

127th Bergedorf Round Table

The Middle East and Western Values—A Dialog With Iran

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(See P. 16)



EDITORIAL

Iran's Anti-Terrorism Policy Independent

Iranian government spokesman Abdollah Ramezanzadeh on Monday said that the Islamic Republic of Iran is following a policy of combating terrorism in all its forms, adding that Iran's campaign against terrorism is not influenced by its relations with other countries.

At his weekly press conference, Ramezanzadeh said that since Iran has been one of the greatest victims of terrorism, it expects other countries to also tackle the problem comprehensively and without any discrimination.

Political analysts believe that the Iranian government spokesman made the comments in response to U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher's remarks on Monday, in which he said Iran should turn over members of Al-Qaeda that it has in custody to the United States instead of only releasing a list of their names.

"Iran has in the past turned over some Al-Qaeda to third countries. However, frankly, we're not aware of any particular progress with regards to the Al-Qaeda who are currently in detention," Boucher said.

In fact, Boucher implied that those detained in Iran are senior members of the group, although the detainees are currently being questioned and their identities have not been verified.

Meanwhile, the United States is demanding that Iran turn over to the U.S. for interrogation all suspected members of the Al-Qaeda network that it is holding, saying that Iran's policy of simply informing the United Nations of their identities would not suffice.

As a matter of fact, Iran's policy in regard to those held in

EU Should Stand by Its Commitments: Khatami

IRAN, GERMANY REVIEW MUTUAL, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS



TEHRAN (IRNA) — President Mohammad Khatami said Tuesday that the European Union should stand by its commitments with regard to the Tehran Declaration last Tuesday in which Iran agreed to sign the additional protocol to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the EU in return agreed to recognize a peaceful use of nuclear energy by Tehran promising to transfer nuclear technology to Iran.

"We expect others to act upon their commitments to help pass through this dilemma without problem," Khatami made the remark in a meeting with former German President Richard Von Weizsäcker who is currently here.

According to the presidential office, at the meeting, President Khatami said culture and ethics are two important elements in global developments.

Lauding the former German president as an cultural and ethical personality, he said the Islamic Republic of Iran never seeks nuclear weapons, noting, "we ourselves have concern about proliferation of weapons of mass destruction but at the same time we also reject political excuses as well as discrimination in dealing with nuclear issues."

"Why are they cracking down on Iran which is not for nuclear weapons but they even do not express concern over Israeli nuclear arsenal?" Khatami asked.

Referring to the recent visit of three European foreign ministers to Tehran and the country's strive to develop nuclear technology, he said to prove Iran's trust-building policy, "we declared that we will sign additional protocol to the NPT in case our national dignity, security and sovereignty are safeguarded."

Describing the current cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Germany as positive he referred to the global convergence in the fight against terrorism, war and violence as well as democracy as predominate dialogue in today's world and expressed hope that the world countries to strive to assist one another to meet the demands of humanity.

Richard Von Weizsäcker, for his part, referred to the existing good relations between Iran and Germany after the visit of President Khatami to Berlin and said there exists ample of economic, cultural and political grounds to further broaden mutual ties and help humanity.

Voicing satisfaction over the results of recent negotiations between European foreign ministers with Iran on removing existing concerns on nuclear activities, he called for continuation of such cooperation and said Iran's move not only remove ambiguities and concern over Iran's nuclear

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Exclusive Interview

Dolich Official Calls Iran Important Partner

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SUMMARY

Shortly after the foreign ministers of France, Germany, and Britain traveled to Iran to negotiate an agreement in the conflict surrounding the country's nuclear program, the Bergedorf Round Table gathered in Isfahan to discuss culture and international politics. Terrorist attacks in neighboring Iraq lent the meeting particular urgency. Chaired by retired German President Richard von Weizsäcker and moderated by Dr. Seyed Kazem Sajjadpour and Dr. Christoph Bertram, the participants examined the region's problems and opportunities, as well as the perspectives of important third countries.

The Round Table's first session dealt with the relationship between culture and politics. The discussion debated the linkage between culture and power, religion and politics. The role of individual persons was appraised very differently. Specifically, the topics included the US cultural background to the Bush Administration's "missionary" stance, and the political significance of cultural groups such as the Shiites and the Jews.

