, that despite anti-Americanism and anti-British sentiment, Muslims do admire a good deal of what we stand for. In contrast to 57% of Americans

who when asked what they admired about Muslims or Islam said “nothing” or “I don’t know,” Muslims who have their resentments globally, also, on the other hand, talk about admiring our technology, our expertise, our knowledge; and the second-most frequent, our freedoms and democracy, our rule of law, our transparency, our notion of social justice. What are Muslims attitudes towards freedoms? The majority, greater than 90% in Egypt, Indonesia, and Iran, said they would include free speech, and indeed significant numbers added freedom of assembly and religion as a fundamental guarantee if they were to draft a new constitution. Asked to describe their dreams, it wasn’t about fighting jihad in the sense of some aggressive holy war, it was about better jobs, economic well-being, prosperity, and a better future for their children.

Not exactly a stunning sort of conclusion. This response ranged from a 70% of Indonesians to 54% of Iranians. But while admiring much of the West, in terms of achieving progress, majorities of Muslims see their religion and culture as very important. They’re not closed to the West, but they don’t see themselves as simply following the Western paradigm, and this is very important. So for example, they want democracy, but not democracy with secularism. They want democracy with religious values, which will often be expressed as, they want sharia to be a source of law. What they mean by sharia is very broad; it can mean many different things. But they do not want sharia as *the* source of law, nor do they want a theocracy. Contrast that with more than 50% of Americans, close to 54% of American Christians, who believe that our legislation should be based on the Bible. The high 40th percentile of those same Christians believe that their religious leaders should be involved in drafting those laws.

The other thing is, at the same time, they’re eager to have better relations with the West. And this is not only on the part of moderates, but also people who we call politically radicalized. The irony is that the politically radicalized in our survey – 7%, 91 million Muslims – who are politically radicalized when it comes to the US, i.e., they believe 9/11 was justified, for example. They are not violent, but they’re attitudes make them sympathetic. When you actually take a look, they – more than the mainstream – believe that democracy is the way forward and that relations with the West are important, but they – far more than the mainstream – believe that that will never happen, that the United States, as well as some European countries, is not interested in really promoting democracy as self-determination but rather democracy as whatever the western desired brand of democracy is. Unless we approve the outcome of an election, we’re not about to accept it, and we have some examples of that already.

To get a sense of the idea that it’s not a blind anti-Americanism, Muslims globally distinguish between the US and the UK, Bush and Blair, on the one hand, and France and Germany on the other – very, very clearly. And they remain critical of other Muslim countries as well, such as Pakistan: 30% of Muslims globally are negative when it comes to Pakistan. But the point is, it’s not a blind hatred of the West. And it’s not a civilizational hatred, it’s a policy. And where you see that it’s policy is in the distinguishing between Bush and Blair – so not even the US in some ways, but the leadership – and the leadership in France and Germany, and the kinds of policies that are

pursued. While 74% of Egyptians have unfavorable views of the US, and 69% said the same about Britain, only 21% have unfavorable views of France.

It's very interesting that when you look and talk about Canada, which we described as the US without its foreign policy, 67% of Kuwaitis have unfavorable views of the US and only 3% of Canada. 64% of Malaysians say the US is aggressive; only 1 in 10 associates that quality with France and Germany. The "aggressive" label is very much there also when it comes to the US-led invasion of Iraq. Vast majorities say it did more harm than good, including 90% of Egyptians, 87% of Senegalese, and 57% of Iranians.

What's the main concern here when it comes to democracy and the future of policy? It's what's regarded as America's double standard—or America and Britain's. A hypocrisy when it comes to the promotion of democracy and human rights, i.e., you promote them in one part of the world but not another. Ambassador Haass, when he was in the State Department during the Bush Administration, acknowledged that. He called it "democratic exceptionalism," and said it existed with every president. It's true, whether a Democrat or Republican: democratic exceptionalism when it came to the Middle East. A) We didn't promote it, and B) what did we do and what do we continue to do? We support authoritarian regimes.

These are all seen as hypocritical, as a double standard, and undermine our moral stature and our believability in the region, and raise profound questions about why this is the case. What you see many Muslims concluding is that it must be something about our religion and our culture and who we are. And so a major complaint is, stop denigrating Islam and considering Muslims as less equal, and Muslim lives as less important, less valuable. And here, both the example of Iraq and very much the example of the American position during the Israeli-Hezbollah war, and the way in which we sat on our hands at that time.

