Less Strategic than Grand: America’s Foreign Policy Consensus

by Brendan Rittenhouse Green

In 2006, the Democratic Party swept to power in Congress, largely on the issue of the Iraq war. The 2008 presidential election will also see a prominent role for foreign affairs, and a Democratic takeover of the White House and increased majorities in Congress seems likely.

However, the Democrats offer no real alternative. Despite a recent victory and probable future success on the basis of foreign policy, their grand strategy is little different than that of the GOP. A careful study of strategy documents, academic works, and the positions of politicians reveals this similarity. Although the parties differ rhetorically, they share a consensus on strategy. Both see a multiplicity of security threats and recommend a forward strategy of wielding American power throughout the world. But this strategy is fundamentally flawed.

Institutional Differences

What are the genuine differences between strategists of the two parties? Republican strategists aim to dominate a permanently dangerous international system, using American might to crush threats where necessary, but ignore less prominent issues. Robert Lieber is characteristic in arguing that applying American primacy must be limited to “cases in which American national interest is most squarely at stake.” Democratic strategists seek to transform the international system to one of mutual cooperation—to use the language of one strategy document, they would forge a “world of liberty under law.”

This difference in high concept leads to a different view of international institutions. Republicans tend to eschew international institutions as restraints on American power, at best an irritation and at worst a threat. In contrast, Democrats view them as the means of system transformation—by which legitimacy is created and mutually beneficial cooperation conceived, achieved, and made permanent. Institutions represent the

continued on page 4
Waiting for Goldilocks in Japan

Richard J. Samuels

Generations of American parents have read their children a story called “Goldilocks and the Three Bears.” It is the story of a young girl who wanders into the bears’ home in the woods. Goldilocks sits on chairs that are too big and too small, before finding one that is “just right.” She rejects bowls of their porridge as being too hot and as too cold, until she finds one that is “just right.” Like most children’s stories, Goldilocks is metaphorical. Americans use it to describe the process of finding just the right balance between alternatives that are too extreme.

This metaphor captures the challenges that have awaited each of Japan’s last two prime ministers, Shinzo Abe and Yasuo Fukuda, very nicely—particularly in the areas of foreign and security policy. Their predecessor, Koizumi Junichiro, had already been like Goldilocks in his extended effort to find just the right policy toward North Korea. In his 2002 visit to Pyongyang he initially explored engagement, only to later adopt a harder, more confrontational line. If the first was too hot and the second too cold, Abe was left with the responsibility to find a policy toward the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) that was “just right.” North Korea’s nuclear weapons test in October 2006 and its July 2006 missile tests certainly did not make this any easier.

Growing Ties to China

China policy provides the same challenge. Prime Minister Koizumi often acknowledged that Sino-Japanese economic relations are mutually beneficial and that the two economies are complementary. Indeed, bilateral trade has never been more robust. Japan provides China with technology and capital, while China provides Japan with cheap production and an export platform. Ten million Chinese work in Japanese firms, and that number continues to grow as Japan redirects its direct foreign investment toward China and away from the United States. Japan’s export dependence on China has soared—nearly to U.S. levels—and the share of Japanese imports from China has nearly doubled. Both countries are energy importers, so each benefits considerably from global resource development, from stability in the sea lanes, and from the efficient use of resources. And both have an abiding interest in a vibrant regional economy. According to a December 2003 Yomiuri Shimbun poll, fifty-three percent of Japanese respondents considered the United States to be the most important country from a political perspective, compared with thirty percent for China. But, when asked who is Japan’s most important trade partner, more than half answered China—twice as many as named the United States.

Confrontational Diplomacy

Still, Koizumi’s China diplomacy was confrontational. He poked a long sharp stick in Beijing’s eye by repeatedly visiting the Yasukuni Shrine, most recently in August 2006. Abe, his chief cabinet secretary, secretly visited the shrine in April, before becoming prime minister. Notwithstanding the fact that Beijing uses anti-Japanese nationalism to consolidate its own power, Tokyo has not gone nearly far enough to earn the trust of its neighbors. Japan still has a very bad reputation in East Asia due to its unwillingness to confront history squarely—undoubtedly the largest constraint on its diplomacy. Japanese voters await a Goldilocks who will get the history issue—and China policy—“just right.”

What would this take? Sino-Japanese trade and investment are at record levels, so clearly more needs to be done. Certainly, a moratorium on Yasukuni visits by the prime
minister—something Abe tacitly declared after assuming office—was a start. But Abe did not go far enough, and Fukuda promises to draw Japan and China more closely together. If redirected through multilateral institutions, Sino-Japanese competition could be positive for both sides. Japanese strategists could continue to proceed functionally, building cooperation in specific policy areas such as energy, crime, the environment, and the economy. They could continue taking small and very tentative steps toward a “comprehensive” arrangement, an “open, transparent, and inclusive” regional trade bloc. Tokyo has sent intermittent signals that it could accept an East Asian Community (EAC) that excludes the United States, and in the run-up to the first meeting of the nascent EAC in Kuala Lumpur in December 2005, Japan’s ambivalence about U.S. participation was more transparent than the economic institutions it was proposing.

Calibrating the U.S.-Japan Relationship

Finally, therefore, Fukuda has to find the right balance in the Japan-U.S. alliance. The United States is still Japan’s most important source of security. It will continue to be embraced—but at what cost? Koizumi tilted hard in the American direction, a move that fortunately has not yet cost the lives of Japanese soldiers, but that could in the future, if a correction is not made. Abe had been similarly willing to court entanglement to avoid abandonment. But, after his ignominious defeat in the upper house elections in July and his subsequent personal meltdown, it is clear that the mood in Japan has shifted. Ozawa Ichiro, the leader of a newly resurgent opposition, has declared his party’s determination to end Japanese refueling of U.S. and British vessels active in Afghan operations.