The second session concentrated on the political situation in the Middle East. In attempting to define the Middle East's regional characteristics, the participants quickly reached the issue of democracy. A good deal of reasons were offered for the region's "democratic deficit": Some participants sought to establish a relationship between Islam and dictatorship, others saw an important link with oil, and still others regarded democracy as the final stage in a long social and economic process that the region had yet to attain. Other topics included the regional role of Iran, the position of Israel, and that of external powers.

The third session looked towards the future, asking how various cultures with some very differing ideas of society and values could peacefully coexist. While some speakers postulated the need for a balanced dialog, the results of which would remain to be seen, others insisted on the universal validity of some values, which would soon include the rejection of dictatorship. The participants all agreed that a permanent alienation between "the West" and "the Islamic World" could not be permitted. They said an acute danger of this happening had existed since 9/11, but, on the other hand, it was agreed that strict cultural exclusion was no longer possible, if only because of global migration.

PROTOCOL

Welcome

von Weizsäcker



Let me begin by expressing my intense gratitude to our Iranian hosts. Talks to make this meeting possible began four years ago. I am all the more happy to meet both Deputy Foreign Minister Azizi, with whom we initiated this contact, and Deputy Foreign Minister Moayeri, with whom we finalized the preparations, at this Round Table. It is my great pleasure to welcome all distinguished participants in Isfahan, a city unique in its history, culture and human atmosphere.

As you all know, the Bergedorf Round Table has no official mandate. Rather, it forms part of civil society. In my home country, we place much faith in civil society and its organizations share public responsibility. Today, both Germany with its long-standing relations to Iran, and Europe in general have to accept responsibility in the Middle East, a region that simultaneously faces dangerous challenges and has so many positive perspectives to offer. People from various countries and walks of life have therefore gathered here in order to engage in an open, maybe critical, but constructive and hopefully encouraging dialog.

This meeting has been organized in cooperation with the Iranian Institute for Political and International Studies, IPIS, and we are therefore privileged to have as our chairpersons Kazem Sajjadpour and Christoph Bertram, to guide us through this exciting and potentially controversial topic.

The Protocol contains an edited and authorized version of the participants' oral contributions.

I. Culture and International Politics—An Overview

To structure our admittedly broad subject of “Culture and International Relations,” we have defined three more specific questions that will set the agenda for the three sessions of this Round Table. First, we will provide an overview of and the theoretical foundations for the relationship between culture and international politics. Secondly, we will focus on culture and international relations in a regional context, specifically the Middle East and Iran’s surrounding areas. Finally, we will attempt to project what the future holds for our subject. This structure, however, should not restrict our flexibility and all comments that increase our understanding are welcome.

Sajjadpour

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

My presentation will provide a theoretical perspective on culture. In his Philosophy of Law, Hegel developed a progressive theory of history. Accordingly, in history human society is evolving and gradually reaching more self-awareness, leading to a more reasonable and wise life. Over time, more and more people are coming to understand who they are and to enjoy freedom as the structure of society changes.

Salimi

presentation

Culture can be understood as a symbol of people’s awareness of themselves, and I will argue that the social sciences and theories of international relations are increasingly adopting this definition. This theoretical trend also has relevance for political practice because theory and practice cannot be entirely distinguished. In Hegel’s words, “what is rational is actual and what is actual is rational.”

Culture as a symbol of people’s awareness of themselves

My first point, then, concerns the definition of culture. All political theories and philosophies are based on assumptions concerning the nature of human beings, and therefore of the meaning of culture. In early modern political thought and anthropology, human beings were seen as a different kind of animal. Hobbes, for instance, thought that humans, like other animals, were driven by their interests and the quest for security. Humans are different only because they have the power of reason at their disposal, which they use in order to create a central authority, the Leviathan. In this system of thought, culture is no more than a wheel in Leviathan’s machine.

In classical anthropology, culture is seen as an attribute of the higher classes in developed societies, rather than a fundamental characteristic of human life. Later, Edward Taylor defined culture as a way of life, as the sum of values, customs, traditions and institutions in a society. This was an important and positive step and his definition has influenced writings about culture for over a century.

Culture is a network of symbols,
which are made by human beings
and which form humans.

Salimi



UNESCO's definition of culture

More recently, however, a different understanding of culture has emerged. In this new framework, culture creates meaning. It is their existence within a framework of symbols that differentiates human beings from animals. Reason is no longer seen as merely an instrument for creating security and attaining one's interests. As Clifford Geertz pointed out, humans establish meaningful interconnections which form the substance of social life. Society in turn shapes the identity of individuals. Culture is a network of symbols, which are made by human beings and which form humans.