And indeed, we not only sat on our hands, but at the same time the Secretary of State was going to the Middle East to talk about the Arab-Israeli war. And it's not just Arabs who felt this way. Gideon Levy, who writes for *Haaretz*, at one point said, please don't come in one of his editorials. He said, because if you come, you're raising expectations and we know ahead of time you're not going to be prepared to really do anything on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and more importantly, you're not doing anything on Lebanon right now. It undermined the credibility.

What can the West do to improve its relations? What do Muslims wind up telling us? Then I'll get to more specific policy recommendations. The most frequent response is that the West needs to demonstrate more respect for Islam, regard for Muslims as equal, and not treat them as inferior. It's reflected in Lebanese respondents' statements only days after the end of the war with Israel, in which respondents blamed America almost as much as they blamed Israel. They, the West, "should consider us humans and should end the war and be at peace with the Muslim world. The West should treat Muslims equally to improve their relations because they look down upon us." One of my colleagues took a

picture in a destroyed area in Lebanon and the sign said, “Thank you, America, for promoting democracy.”

How accurate is this assessment? I’m going to give you two statistics on how Americans feel about Muslims. Anti-Muslim sentiment is widespread in the West. When asked how much prejudice they had, 72% of Americans said they had no prejudice towards Jews. Only 34% say that with regard to Muslims. Significant percentages said they believe that the religion of Islam is the problem. Less than half, 49% of Americans don’t believe that US Muslims can be loyal citizens. Americans’ views of Islam are even worse. 59% of Americans say they have unfavorable views of the faith. Now let me briefly just refer to the fact that when it comes to women and women’s rights, majorities of Muslims, men and women, even in countries like Saudi Arabia, believe that women should have equal rights to citizenship, education, employment (including senior levels of employment), and to vote without any interference.

But what can we say about where we need to go from here? It seems to me there are two possible scenarios. And here I would refer you to *World Policy Journal*; Dalia and I did an article there where we lay out the scenarios. I don’t have time to get into them, but one of the scenarios is that we continue with business as usual; that we define our interest in security by supporting authoritarian regimes, that we see the difference as simply cultural or if you will, simply “a war of ideas,” and therefore, what we tend to do is emphasize public affairs, or PR, rather than policy achievements. And that’s a major difference when you ask Americans and people in the Muslim world what should be done, they both agree on promoting better understanding; education exchange. But Americans stop there. Foreign policy is not on there window.

The same thing occurred during the Bush Administration. Secretary Powell saw public diplomacy as public relations and policy. The reason why we failed, among others, in our public diplomacy is that we consistently never addressed the policies. I was asked, with five other people, to review all of our government agencies’ policies on public diplomacy programs a number of years ago. We were told, when we were invited and when we first sat down – although we were not held to it at the end of the day, because five out of six of us refused to hold to it – that we would evaluate the public diplomacy program but we would not discuss foreign policy, that the Bush administration did not want us to review foreign policy.

Let’s talk about the new direction. On the one hand, we have to go with where President Bush was correct, and that is, he said we have to have a three-pronged approach, as you’ll remember: military, economic, and public diplomacy. But we have to realize, the military fights terrorism. It doesn’t fight effectively the war against global terrorism, because global terrorism goes beyond killing and capturing people. That’s where our public diplomacy comes into play. So part of it is that you can do the military and economics, but you really need the public diplomacy.

The target for us is not the vast majority of Muslims. 93% of Muslims don’t believe 9/11 was justified. They may have had problems with our foreign policy, but they’re not

potential radicals. Our target should be the 7% that are potential radicals. They are not violent, they're no more religious than others, and were educated in an international environment. They do better economically, believe in democracy and relations with the West, but they're much more cynical. They see a Western invasion, dominance; political, military, and cultural.

That's our target audience for public diplomacy. But we can't address the public diplomacy unless we do more than the PR. We can't just do videos telling people, you just don't understand us, as it were. The problem is, an awful lot of these people, if you look at the profile I just gave you, they are also more internationally aware. Many of them know us. They don't just know us from the media, they visit here, etc. And so they should be the audience for what we do. In this war, global terrorism is going to be with us, but the real question is, do you limit the credibility of extremists and terrorists who intend to recruit, and who in recruiting are not recruiting by simply saying, we have to kill people. The emphasis is always going to be in terms of political and economic grievances: the West is a threat to us in a variety of ways.