If he is to be Japan’s “Goldilocks,” Fukuda will reposition Japan—neither too close nor too far from the United States. Building an East Asian Community that resembles the stable, prosperous, economically integrated Western Europe—and one that is built upon a Japanese commitment to the values of democracy and freedom—would be “just right.”

Washington seems confident that Fukuda, like Abe and Koizumi before him, appreciates our many shared national interests. It will continue to monitor the construction of Asia’s new economic architecture, and will want to be sure that it is open and built upon a liberal vision. It will have to be patient as “Goldilocks” repairs Japan’s relationships with Korea and China. It will also have to appreciate—or at least not be too surprised—that “Goldilocks” will be engaged in distancing Japan from the United States in areas where interests diverge, as in the case of Iran, and even in some where they converge, as in Afghanistan.

Although Mr. Abe had been identified by many analysts as an unreconstructed and doctrinaire hawk—the very personification of the consolidation of revisionist power within the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)—he assumed the Goldilocks role. Adopting a sort of “Nixon goes to China” posture, the conservative Abe endorsed the war apologies uttered by previous Japanese leaders, including the most controversial one penned by socialist Murayama Tomiichi in 1993. Then, departing from a long tradition of making Washington the prime minister’s first stop, Abe’s initial overseas visit took him to Beijing, where he held lengthy consultations with both President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao. There he once again acknowledged Japan’s war responsibility and distanced himself from his predecessor’s promise to visit the Yasukuni Shrine annually.

In another fence-mending initiative, Prime Minister Abe flew from Beijing to Seoul to confer with President Roh Moo-hyun. Soon thereafter, in a statement that surprised most pundits, Abe even acknowledged his grandfather’s “mistake” in initiating the Pacific War. (Abe’s grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi, was a leading official in Japan’s indus-

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trial development during WWII; he then served as Japan’s Prime Minister from 1957 to 1960.)

In Iran, meanwhile, negotiations between the Iranian government and Impex, the Japanese government-owned oil exploration firm, resulted in a sharp reduction—from 75 percent to 10 percent—of the Japanese stake in the development of the Azadegan field. Abe has wasted no time in rearranging Japan’s strategic chess board, while keeping it in the game on all fronts.

Prime Minister Fukuda comes to power without a majority in the upper house, and is already more constrained than his predecessors. He has withdrawn plans to press ahead to declare cooperative self-defense constitutional and was not able to extend the mandate for Japanese tankers in the Indian Ocean. To survive politically, Fukuda will have to speak with an independent, full-throated voice on security issues as well as a keen eye for economic advantage. He will neither lead Japan too far toward great power status, nor allow it to remain so dependent upon the United States as to risk further entanglement. He will abandon Japan’s cheap riding and will consolidate its military gains, without allowing them to drag Japan down. In short, he will appreciate that the costs of remaining a U.S. ally are escalating, but will avoid allowing them to become too great to bear.

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**Less Strategic than Grand:**

**America’s Foreign Policy Consensus**

*continued from page 1*

Key disparity between the future grand strategies of the two parties: a Democratic strategy will embrace them as a key tool for addressing threats, while a Republican strategy will largely ignore them.

But even here there is good reason to expect a slippage in distinctiveness. Several prominent Republican strategists have realized that global domination is a costly enterprise and one likely to require the cooperation of other states. Stephen Rosen has suggested that the economy of force provided by treaties and alliances will prove vital to sustaining a forward grand strategy. Meanwhile, the history of the Clinton administration shows that Democratic strategists often find institutions useful only insofar as they achieve American goals. For example, the abuse and ultimate rejection of UN authority during the Bosnia and Kosovo wars reveals that the Democratic commitment to institutions is selective at best. It is no accident, then, that major strategists from both parties have called for new institutions of democracies. The purpose of such institutions is to serve, not limit, American power.

**Two Parties, One Strategy**

Beyond international institutions, the essential similarity of the two parties’ grand strategies is laid bare. Both parties believe that America is awash in threats. By and large, these threats are no longer from other great powers in the international system. Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay go so far as to argue that geo-politics is dead, while Lieber suggests at most a hedging strategy against other great powers. Instead, elite strategists fear several related phenomena: terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and regional instability.

Both sides fear terrorism. This threat is heightened by the proliferation of WMD and especially nuclear proliferation. Both parties fear that nuclear weapons might accidentally, or with state complicity, fall into the hands of terrorists. In addition, proliferation is a grave threat in its own right for several reasons. As Stephen Rosen and others argue, in a world of multiple nuclear powers, conventional and nuclear deterrence may be much harder, and security competition more intense. Finally, regional instability in various
forms threatens America in one way or another—through refugees, oil insecurity, and other generally vague mechanisms.\textsuperscript{10}

These threats are grave and gathering, taking priority over the historically dominant concern of great power politics. Although their rhetoric sometimes suggests otherwise, both Republican and Democratic elites believe that preventive war is a proliferation policy worthy of serious consideration. Regarding Iran, most presidential candidates affirm that all options must remain on the table.\textsuperscript{11} Similarly, “Countries like Iran…must be denied the ability to make nuclear threats against the United States and its allies” argues the liberal Center for American Progress.\textsuperscript{12}

Republicans and Democrats alike see a need to intervene in civil war and ethnic conflict, at least in the case of genocide. Charles Kupchan’s view that one “positive spillover effect of unipolarity is humanitarian intervention” is characteristic of the Democratic Party, which tends to laud the interventions of the 1990s and castigate the failure to intervene in Rwanda.\textsuperscript{13} This position often mimics Republican strategist Thomas P.M. Barnett, who has American military intervention planned for the civil strife occurring in most of what he calls “the non-integrating gap” (that is, the non-developed world).\textsuperscript{14}

Importantly, even the least committed strategists on Iraq call for missions requiring a significant troop presence for some time, including fighting terrorism in Anbar province and training Iraqi forces to prevent complete civil breakdown. The Center for New American Security, a Democratic think tank, recently released a phased withdrawal plan that would leave 60,000 troops in country until 2011, and perhaps beyond.\textsuperscript{15} The three Democratic presidential candidates who have discussed their foreign policies in \textit{Foreign Affairs} have all recognized a need to maintain a troop presence in Iraq for some time to come.\textsuperscript{16} In addition, there is mutual agreement on other potentially military intensive commitments held over from the Cold War: stability in the Balkans, Korea, and the Taiwan Strait.