While the definition of culture remains an issue of contention in most meetings about cultural affairs, we need to move further in the debate. For the sake of simplicity, I will therefore rely on the definition suggested by the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies held in Mexico City in 1982: Culture is "the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group." It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs. It is culture that makes us specifically human, rational beings, endowed with a critical judgement and a sense of moral commitment.

Culture and international relations:
clash or dialog of civilizations?

My second point is about the role of culture in theories of international relations. To me, an understanding of different cultural backgrounds is a crucial factor in international politics and it is a key characteristic of a new generation of theories. Samuel Huntington proclaimed his famous "Clash of Civilizations" as a new paradigm in international political theory, in which culture and civilization play an essential role. President Khatami's initiative for a dialog among civilizations is based on a similar premise.

In a globalized world culture
makes cooperation possible

Theories of international relations are usually divided into three categories: realism, liberalism and Marxism or critical theory. Liberalism, and particularly neo-liberalism, accords a fundamental role to culture. We cannot understand international politics in a globalizing world without analyzing cultural relationships. John Thompson, for example, emphasizes how the media, information networks, and art production spanning the entire world influence mentalities and create specific values and discourses. These factors thus create different actors and represent another kind of power which affects how political issues are interpreted. For thinkers like Joseph Nye, culture is a central factor changing the dominant rule in an interdependent and globalized world from conflict to cooperation. And while cultural interactions between different societies have been complex for the last 3000 years, theorists like David Helton and Tony McGrath believe that new

Culture and politics share the essential characteristic of self-assertion.

Reissner

technologies enable mass communication on a scale that is unique for the late 20th century and the new millennium.

While we might expect liberal approaches to pay attention to cultural factors, it is more surprising to observe the same in Marxist theories. I believe that the emphasis on culture in Marxism has its roots in the theories of the Italian Antonio Gramsci and other European schools of thought such as the Frankfurt School in Germany. Immanuel Wallerstein for example thinks that the capitalist world system has to prove its validity in the field of culture because the fundamental contradictions of that system can only be resolved through culture. Today, most literature about the relation between culture and world politics has Marxist roots.

Finally, we can observe an interesting change in realist theories of international relations. For classical realist thinkers like Hans Morgenthau and E.H. Carr, culture has no place in international politics. Neo-realists like Kenneth Waltz only see that culture can play an instrumental role. The constructivist Alexander Wendt by contrast offers a re-reading of realism that places more emphasis on human consciousness. For him, culture is a sign of the human ability to change the world. In sum, then, we can observe that almost all recent theories in the field of international relations have underlined the significance of culture in international politics.

Our topic, the relationship between culture and politics, reminds me of a statement by the former director of the Institute for Political and International Studies in Tehran, the IPIS. In 1999, when we were planning a joint project with the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, he said, “You always speak of culture. We speak of civilization, which we define as culture plus power.” There are many remarkable things about this sentence.

To my mind, culture and politics share the essential characteristic of self-assertion. That becomes clear if we derive the word “culture” not only from the Latin noun *cultura*, which refers to existing traditions and symbols, but from the verb *colere*, meaning “to cultivate” and “give something significance.” Culture is therefore a semiotic, significance-giving, and therefore also order-creating practice that promotes orientation and self-assertion. This approach to the term culture also has the advantage of preceding any subdivision into high-, everyday-, and material culture.

This definition of culture affects both politics and religion, a relationship that

Reissner
presentation

Self-assertion: common characteristic of culture and politics



Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" is an expression of anxiety

Khatami's dialog of civilizations degenerated into self-promotion

Kepel
presentation

Paul Wolfowitz and the Shi'ites

was demonstrated most clearly by the German theologian and philosopher Paul Tillich. Culture, religion, and politics constitute separate and discrete categories in modern civilization, yet they find common ground when they address the essential interests of people as needy and desirous beings in their existential situations.

Leaping from Paul Tillich to Samuel Huntington, I would just like to say that I think the thesis of the "Clash of Civilizations" isn't so much a new theory as an expression of anxiety. Huntington's reflections were driven by the fear that the boundaries between culture, politics, and economics could be incomprehensibly altered during a new geopolitical era. That would open the gates for assertive cultures to promote new forces that could defeat traditional ways of holding on to power. Fear of this kind of chaos is a very grave one, as we know from history and philosophy.