We need to be aware of those issues, and president-elect Obama has to be willing to address those issues. This means a significant shift not only in public diplomacy but also in policy. We need to be emphasizing diplomacy over military response. Military is used selectively, but if the end result is diplomacy, we should be open to talking to people who disagree with us, and we do that all the time. We did it with North Korea but we were always threatening militarily. We need to emphasize economic development, educational development, and technological development.

The majority of Muslims say that that's what they're looking for. They welcome that kind of intervention as assistance. We need to use our leverage – our political, military, and economic leverage – with Arab and Muslim regimes to get them to open up and develop stronger civil societies, rather than to fall silent as we did in the last Egyptian election; rather than after the election of Hamas: however much many may deplore Hamas, they were elected with full and fair democratic elections. This was not the case Somalia and Tunisia, this was not the case with Mr. Mubarak, and it's not the case with a host of other people who we get along with. It's not the case with countries like Saudi Arabia that don't even have this kind of system. I think that really becomes a major challenge.

The vital thing that we need to realize – and I'll just put it right out for you – I think Obama is an international president, and I did a piece the other day on that issue. But one of the points I made is that what we're faced with is, how international will he be toward the Arab and Muslim world? We can argue for the fact that he was noticeably silent on that issue and avoided any kind of association with Arabs and Muslims. Think about what Secretary Powell said, which was, He's a Christian, he's not a Muslim, and shouldn't a 7-year-old Muslim be able to dream about growing up to be president? He avoided that, just as he avoided talking about how he would do it, and instead he was all about helping the middle class and the question of taxing the upper class.

I think the reality of it, and the real question is, how much will this administration be able to move beyond that, rather than, as some people are convinced of, that they ought to stay where they are today. That's why we're going to have to watch very carefully who the advisors on the Arab world are, the Middle East, and the Muslim world; because if you look at the advisors during the campaign, it's depressing. And the one or two people who are really good had to quietly resign. So the question is, what will the appointments look like, and will Obama be a realist?

The reality is, this is a president who will be embraced by the Muslim world at one level, depending on how things play out, but the problem is, and this is a problem that every administration has had, whether Democrat or Republican, is what's going to happen with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. And on that one, unless something remarkable happens, it's not at all clear that an Obama administration, certainly in its early years, would really take on that issue the way that it has to be taken on.

Thank you.

Gail Kitch: We're going to take questions now.

Patricia Ellis: I'm Patricia Ellis of the Women's Foreign Policy Group. Thank you so much for joining us. I'd just like to follow up on your last statement, and I think expectations are high for President Obama, around the world and, as you mentioned, in the Middle East. I'm just wondering how easy it would be for people to be disappointed because expectations are so high. And also, you talked about appointments. What do you think about the fact that a lot of the people on the transition team are from the Clinton administration? Now, that can be both positive and negative because obviously the Middle East was a lot more of a priority very early on and throughout their administration, and it certainly was in the Bush administration.

John Esposito: I think one of the challenges is that whatever the appointments, they have to look like a new vision. The problem is you've already seen controversy about a Chief of Staff, potentially. If the Chief of Staff is just the Chief of Staff, that's fine. But the reality is if you feel strongly about something, you're not just going to be the Chief of Staff. And I think his father's statement indicated a reality. I don't mean the actual words his father used, but the idea that, this is how passionately my son feels about something, obviously I'm going to say something. One would expect that if it were a Palestinian who had that position.

The question is, for example, is the rumor true that Dennis Ross will become, let's say, ambassador-at-large in the Middle East? That's the old vision; that's not new vision. Read Dennis Ross' associate for many years, Aaron Miller's book³, and Aaron addresses that the policy of the past is a losing paradigm. I don't see Mr. Ross representing a new paradigm. Neither does his associations with WINEP⁴ nor more recently, when Daniel

³ *The Too Much Promised Land: America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace*

⁴ Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Pipes bragged that Dennis Ross is on his board of editors. If that's true, and on that kind of statement Daniel doesn't lie, that's an issue.

And the idea that Hillary Clinton would be Secretary of State, I am a great admirer of her on a lot of counts – not on the Middle East. She did a 180 degree turn when she left the White House to run for office in New York, and has stayed there. Her statements in the campaign, to the extent that she touched on the Middle East, were troublesome. It was always hypotheticals about Iran, and you're thinking, why would she be doing these hypotheticals? If Ahmadinejad did that, we wouldn't just say that's a hypothetical, we'd be saying, what does that say about Iran and Ahmadinejad's real position? So I'm very concerned.