Strategists in both parties see two primary sources of the diffuse dangers that threaten America: failed states and rogue states.\textsuperscript{17} These have two important advantages as potential bête noires. First, neither type of state is likely to be able to long resist American military power, and second, this use of American power can be plausibly buttressed by the liberal conceptions that underlie the worldviews of both parties. Entitling his strategy “democratic realism,” Republican columnist Charles Krauthammer argues that “democracies are inherently more friendly to the United States, less belligerent to their neighbors, and generally more inclined to peace.”\textsuperscript{18} Meanwhile, the fulcrum around which the liberal Princeton Project on National Security is designed is bringing governments up to “PAR”: making them participatory, accountable, and rights-respecting.\textsuperscript{19} But views betray a common assumption—American targets are rogue dissenters from, or failed exponents of, liberalism.

**Flaws and Failure**

Unfortunately, the bipartisan consensus strategy described above is likely to fail. Whatever modest differences in policy may ultimately result from a Democratic rather than a Republican president, they are unlikely to much improve American security. Civil wars, failed states, and rogue regimes are among the most intractable problems in international relations. These are political problems, and involve actor identities and preferences that America has little knowledge of and even less ability to affect. The technocratic and liberal assumptions shared by both parties are flawed: liberal norms are difficult to inculcate, democracy does not ameliorate conflicting preferences nor lead to peaceful behavior, and market economies can create as much strife as they can wealth.

Whether a Democrat or a Republican president tilts at these windmills is irrelevant: there are no giants here to slay. Great powers of the past would struggle to threaten

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America; today’s basket cases of global disorder are even less dangerous. Yet, Republicans and Democrats perceive the same threats, advance the same forward strategy for dealing with them, and place significant emphasis on the same coercive might and liberal assumptions. Therefore, either party will achieve the same result: costly failure.

A real alternative would advance the notion that to the extent that terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and humanitarian crises represent real problems, their worst excesses can be managed. It would focus not on offensive solutions to failed, rogue, and fracturing states, but on defending American shores from their consequences. It would rejoice in America’s relative security, rather than searching abroad for monsters to destroy. We will not see its like anytime soon.

1 I have forced a certain amount of consistency here—one can always find disagreement within and among strategic groups. I have cited as widely as possible to indicate the breadth of the consensus.


5 Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay, “Global NATO,” Foreign Affairs (Sep/Oct 2006); Rudolph W. Giuliani, “Towards A Realistic Peace,” Foreign Affairs (Sep/Oct 2007), p. 5. All Foreign Affairs articles are paginated by the online version.


16 See Foreign Affairs essays cited above.


19Ikenberry and Slaughter, Forging a World, pp. 20-21.
An inspiration against nuclear arms

By John Tirman

Randy Forsberg, who died this month at age 64, left a remarkable legacy: she helped end the Cold War, the most costly and dangerous confrontation in world history. This singular achievement was not hers alone, of course, but she spurred the massive social movement in the United States and Europe that convinced the superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union—that they had to stand down from their nuclear rivalry.

In 1980, she invented the call to freeze the nuclear arms race, and this simple but compelling idea—essentially, a moratorium on new nuclear weapons as a Prelude to gradual disarmament—became the rallying cry for millions of people sickened by the rush to develop and deploy new nuclear weapons and missiles, space weapons, stealth bombers, and all the other expensive, provocative gadgets of the arms industry.

The nuclear freeze idea, and the citizens’ campaign that galvanized the world to embrace it, gradually altered the opinions of the public and then the policy makers in the United States and elsewhere. In America, the quickly rising popularity of the freeze collided with the equal popularity of President Ronald Reagan, who accelerated the arms buildup in the early 1980s. But the freeze movement changed Reagan’s own calculations, driving him toward arms control negotiations and softer rhetoric toward the USSR by 1984.

When Mikhail Gorbachev became the Soviet premier in 1985, the possibility of dramatic action to reduce the nuclear danger suddenly seemed feasible. Gorbachev was influenced by the freeze idea and other arms control proposals. When he began a series of unilateral steps to demonstrate his willingness to end the nuclear rivalry, most policy and political experts in the United States were skeptical, and rejected his overtures.

But the public was increasingly adamant about ending the nuclear arms race, and they responded with cautious but unmistakable support for such disarmament measures. Reagan, a master politician, also recognized this opportunity. Buffeted by the Iran–Contra scandal that was revealed in November 1986, he immediately moved to engage Gorbachev and the relatively radical ideas for stopping the nuclear rivalry.

The first great test of this new bilateral cooperation was the Euromissiles treaty in 1987, which eliminated the new missiles NATO was installing in Europe and those the USSR had aimed at Europe. Initially opposed by the defense intelligentsia in Washington and much of the Democratic leadership in the Congress, the overwhelming popularity of this measure altered the elites’ resistance. Other arms reduction measures followed.

This sudden turnaround in US politics could be explained by one factor above all others—the public had become convinced, by the freeze movement particularly, that something substantial had to be done, and soon, to end the nuclear peril. The politicians, news media, and experts followed suit. A citizens’ movement in Europe pressed this upon their governments, and this even spilled over to affect the Soviet establishment.

It was an extraordinary victory for civil society, and Randy Forsberg was at its root. She wrote and spoke tirelessly on behalf of the freeze and similar proposals. She engaged policy makers, national security analysts, and reporters. She helped build an infrastructure of new think tanks and activist organizations. She spread the word to Europe and the Soviet Union. And she continued to agitate for nuclear disarmament after the Cold War (and the Soviet Union) ended.