President Khatami had a different approach to this fear. Instead of pronouncing the "clash of civilizations" as inevitable, he called for a dialog of civilizations. Why, then, did this dialog fail? In the interest of gathering representatives of various cultures to speak with each other at the same level, we certainly experienced a moment of self-assertion. Unfortunately, these talks did not revolve around very important matters and, indeed, degenerated far too often into competing acts of self-promotion. Of course, that can also be an important part of making an initial contact, but the values that all agreed were mutual were not translated into the differing ways of life represented at the talks. Moreover, it was mostly the same people who did the talking, and the dialog itself focused far too much on security issues, even before September 11, 2001. Therefore it was difficult to open up a view to new forms of self-assertion, to make some more progress in this fundamental issue of international security.

Rather than dealing any further with concepts, let me try to show the practical side of what has been said by telling a tale. My tale is a tribute to this place, which resembles the Palace of a Thousand and One Nights, an anticipation of paradise, and as all tales, it begins with "once upon a time."

Once upon a time, Shiites were all terrorists and America was the Great Satan. This tale, though, does not take place once upon a time, but in July 2003. And we are not in paradise, but in the Pentagon in Washington DC, i.e. somewhat closer to hell. I, the storyteller, am on my way to an important agent of the Great Satan, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. In his waiting room, I am stunned



to find not a few military officials, but a group of Shiite clerics wearing beards, dressed in black and speaking Arabic rather than English.

Curious whether the “Clash of Civilizations” really no longer exists, as this scene would suggest, I ask Secretary Wolfowitz why that group of Mullahs and Ayatollahs is here. He replies that he has the highest regard for Islam in general and Shiites in particular and that he works a lot with them. Knowing in the back of my mind that I need interesting ideas for this Round Table, we embark on a discussion about culture and international politics.

In the course of it, we compare Shiites and Jews and discover a whole range of common characteristics. Both are groups persecuted by the majority surrounding them. Both cling to their religious authorities, whether Rabbis or Ayatollahs, to maintain their cultural identity. They define themselves mainly through their holy scriptures to survive in a hostile environment.

When we begin to focus on more contemporary issues, we notice that this religious orientation has a strong effect on the social dynamics of both groups. Both Shiites and Jews hold high reverence for those who interpret the scripture and create the *Ishtihad* and the *Talmud* respectively. In an increasingly secularized world, this translated into an extremely high regard for education and intellectual life. In the first half of the twentieth century, it also led to an overwhelming representation of both Shiites and Jews in Communist parties and the intellectual avant-garde. Thus, for example Iraq is the only Arab country which had a strong Communist party and also the only Arab country with a strong Shiite component.

Here, the tale and my role as a French Sheherazade end. I hope it will bring us a fresh perspective on the relationship between culture or civilization and international politics as well as on pressing political issues, not least in the Middle East. As religion is an integral part of culture, we should also ask ourselves questions such as: To what extent are religious frontiers significant and how are they connected to political frontiers? How important are religious concepts for an understanding of international relations and the politics of countries like Iran or the United States?

Following this fantastic narration concerning the significance of different cultures and possibilities for a conversation among them, let me briefly sum up the introductory statements as a triple “C”. The first was “cultural meaning.” Our definitions of culture vary and continue to change. The second was the question

Parallels between Shi’ites and Jews

Sajjadpour

Culture and especially religion
are private affairs of the individual.

Weisskirchen



of “centrality.” While culture used to be considered a marginal factor in politics, it is now gaining a central role. The third was about “commonalities and differences.” What do commonalities tell us about differences? Will differences lead to clashes or cooperation? This question is particularly telling since the role of religion is becoming more important in the world and that reflects back on politics.

Weisskirchen

Locke, not Hobbes, shows us how
to understand culture

Mr. Salimi, you dealt with Thomas Hobbes in your presentation but unfortunately did not mention his exact opposite, John Locke, whose “Letter on Toleration” constitutes the antithesis to Hobbes’ Leviathan. After determining that cultures are different, it attempts to pluralize and defuse the potential for violence that these differences can foster. I would say that the decisive term here is not only Mr. Reissner’s “self-assertion,” but, above all, “tolerance,” as used by Locke or Michael Walzer.