If he brought Rob Malley in, that would be different. Rob Malley was a National Security Council aide under Clinton. My understanding was that he was an advisor, and then he quietly disappeared as an advisor, that is during the campaign. If somebody like Rob Malley came in, because I think that he represents a different vision, and that's going to be the critical thing. And that's what I'm observing. I don't see a lot of the new people around giving that kind of advice, but maybe we will all be surprised. Presidents have a way of surprising us.

Question: In your recommendation for military diplomacy and public diplomacy, there seems to be another important element, and that is the role of education in preparing young men and women for the new age, an age in which they will not necessarily count on the government but will look to the private sector. Will you include an education component in your approach to the future?

John Esposito: Yes. I tend to speak very quickly, but I think I said economic, educational and technological aid. So yes, I think that that becomes absolutely critical overseas. The fact is, we have the ability – although with the economic crisis, I don't know – but certainly in terms of the knowledge and the ability to help in some of these societies, and to partner with Arabs and Muslims that have those skills also; but don't have the resources; that's what we ought to be investing in.

One of the things I think is very sad about Iraq and Afghanistan is that both Bush and Blair, at an early stage, promised significant economic aid, development and infrastructure, and that was never really delivered in Iraq and Afghanistan to the extent that it needed to be delivered. We have that tendency to say, no, it's more important to build roads, it's more important to do things in the short term, and yet the long term becomes short term. 10 or 15 years go by, and you're dealing with a new generation, and that new generation doesn't have skills. If the government's still authoritarian, that new generation doesn't have skills and can't get jobs.

Question: A lot of what you've just proposed is so proactive, but unfortunately has a lot of costs attached to it. In light of our economic crisis and particularly given the fairly dire straights we may face at home, how do you see the aid that may be required by some of these very real suggestions of yours, playing out?

John Esposito: One of the things I learned when I was a kid – and I came from a very working-class background – and the difference between myself and my brothers was that I never let it bother me. It was always an issue in my family, because I would go to the store and buy the best cuts of Italian cold cuts, and somebody was going to pay for it. After I got married, I sort of had to change my attitude. Fortunately my wife takes good care of me.

But to be serious, the reality of it is, part of what I'm saying is we have to reorder our priorities. And the fact is, we have tremendous things complicating that, like for example, this present financial issue that we didn't expect. But the question is, if we reorder our priorities with regard to our defense budget and the kinds of wars that we get into, and the kind of debt that we run up because of the wars that we're involved with, because of our weapons development – not that I'm against developing weapons – because of the way we approach the military, then I think we can talk about a reallocation of our resources.

There's no doubt that this economic situation we're in has consequences for the kind of aid I'm talking about, but if we take the attitude that, no no no, when it comes to the security side of things, we're not going to do a real cost-cutting, etc., then I think we've got a problem. What I'm also saying is implied in this approach that emphasizes diplomacy over all other will be a lot of moving back across things not only in the way we develop our security side but also cost-saving in the kinds of aid we give to certain countries, the kinds of significant military aid and assistance and the costs that that means in terms of a lot of the regimes that we support.

So we're not going to be able to do everything that I and others might like to see done on the soft side of things. But I think that we have to be able to balance the hard and the soft. And I think there are still going to be people who say, oh no, don't touch the hard side, and we just can't do the other stuff. And I don't think that's going to wash any more – and my analogies are always terrible – any more than it's going to wash domestically if we wind up saying that our way forward means that we don't look at the realities of health care, the realities of taking care of citizens of our society in a variety of ways.

Somehow we have to figure out a way in which we balance the cuts, as well as get a more appropriate approach towards how we've talked about developing not only our country, in the short term, but how we engage in development and developing projects overseas. And some of these are critical. In some of these areas if you look at what we do, and see that some of it is critical to our safety and security, then we have to be willing to make some of those sacrifices.

I think that's going to be difficult. It's going to be especially difficult because the temperament of most Americans – and this is true of other countries too – is to say, things are so bad at home, what are we doing worrying about things outside? But one of the things we've learned in this new age of global communications, global transportation, and global terrorism, is that you can't let go of the outside and think that it's not going to come back to haunt you. Thank you.