Above all, her exemplary life is a tribute to the power of an individual’s capacity to change history. Her combination of knowledge, inventiveness, and persistence is itself a rarity. But Randy Forsberg proved it could be done, a glorious paragon of the better angels of our nature.
John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt’s book *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* set off a firestorm of controversy when it hit the shelves earlier this year. In it, the authors argue that an Israel Lobby exists, that it receives biased American support and, as a result, has been influencing U.S. policy that is harmful to both America and Israel. On October 3, Mearsheimer, a professor at the University of Chicago, and Walt, a professor at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, came to MIT as part of a CIS Starr Forum to talk about their book. Joining them for the discussion was Bruce Riedel, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, who offered a critical analysis of their points. The event was attended by an overflowing audience and concluded with a spirited question-and-answer session.

Walt, who spoke first, described the Israel Lobby as a particularly influential loose-coalition of individuals and groups that work to make U.S. foreign policy pro-Israel. These individuals and groups exert influence by helping to elect individuals to office (especially in the U.S. Congress) who share their views, said Walt. He noted that the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), a key member of the Israel Lobby, was cited by both Newt Gingrich and Bill Clinton as the most effective lobbying group in existence. Walt pointed to the fact that Lobby members and groups have garnered strong bi-partisan support and have swayed mainstream American media in their favor. He stated that neither he nor Mearsheimer think that the Israel Lobby is doing anything illegal or untoward. He claims that the Lobby is not a cabal or conspiracy and that its actions are “as American as apple pie.” Just as most find it natural to talk about oil companies and their lobbying efforts for U.S. energy policy and the National Rifle Association (NRA) and its lobbying efforts for U.S. gun control policy, he believes that it is right and proper to talk about lobbying efforts to influence U.S. foreign policy, in this case regarding one state in particular.

Mearsheimer focused on the impact of the Lobby on U.S. foreign policy, arguing that the Lobby has pushed America’s Middle East policy in directions neither in the interests of the United States nor Israel. Specifically, he believes that the failure of the United States to seriously challenge Israel on the expansion of its settlements in the occupied territories and the unconditional aid that the U.S. provides to Israel are both clear evidence of the Lobby’s efforts. Mearsheimer stated that “it is hard to imagine the Iraq War happening without the Lobby.” Per Mearsheimer, the Lobby has always identified Iran as Israel’s main enemy, but the Lobby quickly moved to support the Iraq war because it believed it was in America and Israel’s interest. Israel and Kuwait were the only two countries other than the United States where both the government and a majority of the populace supported the Iraq war, said Mearsheimer. The Lobby backed the war, he contends, because it would eliminate a longtime threat to Israel: Saddam Hussein.

The Lobby is defined by its political agenda, not by religion or ethnicity, said Mearsheimer. He noted that large numbers of evangelical Christians are part of the Israel Lobby, but many Jewish individuals are not. In fact, a higher percentage of American Jews thought that the Iraq war was a bad idea than the rest of the American populace. Mearsheimer finished by saying that he and Walt desire a strong and prosperous Israel. However, they want the United States to treat Israel like it does its other...
democratic allies, such as Britain and France: support it when it takes favorable action, oppose it when it does not.

Bruce Riedel, the final speaker, responded that although he thinks this debate is worth having, Walt and Mearsheimer oversimplify complex situations. He agreed that U.S. policy in the Middle East is currently a catastrophe, but he stated that this is not Israel’s fault, but America’s. Riedel granted that the Israel Lobby is influential, but he noted that many of its supposed members have disparate aims. For example, other groups like Israel Policy Forum and Peace Now lobby for U.S. policies toward Israel that are quite different than those supported by Walt and Mearsheimer’s “Lobby,” and U.S. presidents have made their own choices concerning Israel. He didn’t deny that U.S. support for Israel and its policies in the West Bank have fueled anger and recruitment of extremists among jihadi groups; however, he argued that groups like Al Qaeda and others want Israel destroyed, not a negotiated peace as sought by Walt and Mearsheimer.

Walt and Mearsheimer’s book has touched on two key debates that suffer from a lack of adequate discourse in America. The first concerns the presence of lobbies, how strong they are, and how they are able to exert influence in this country. The second concerns the future of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, specifically toward its greatest ally in the region: Israel.

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Walt and Mearsheimer’s book has touched on two key debates that suffer from a lack of adequate discourse in America. The first concerns the presence of lobbies, how strong they are, and how they are able to exert influence in this country. The second concerns the future of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, specifically toward its greatest ally in the region: Israel. Unfortunately, much of the controversy, and therefore the discussion, has surrounded the first debate. Scholars, pundits, and informed private citizens have argued back and forth over whether an Israel Lobby exists, how much power it has if so, and what individuals and groups are a part of the so-called Lobby. The second debate is far more pressing, however. The one thing that Walt, Mearsheimer, and Riedel seem to agree on wholeheartedly is that current U.S. policy in the Middle East is an unmitigated disaster. It appears that the next hope for a significant change of course will come with the 2008 presidential election. However, if Brendan Green is right in his article “Less Strategic than Grand: America’s Foreign Policy Consensus” appearing on pg. 1 of this issue, any hope for significant change may be unfulfilled regardless of the victor.