Contain and use productively culture’s
potential for violence

If we do not integrate the concept of tolerance into our understanding of culture, we will be unable to put behind us the era in which culture is associated with expansion, nation-building, and violence. Our task is to differentiate, contain, and productively use the potential for violence innate to every culture. In Europe, at least, we have had some profound experiences in this matter. Among the most important lessons we have learned is to regard culture and especially religion as private affairs of the individual. Guaranteeing artistic freedom and secularism have been the most important steps toward this goal.

Bertram

But don’t we risk trivializing and denying the meaning of culture if we differentiate as much and are as tolerant as you suggest?

Weisskirchen

No. We do not trivialize culture, we recognize it. Recognition should be a central theme of our discussion.

Manouchehri

I would like to look again at the concepts of culture and world politics, both etymologically and historically. One way to see their relationship is that they belong to two different worlds. The world of culture is one of learning and growing. In many languages the term “culture” already contains the notion of growth. International politics, by contrast, historically belongs to a world of power, conflict and strife.

Does politics dominate culture or vice versa?

In recent years, however, we can observe two conflicting trends concerning the relationship between these two concepts. One tendency is to subsume the

The world of culture is one of learning and growing. International politics, by contrast, belongs to a world of power, conflict and strife.

Manouchehri



notion of culture under world politics. It is exemplified by Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations." The other tendency is to subsume world politics under culture. It appears in a range of different theoretical and practical approaches, such as in the efforts to establish a dialog among civilizations.

Those who are concerned with the flourishing cultural interactions among people throughout the world should pay attention to both tendencies. However, I believe that the notion of culture and its historical experiences contain a great potential that can be used to direct world politics instead of being dominated by it. We should therefore put special emphasis on the second trend, which subsumes international politics under the world of culture.

I would like to make two comments and pose one question for our discussion. First, I believe that culture in the old meaning of the word, as national culture, no longer exists. Rather, cultural life today has become globalized, even if it retains its national origins.

At first, globalization concerned mainly economics and finance. But today, culture is spreading increasingly fast and effectively across borders so that important cultural events can sometimes become part of world culture within hours. I believe that this process will intensify through new technologies. As a result, a world culture will be created with free access for everybody. This new phenomenon will shape the future. As the cultural heritage of the world becomes freely accessible to all, culture will become much more central in many spheres of life, including politics.

Secondly, culture at the national, regional and international level today is multi-layered rather than homogenous. Take as an example the Turkish community in Germany, which is creating an entirely new culture within that country. Similar trends can be observed in many countries and they are still becoming stronger. Understanding a national culture therefore means not only seeing a country's historical heritage, but also its current, diverse cultures—something that can be politically sensitive.

The question that follows from this relates to cultural identity: Should we try to preserve, and if necessary fight for, national cultural identities or not?

What is your answer?

Culture can direct world politics

Fedorov

Cultural life has become globalized ...

... and national culture today is no longer homogeneous, but multi-layered

Bertram

A few Hollywood movies did much more damage to the Soviet Union than thousands of missiles.

Fedorovs



Fedorov To my mind, we should remain conscious about the historical roots of our cultures. In a broader sense, this also means that we should be aware of where certain cultural elements, such as the alphabet, come from. Contemporary culture, by contrast, should be less defined in national terms.

Culture as a weapon in world politics

For world politics, the most salient question is that of cultural expansion. On the one hand, culture can be used as a weapon. Thus, a few Hollywood movies did much more damage to the Soviet Union than thousands of missiles. On the other hand, cultural expansion can also be positive, as the effective policies in this area in Germany and Japan demonstrate.

McFaul I would like to turn Mr. Manouchehri's question on its head and ask whether culture can in any way be considered independent of power. In other words—and I am also thinking about the example given concerning Shiites and Jews—is it power that really drives culture? And, as a consequence, do we get ourselves into a theoretical mess when we try to think of the two concepts as separate?

Culture, religion and power are inextricably linked

To an outsider, Iran offers striking evidence for the connection between culture and power. Islam came to this country rather late and it was introduced by an invading power. The same is true of the Persian alphabet. And, as we learned during our tour of the Emam Khomeini Square, which links a bazaar with a palace and a mosque, Shia Islam itself was a manifestation of power.