Ashutosh Varshney, professor at the University of Michigan, joins CIS as a visiting scholar for the academic year 2007-2008. Varshney received his Ph.D. from the MIT political science department in 1990, and his dissertation, completed under the guidance of Suzanne Berger and the late Myron Weiner, addressed the impact of democracy on industrial development in India. He has taught at a number of academic institutions, including Harvard University, Columbia University, and the University of Notre Dame. Varshney’s current research, funded by a grant from the Ford Foundation, focuses on the sources of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Nigeria. He employs a wide variety of methods to reach his conclusions, including extensive surveys, the creation of large-N data sets, and the analysis of crucial case studies via process tracing. Varshney’s search for causal explanations depends on such methodological pluralism. He serves as a consultant for the World Bank and has always sought to reach two audiences: his academic peers and the public sphere. Varshney has offered to meet with graduate students who have research interests concerning ethnic conflict, Southeast Asia, or political economy and development. He is delighted to be back in Cambridge, which he considers the site of much of his academic development over the past 25 years.
Anat Biletzki has been teaching philosophy at Tel Aviv University since 1979. Her publications include: Paradoxes (1996), Talking Wolves (1997), What is Logic (2002), (Over)Interpreting Wittgenstein (2003) and articles on analytic philosophy and political thought. She has traveled widely, presenting issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, while in Israel, invests most of her efforts in public education for human rights and peace. In 2005, she was chosen as one of “50 most influential women in Israel” by Globes, the Israeli business monthly, and was nominated among the “1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005.”

précis: Why did you want to come to CIS and what do you see as your role now that you are here?

AB: I heard about MIT’s Program on Human Rights and Justice (PHRJ) while I was at Boston University last year as a visiting professor. I was teaching the philosophy of human rights, and Noam Chomsky told me that there was a program here. I was interested in staying another year in the states because I have to finish the books that I am writing. Coming to MIT was an option where I could work academically on human rights, which I’ve usually done through either activism or philosophy. When I came here, I didn’t realize PHRJ was part of the Center for International Studies. However, being in this context has opened my eyes. Instead of being in the stratosphere of theory (in philosophy) or completely down-to-earth (in activism), I am now in an environment that enables me to do academic work right in the middle, so to speak. It seems promising in putting together theory and praxis.

précis: What books are you working on while at CIS?

AB: One is a book that I started a few years ago, which I let go for a while because I was so busy in Israel doing politics, and that’s on Hobbes and Wittgenstein on religion. It has nothing to do with human rights—unless you want to consider how religion impacts human rights in a very indirect way. The other book is explicitly about human rights. It started out as a very big project and has sort of separated into two, so I don’t know if it will be one or perhaps two books. One part is very academic and is the research project that I am focusing on here. It’s about the question of politicization of human rights, i.e., the connection between human rights and politics. People assume that the two are naturally connected, but they aren’t necessarily either philosophically nor “activistically.” The other part of this big project has resulted in a smaller book on human rights. It’s almost finished and is a more personal book. It’s called, What’s a Philosopher Like You Doing in a Place Like This?, and is about Israeli/Palestinian human rights work.

précis: Could you talk a little bit more about the politicization of human rights? How do politics play into the way people conceive of human rights?

AB: It has to do with how you define politics, which I am not going to go into now. However, if you look at the human rights side, it is well defined. There are philosophical questions about the basis of human rights. For example, are they natural rights, institutions, policies, powers, etc? When you go into the community of human rights, the mainstay of everything we do is law. And law is not political, or is not supposed to be political. You have international treaties, conventions, and you know exactly where you’re working, who the addressee is, what kind of phenomena are considered human rights violations, etc. Thus, the community working on human rights is very involved in hanging on to our legal status. When you have international law, it gives you not only something to hang on to, it gives you something to stand upon. More than that, pragmatically speaking, and I sometimes say, cynically speaking, as long as you say you’re working under the auspices of law, for the law, even if it’s international law, you can keep on with the claim that this is universal, this is international, this is not particular, this is not biased, this is not partisan and, thus, has nothing to do with politics. I, on the contrary, think that human rights should be, and are, political, in a deep sense of political, and I go back to Hannah Arendt with
that, saying that the human being cannot even be human if not placed in a political context. So that’s basically where I see my philosophical work going.

précis: Could you talk about the specific area that you work in the most in terms of activism, which is the Israeli/Palestinian case?

AB: I’m still working with B’Tselem, which is, for me, THE ultimate human rights organization in Israel—there are, of course, many others. That said, I think that working for human rights in Israel/Palestine has a lot to do with identity problems. If you’re in Israel, and you want to work on human rights within Israel, that’s fine, it’s just like there are organizations here that work on human rights vis-à-vis the state. If you’re in Palestine, and there are many human rights organizations in Palestine, then it’s a little more interesting. You don’t know who’s the addressee for your complaints. Is it going to be the Palestinian Authority? Or is it going to be the Israeli powers that still have control over Palestine?

The organization that I work with is, I think, the most complicated, because B’Tselem was established in 1989 during the first intifada to address the human rights of Palestinians in the occupied territories. It’s an Israeli organization, which immediately makes people say that we are traitors, that we are betraying our own side because we are sticking up for the other side. In fact, the original mandate was not to worry about Palestinian human rights, it was about human rights in the occupied territories. So, we can theoretically, and we do sometimes practically, worry about the human rights of the Jewish settlers since, even though the settlements might be criminal according to international law, as civilians, the settlers’ human rights are also sometimes violated. So, the mandate is, strangely, a geographical mandate: human rights in the occupied territories. It’s interesting that in good times, or in what is purportedly thought of as good times, like Oslo, in the ‘90s, people thought we were moving ahead toward peace, and suddenly we were not being accused of being traitorous. When things are good, everyone is gung-ho for human rights. So at that time we even had Likud members who were supporting us. The minute the second intifada started, we became non grata again—an Israeli registered organization, looking out for somebody else’s human rights who happens to be the enemy! That’s what it seems to some people now.

précis: How do you balance those concerns about the impact you’re having politically with the idea that you are simply pursuing “universal laws” of how all people should be treated?

AB: B’Tselem is a human rights organization. Its strengths lie in the fact that it is a human rights organization. I say “strengths” because we have a working relationship with the military, we are consulted by Israeli parliamentarians, we are—in a sense, and some may badmouth us for that—on relatively “good terms” with the establishment. Unlike many other organizations, that are, so to speak, more political, we are publicly perceived as being a human rights organization. Our Settlement Report in 2002 speaks to violations of human rights—showing how questions of real estate or security are really issues of human rights. How can you say that somebody building a house on some hilltop is violating somebody’s human rights? They are annexing land that is not theirs, but you have to go an interesting route in getting to the point of whether a human right is being violated and what human right exactly. B’Tselem was intent on showing that the whole Settlement Project is a mass of human rights violations. When the report came out, of course, it was considered by the media as a political statement—B’Tselem coming out against settlement. But, B’Tselem, itself, said, “No, we haven’t said anything political. All we’ve done is show how the whole Settlement Project is an amazing violation of human rights.” We are still perceived by some, by most, as doing political work, but by insisting on the fact that we’re “human rightists”, we get people’s ears. People being the authorities, of course. If we were a political movement, nobody would’ve read that report. Now, if you go to Capitol Hill, you see B’Tselem’s booklets and reports on every single person’s desk. If you ask me if it will make a political difference—I think that it’s the only way to get through to some people.

précis: You’ve worked on the ground in the territories in Israel, you’ve been back and forth to America. What are the things that you think Americans need to know about the problems in Israel and the territories that they do not know from their mainstream media outlets?

AB: Let me give the plain answer and then the beautified one, the one that’s going to work deeper. The plain answer says they need to know the truth. And the truth is not out there—not in mainstream media. It’s getting better though. Five years ago, no one knew about B’Tselem. Today, you open the New York Times and B’Tselem’s data is there four times a week, so they are reporting, or they are trying to report some more. I think if people saw, or heard, or read the truth, they would open their eyes and know what’s going on. That’s the simple answer. I think that the better answer is that the people have to be more self-reflective. I’ve been here for more than a year now, and people have changed here, more because of Iraq than because of Israel/Palestine, but still, Americans have started thinking things over. The Jewish community here is speaking and debating like it never did before. In Congress, I think Republicans and Democrats are not that different when it comes to Israel, but again, there is more listening going on now. We are opening a B’Tselem office in D.C. now, because we’ve realized that the information we put out is very important, especially in America. So we have two target audiences: the Jewish community and the policy makers. The point is to get the information out there. Of course, getting the information out is also advocacy work. Is this human rights work, or political work? Well, it’s going to be human rights information; the content is going to be human rights. We’re going to show how human rights have gone awry in Israel/Palestine, but hopefully, this will lead to the politics getting done right. ■
CIS Remembers
Hayward Alker

Hayward R. Alker, an MIT alumnus and former professor of political science who specialized in international relations, died of a cerebral hemorrhage on August 24. He was 69.

Alker was a leading scholar on world order and international conflict resolution. He employed an interdisciplinary approach that incorporated statistical and humanistic techniques, which reflected his background in both mathematics and social science.

Alker first taught at Yale University, where he had received his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in 1960 and 1963, respectively. Alker returned to his alma mater, MIT (class of 1959), as a professor in 1968 and remained here until 1995, when he left to teach at the University of Southern California. His books include Journeys Through Conflict (2001), Rediscoveries and Reformulations: Humanistic Methodologies for International Studies (1996) and Mathematics and Politics (1965).

Alker is survived by his wife, J. Ann Tickner, also a professor of international relations at the University of Southern California.

CIS Audits Conventional Wisdom

Among the topics addressed in the Center’s Audit of the Conventional Wisdom publications in the summer and fall were U.S. foreign policy toward China, political instability in Pakistan, the UN’s record on promoting human rights, the growth of the Japanese military, the status of democracy and modernization in Turkey, the size of the U.S. military, U.S. immigration reform, and the American foreign policy process. All of the essays are available at: http://web.mit.edu/CIS/acw_h.html.

Recently published:

IAP 2008 Offerings


Introducing MIT-Israel

The MIT International Science and Technology Initiatives (MISTI) launched a new program this fall: MIT-Israel. Christine Ortiz, associate professor in the Department of Material Science and Engineering, will direct the program, which has been generously funded by private donations. The MIT-Israel Program expects to send its first interns abroad this summer. Please contact Christine Ortiz (cortiz@mit.edu) for more information.

Australian Journalist Receives Neuffer Fellowship

Sally Sara joins CIS as this year’s recipient of the Elizabeth Neuffer fellowship, founded in memory of a Boston Globe reporter who was killed in May 2003 while covering the war in Iraq. Sara is the third recipient of the award, which supports women journalists who report on human rights and social justice issues. After getting her start covering agricultural issues for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), Sara became the station’s sole foreign correspondent for the entire continent of Africa from 2000 to 2005. Sara’s reporting included stories on human rights abuses in Darfur and Zimbabwe, child soldiers in Liberia, AIDS orphans in Lesotho, and the mutilation of women in Uganda. After traveling throughout Africa approximately 180 days a year for five years, Sara decided to write a book chronicling the lives of twelve women across the continent. She spent weeks with each woman, many of whom she had previously met over the course of her travels, in order to get a strong sense of daily struggles and triumphs of an African life. Sara’s book, GoGo Mama, was published in July 2007. In addition to coursework and her internships with the Boston Globe and New York Times later this year, Sara will use her time at CIS to begin planning for a new book about the lives of women across Asia. Sally is happy to talk with students who share her interests in human rights, women’s issues, journalism, and African politics and society.
Cole on America’s Relevance to Iraq’s Civil Wars

Juan Cole, Richard P. Mitchell Distinguished University Professor of History, University of Michigan, spoke December 10 on “Iraq’s Three Civil Wars: Is the U.S. Relevant to Them?” Cole has written extensively about Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and South Asia. After Sept. 11, he launched a blog, Informed Comment, in an effort to offer a more accurate interpretation of the Middle East. Now, Cole is cited as one of the world’s top bloggers and is widely respected as a public intellectual on the Middle East. In 2004, he was invited to address the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations concerning the war in Iraq. The CIS Starr Forum event was co-sponsored by MIT’s history department.

Mertus on Human Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy

Julie Mertus, co-director of the Ethics, Peace and Global Affairs Program at American University and award-winning author of Bait and Switch: Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Policy, spoke on November 6 as part of CIS’s Starr Forum seminar series. Mertus’ talk, “Don’t Be an American Idiot,” addressed how the United States government makes use of human rights in its foreign policy. Specifically, Mertus discussed the relative importance of civil society and the executive branch in determining the relevance of human rights for U.S. policy.