Take as another example Samuel Huntington's book "The Clash of Civilizations." That book could not have been written in 1933, because American power was preoccupied with the clash with Germany and the struggle against fascism. Likewise in 1963 we were not thinking about civilizations, because we were concerned about the balance of power. Only by 1993, when fascism and communism were no longer the opponents in America's expansion of power, did we come to call it "culture" or "civilization." If this argument is right, its consequences are fearful.

Cultural expansion causes conflicts

If power and culture are linked in a significant way, then a key question is how we can prevent conflicts and wars arising from the expansion of power and with it its cultural baggage. To my mind, a precondition for tolerance is a minimum level of security. The question therefore becomes how an expansive power can provide that security rather than destroy it.

Let me end with a comment on the future: When talking about culture, we should look beyond our current historical situation. For example, we are mainly using English in this international Round Table for a specific reason. But might



the current international constellation and the process of globalization not be temporal? Will Chinese or Persian be the lingua franca in five hundred years and will we then talk about a different cultural expansion?

I find it disturbing when people see culture as a static concept. In reality, culture is changing over time—and these changes are particularly manifest in international politics. Much more interesting would be to explore the dynamics through which culture influences international politics. Different negotiation styles or ways to react to pressure for example could offer useful insights.

In general, though, I believe that individual personalities, who always escape analysis, have a much greater influence over history and conflicts. Now, do these leaders represent their culture or are they trying to invent something else? This question remains open, just consider the example of Saddam Hussein when you attempt to answer it. Did he represent a culture or was he, during his reign of terror, representing himself? Certainly the monarchic rule of Iraq for almost 40 years had nothing to do with the way Saddam had ruled Iraq. So which type of governance represented the country's culture? The same could be asked about the Nazi rule in Germany or about the fascists in Italy.

Another fascinating piece of evidence for the supposed relationship between culture and politics comes from Asia. We would generally expect to find the highest ranking female leadership in Western cultures. But we find most women political leaders in “backward” areas like Bangladesh, Pakistan or Sri Lanka. This makes me wonder whether we are only constructing an interpretation of their culture and assuming an impact on international politics. We should therefore concentrate on whether and how culture really affects international relations.

Does culture then have to do with good governance?

No. Any culture or society can develop good governance or lose it. But culture has a greater effect on local and regional than on international politics.

Let me return to the connection between culture and power. I believe that the relevance of culture in politics today has more to do with a combination of affluence and impotence than power.

In the first half of the 20th century, politics was largely the preserve of hierarchical institutions and dealt with questions of distribution. Today, both the form

Alnajjar

Culture changes

Do individual politicians represent their cultures?

Bertram

Alnajjar

Culture and good governance?

Leonard

Today, networks are replacing big hierarchical organizations ...

Culture has become a catch-all term to explain why politics does or does not work.

Leonard



and the content of politics have changed. Networks are replacing big hierarchical organizations. Just as factories gave birth to political parties and trade unions, the Internet is creating a new type of organization that does not have a large staff but can mobilize large numbers of people in different places.

... and the focus of politics has shifted from distributional to cultural issues

In terms of content, the focus has shifted from distributional to cultural issues. Thus, traditional political groups had to reinvent themselves as cultural movements. Parties of the Right have turned into trenches against globalization and social change, while parties of the Left often amalgamate different claims to cultural rights, from sexual orientation and gender to ethnic groups.

This shows both that culture is important in politics and that it changes more quickly than anything else. That might be why culture has become such a catch-all term to explain why politics does or does not work. So if a country has bad governance, we attribute it to its culture. But when it improves, it will also be due to its culture.

“Cultural politics” as an expression of affluence and impotence

Let me finish with a recent example that illustrates this type of post-material cultural politics really well: the Iraq war. The one million people who demonstrated against the war in Great Britain held placards saying “not in my name” rather than “not at all.” The demonstrators wanted to dissociate themselves from the war rather than stop the war. This is where affluence and impotence play in: they might have thought that they could not stop the war, but they also did not care that much. People were more interested in the cultural than the material aspects of politics. Similarly, many of these new organizations operating at the global level try to change people’s minds and the vocabulary used in politics, but they do not have very specific goals.

Sajjadpour

I think we are selective in our reading of certain situations. You saw placards saying “not in my name,” maybe because it appealed to your cultural orientation or to an issue you want to emphasize. I, however, read something else on the Internet: There, a group of beautiful girls held up a placard saying “Don’t send boys to war—send them to us.” But this might also be a cultural selectivity.