Jones on the Rise of the Insurgency in Afghanistan

Seth Jones, a political scientist at the RAND Corporation, adjunct professor at Georgetown University’s Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, and current senior advisor to the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, spoke at CIS on November 7 as part of the MIT Security Studies Program Wednesday seminar series. After describing the quantity, quality, and geographic location of the main insurgent groups, Jones argued that, contrary to popular belief, neither ethnic grievances nor greed could explain the emergence of the insurgency in Afghanistan. Instead, Jones argued that a collapse of governance and lack of social services led to the rise of the insurgency, and suggested that progress in these areas could improve the situation for the Afghanistan government and NATO forces in the region. Other speakers in the SSP Wednesday seminar series included Stephen Van Evera (professor of political science at MIT) on American grand strategy for a new era, MIT alumnus Taylor Seybolt (U.S. Institute of Peace) on strategies of humanitarian intervention, and Kevin Benson (Colonel, US Army, retired) on the military adaptation of red teaming. The talks are open to the public. The schedule and summaries of past talks are online here: http://web.mit.edu/ssp/seminars/wednesday.html.

Slavin on U.S.-Iran Relations

Barbara Slavin, chief diplomatic correspondent, USA Today, discussed her new book, Bitter Friends, Bosom Enemies: Iran, the U.S., and the Twisted Path to Confrontation, on November 8. Slavin’s book covers the troubled relationship between Iran and the United States, which she argues has been marked by extensive misunderstanding, decades-old resentment, and countless missed opportunities at rapprochement. Since 1996, Slavin has been responsible for...
analyzing foreign news and U.S. foreign policy for *USA Today*. In addition to Iran, she has covered such key issues as the U.S.-led war on terrorism, policy toward “rogue” states, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. She has also accompanied two Secretaries of State on their official travels and reported from Libya, Israel, Egypt, North Korea, Russia, China, Saudi Arabia and Syria. The event was co-sponsored by CIS and the Iranian Studies Group at MIT.

**MIT-India Co-hosts Conference on Rising India**

MIT-India co-hosted a conference “Emergent India: An Engagement with MIT” with the Office of the Provost and Foreign Languages and Literatures on September 21. The conference was open to the public and topics ranged from energy and industrial competitiveness to poverty and funding for the arts. Speakers included CEOs, academic and business leaders from India, and MIT professors from numerous departments, including physics, chemistry, bioengineering, urban studies and planning, computer science, and theater arts. The conference was well attended and should serve as a significant stepping-stone to increased engagement between MIT and Indian students, academic institutions, businesses, and culture.

**Kanstroom on Deportation of Non-Citizens in America**

Daniel Kanstroom, director of the Human Rights Program and clinical professor of law at Boston College, gave a talk on his recent book, *Deportation Nation: Outsiders in American History* on October 9. Kanstroom analyzed the history of non-citizens in the United States, including the post-Revolutionary Alien and Sedition Acts, the Fugitive Slave laws, the Indian “removals,” the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Palmer Raids, the internment of the Japanese Americans, and the threats of deportation faced by Mexican immigrants today. Kanstroom argued that deportation has often been threatened and/or employed as a legal tool to remove those who were not (or could never become) “true” Americans in the eyes of a xenophobic populace. The session was part of the Myron Weiner Seminar Series on International Migration, sponsored by CIS and the Inter-University Committee on International Migration.

**Biletzki and Halper on Human Rights and Politics in Israel-Palestine**

Anat Biletzki and Jeff Halper spoke on human rights and the role of politics in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza on October 22. The talk was sponsored by CIS and the Program on Human Rights and Justice (PHRJ). Halper is the coordinating director of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), and Biletzki is the current PHRJ fellow, professor of philosophy at Tel Aviv University and former chairperson of B’Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. Halper and Biletzki are the co-winners of the 2007 Olive Branch Award from Jewish Voice for Peace.

**Warde on Financing Islamic Terrorism**

Ibrahim A. Warde, adjunct professor of international business at the Fletcher School, Tufts University, and contributor to *Le Monde diplomatique*, gave a lecture entitled “Financing Islamic Terrorism” on September 18. His talk, part of the Emile Bustani Seminar Series and co-sponsored by CIS and The Technology and Culture Forum at MIT, critiqued the Bush administration’s claims of significant gains made in cutting off finances to Islamic terrorist organizations. He argued that, contrary to popular belief, the Bush administration’s supposed financial crackdowns have had no discernible impact on the functioning of terrorist organizations, which run more by envelopes of cash than seamless electronic transfers. Warde is the author of a new book, *The Price of Fear: The Truth Behind Financing the War on Terror*, which expands on these arguments.
People

Recent Ph.D. recipient Boaz Atzili received the Kenneth Waltz Prize for the best 2007 dissertation in international security, awarded by the International Security and Arms Control section of the American Political Science Association. His dissertation is entitled “Border Fixity: When Good Fences Make Bad Neighbors.” He also gave a talk at the 2007 APSA Convention in Chicago, titled “Weak State and Transnational Insurgency: PLO and Hezbollah in Lebanon.”

Sigrid Berka, managing director of the MIT-Germany program, organized and was a speaker at the workshop “Transitioning into the Global Work Place—International Recruiting Strategies” at the 10th Annual Colloquium of International Engineering Education held at Purdue University in November.

SSP associate director Owen Cote and principal research scientist Cindy Williams helped direct the Department of Defense’s National Security Studies Program in partnership with the Elliot School of International Affairs at the George Washington University. Cote and Williams led a number of lectures, workshops, and simulation exercises for senior DoD Defense leaders from June through November. Ford International Professor of Political Science and director of the Security Studies Program Barry Posen and SSP research associate Jim Walsh provided guest lectures for the program. The program’s contract was renewed by the Department of Defense for 2008.

SSP associate director Owen Cote appeared on New England Cable News (NECN) in September to speak about the Petraeus-Crocker hearings and the ongoing war in Iraq. The interview is available on NECN’s website.

Diane Davis, professor of political sociology in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, was the keynote speaker at a special session on “Violence in the Global South,” held at the University of Utrecht, in June. She also gave a lecture for the “Seminar on Urban Violence and Crime in Latin America,” at the USAID-Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC, in March.

Recent Ph.D. recipient Vanda Felbab-Brown won APSA’s 2007 Harold D. Laswell Award for the best dissertation in the field of public policy. Her dissertation is entitled “Shooting Up: The Impact of Illicit Substances on Military Conflict.”

Ph.D. candidate in political science Benjamin Friedman gave a talk entitled “Does Torture Work?” at APSA in September. He also delivered a talk at the Cato Institute in October entitled “Don’t Grow the Ground Forces.”

Richard Locke, the Alvin J. Siteman Associate Professor of Entrepreneurship and Political Science, received the MIT Class of 1960 Innovation in Education Award, which recognizes dedication to excellence in teaching and innovative education efforts toward integration of research and education.

Ban Al-Mahfodh is a new CIS program coordinator who is helping to organize research projects. She is a recent M.A. graduate of Brandeis’ Heller School for Social Policy and Management, and also holds an
M.A. in linguistics from the University of Basra. A native of Basra, she worked at Save the Children there, among other posts.

Deepti Nijhawan, coordinator of the MIT-India program, gave a presentation on the MIT-India and MIT-Germany programs of MISTI (along with Sigrid Berka) at the University of Alberta in November.

April Julich Perez, assistant director of MISTI for Information and Program Development and coordinator of MIT-France, presented the MIT-France Seed Fund for Collaborative Research at the 6th Annual American Society for Engineering Education Global Colloquium in Istanbul, Turkey, in October.

Ford International Professor of Political Science and director of the Security Studies Program Barry Posen, Ford International Professor of Political Science Stephen Van Evera, and Robert Art, Christian A. Herter Professor of International Relations at Brandeis University, all appeared on Chris Lydon’s “Open Source,” a radio program hosted by Brown University’s Watson Institute for International Studies. They were three in a series of academics interviewed by Lydon who “got it right” on Iraq and expressed their concerns about potential U.S. actions concerning Iran. Posen also appeared on WBUR’s “On Point” on 9/11 providing commentary during the Petraeus-Crocker hearings. Van Evera appeared on “On Point” in June for the program “Critiquing America at War.” All interviews are available through the SSP website.

Ph.D. candidate in political science Joshua Rovner, in the second year of a teaching fellowship at Williams College, gave a talk in April at Williams entitled “What Will it Take to Save Darfur?” In September, Josh participated in a panel discussion at Williams on the question, “Is War Between the U.S. and China Inevitable?”

Amy Spelz joined the Center as its Jerusalem 2050 program coordinator in May. Spelz holds an M.A. in peace and conflict studies from the European University Center for Peace Studies and a B.A. in international relations from St. Joseph’s University in Philadelphia. Spelz is managing the Just Jerusalem competition, which is jointly sponsored by CIS and the Department of Urban Studies and launched in March 2007. The international competition calls for entrants to articulate their own unique visions for a more just and peaceful Jerusalem. The deadline for entry is December 31, 2007. Details are available on the Just Jerusalem web site http://www.justjerusalem.org/.

Ph.D. candidate in political science Paul Staniland presented a paper entitled “Leashing and Unleashing the Dogs of War: Cohesion, Fragmentation, and Control in Armed Political Groups” at APSA in Chicago. Paul did fieldwork in Northern Ireland during the summer of 2007 on a CIS grant.

In August, Ph.D. candidate in political science Caitlin Talmadge participated in a two-day workshop at the LBJ School in Austin, Texas, on military and economic issues surrounding potential Iranian closure of the Strait of Hormuz. The workshop was run by MIT/SSP alum Eugene Gholz, a professor at the LBJ School, and also attended by two other MIT/SSP alums, Daryl Press and Alan Kuperman.
Published

**Jeremy Allouche**, Visiting Fellow

**Alice Amsden**, Barton L. Weller Professor of Political Economy in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning

**Boaz Atzili**, Recent Ph.D. Recipient

**Taylor Fravel**, Assistant Professor of Political Science

**Benjamin Friedman**, Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science

**Richard Locke**, Alvin J. Siteman Associate Professor of Entrepreneurship and Political Science


**Barry Posen**, Ford International Professor of Political Science and Director of the Security Studies Program

**Joshua Rovner**, Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science

Richard Samuels, Ford International Professor of Political Science and Director of the Center for International Studies


David Singer, Assistant Professor of Political Science

Eugene Skolnikoff, Professor of Political Science Emeritus

Paul Staniland, Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science

Edward Steinfeld, Associate Professor of Political Science
“The Rogue that Plays by the Rules” *Washington Post* (September 2, 2007)

John Tirman, Executive Director and a Principal Research Scientist at the Center for International Studies
*Terror, Insurgency and the State: Ending Protracted Conflicts* (Pennsylvania Press, 2007)

Stephen Van Evera, Ford International Professor of Political Science

Jim Walsh, SSP Research Associate

David Weinberg, Graduate Student in Political Science
“America the Generous or America the Stingy?” *The Daily Star* (Lebanon), September 14, 2007.


CIS Launches Iraq Mortality Site

In cooperation with MIT’s HyperStudio, the Center has launched a new web site, “Iraq: The Human Cost,” which features resources on the Iraq war and its human toll in deaths, displacement, poverty, and other effects. The site features photographs by award-winning AP photographer Anja Niedringhaus. Essays and news updates on the data and controversies of the human cost are included, as are links to other sources of information. The web site is http://web.mit.edu/humancostiraq/.

Photos courtesy Anja Niedringhaus