Bertram
Instrumentalization of culture

You have pointed to an aspect that Kenneth Waltz would have been delighted about: Culture can be instrumentalized. But can it only be used in that way because it resonates with people? Maybe we should look more closely at this mechanism.



Throughout this debate, we have been assuming that culture plays an important role in defining one's identity. But we should be careful not to fall into the trap of seeking only one identity—a direction that a majority of the media and of politicians push people in. My personal experience has taught me that it is only because we unconsciously accept the multiple identities we carry that we are able to coexist without killing each other here and now.

Then, I take up with enthusiasm Ghanim Alnajjar's point that culture per se has no practical meaning except at the level of the individual. Contrary to what I believed when I was young, it is clear to me now that it is individuals who make and shape events. While I appreciate a conversation about the theory of culture, decisions that define this world are taken by individuals, particularly if they act in a contingency.

A small story illustrates this: Secretary of State George Shultz never had meetings on those Saturdays when the Red Sox were playing in Washington because he went to the stadium. People came up with different cultural reasons for why he would not meet anybody on Saturdays. This choice, however, was due to his personal preferences, rather than his cultural background. It might therefore make more sense to talk about the culture of Joe and Lisa, instead of culture in general.

May I first of all thank Mr. McFaul for his remark concerning the English language. If we had chosen a language according to its beauty, to my mind we should have chosen French or Russian, but not English or German.

We would be having fewer difficulties with definitions right now, had we chosen as our topic "Religion and Politics" instead of "Culture and Politics." Disputes over concepts are hardly avoidable when debating culture. That is why I was happy when we moved on from Hegel to Paul Tillich. In the relationship of religion and power, it is essential that the individual significance of religion not be permitted to lead toward religion as power politics. This is the core of secularization that Mr. Weisskirchen was referring to.

Mr. Fedorov mentioned the Turkish community in Germany. When I was still mayor of Berlin, I was greeted in Turkey as the mayor of the largest Turkish city outside Turkey. The German ambassador at the time, a very pious man, warned me to be careful that Berlin wouldn't become a Muslim city within 20 years, which would negate the victory over the Ottomans at Vienna in 1683. I responded by saying I thought an even greater danger would be for Turkish schoolchildren to copy the secularization of their "Christian" friends in Berlin too quickly.

Picco

We are able to coexist only because we accept our multiple identities

The individual culture of ...

... Joe and Lisa is what is really interesting

von Weizsäcker

Religion should never turn into power politics

German culture is being secularized, not Islamicized

Culture means learning to live together. Therefore, I see recognition rather than self-assertion as its most important function.

von Weizsäcker



So much for religion's individual dimension. When we ask, however, how religion influences politics and becomes part of power politics itself, a different understanding of culture dominates. Culture—derived, as Mr. Reissner said, from *colere*—means learning to live together, as I define it. Therefore, I see recognition rather than self-assertion as its most important function. In this way, culture can be a useful corrective in the relationship between religion and politics that, today, is throwing up so many insoluble questions.

Bertram

Culture as defense against a hegemon

For the remaining part of our overview of culture and international politics, I would propose that we try to move away from generalities and on to more specific arguments. This could include first the question whether our recent turbulent experiences point to a particular European or American approach to international affairs, which is shaped by culture. Second, is the world-wide increase in fundamentalist religion a temporary or a general phenomenon? Third, I had thought that Huntington had already disappeared in the trash boxes of history and that his theory was generally seen as the “Trash of Civilizations,” rather than the “Clash of Civilizations.” But now, Johannes Reissner offered a rather stimulating interpretation that we might want to come back to: Is culture used in order to defend oneself against an overpowering hegemon or against globalization?

Kepel

Immigrants have an effect on societies and vice versa

I want to come back to the effect that immigrant communities have on European and other societies that both Mr. Fedorov and Mr. von Weizsäcker alluded to. First, it is important to note, that not only the host countries' cultures are challenged by the presence and cultural elaborations of Turks or North Africans. Their cultures, too, undergo changes.

Important elements of French culture have foreign roots ...

Let me give you some examples. On the one hand, a recent poll in France, the country of gastronomy, about people's favorite dish indicated that it was couscous. On the other hand, somebody approached me yesterday in Isfahan and addressed me in French. He was wearing a cap with “Zizou” written on it, the nickname of Zinedine Zidane, the world-famous French soccer champion of Algerian origins. France, then, is identified from the inside and the outside as couscous and Zidane, and I am very proud of it.

Mr. Fedorov asked whether governments should act to preserve national identity. I had some interesting experiences as a member of President Chirac's newly appointed committee on secularism. The committee mainly deals with the issue of the headscarf, because it is so controversial whether it should be forbidden in

France is identified as couscous and Zidane, and I am very proud of it.

Kepel



our schools. For governments, the question of how and to what extent they should influence the social construction of culture remains a very difficult one. French culture for instance is usually associated with people wearing a beret on their head and a baguette under their arm, but you would be amazed to see how many traditionalist French citizens bear a Czech or similar name.

Similarly, Iranian culture today cannot be reduced only to Imam Khomeini's legacy. Cultures are constantly being built and they intermingle. Therefore, "civilizations" as identifiable entities no longer exist and I agree that what you named the "Trash of Civilizations" should be discarded.

... and Iranian culture cannot be reduced to Imam Khomeini's legacy

First I'd like to add a comment on the definition of culture. We increasingly understand culture as something in a permanent state of flux. Partly this is in reaction to a strong tendency during the 1990s, both in Western and Arab-Islamic literature, to reduce the notion of culture to its bare essentials. This led to the identification of cultures' "immutable characteristics." Today the opposite is taking place. Yet we miss something vital when we say that everything always changes. That is, that culture also provides a reference framework for our conduct. Intellectuals and social scientists are supposed to analyze how this framework influences behavior and how it, in turn, can be changed by people's conduct. Therefore it is not sufficient to define Islamic culture as pluralistic and evolving while neglecting its role as a system of references.

Hamzawy

I'd also like to comment on the continuing development of fundamentalist tendencies. I think we should be asking different questions. Not only the future of fundamentalist movements is relevant, but mainly the change in the role religion plays in various societies. Terms such as secularization or rationalization are helpful in this kind of inquiry, but they are not enough.

Even though Muslim fundamentalists stick to their terminology ...

Take, for instance, the discourses of fundamentalist movements in the Arab-Islamic world. They use the same concepts that were making the rounds during the 1970s and 80s, yet the hierarchical position of concepts such as democracy, human rights, or application of Sharia, or Islamic law, has, in part, changed radically.

If we look at examples like the Muslim Brotherhoods in Egypt and Jordan, or moderate movements in North Africa and in the Gulf, we see them talk mainly about respect for human rights and democratization. In terms of rhetoric, one still sees demands for Islamic law and slogans like "Islam is the solution," but their significance has declined sharply. This is due partly to a change in the

... those groups are opening up politically



discourses themselves, but also to the Islamists' lack of success in the second half of the 1990s.

Finally, I'd like to return to Mr. Reissner's comments on the efforts to establish a dialog of civilizations. He is right to say that there was more self-presentation than real exchange there, but I think self-presentation is all we can expect as long as we limit ourselves to topics as general as democracy or culture or international politics. Real discussions can emerge only once we have formulated more specific questions. One of these might be on how knowledge is produced within the Muslim communities in Europe, and how it affects the larger Arab-Islamic world.

Bertram

Gilles Kepel, you have recently published a book on the decline of fundamentalism in the Islamic world. Could you comment on Mr. Hamzawy's statement?

Kepel

Islamists are successful when calling on different social groups ...

The book "Jihad" treats both the expansion and the decline of Islamist movements. It analyzes under which circumstances they do or do not manage to seize power. In Iran, for instance, the Ayatollah Khomeini could mobilize different social groups. His religious discourse brought together the young urban poor from southern Tehran, who had a social revolutionary agenda, and the upper middle classes including the bazaar traders, who had political motives. Together, they created a momentum that ousted the ruling government.

... and fail if they do not join forces

In other countries, often with a Sunni majority, similar groups existed, but were not able to combine their forces. In Egypt, for example, the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Jamah al-Islamia and Islamic Jihad remained divided and could therefore be crushed by the regime. The most successful attempt in the Sunni world to bring together different social groups was the Islamic Salvation Front or FIS in Algeria. But even this group could not agree on one spokesperson. Instead, both the rather bourgeois Abdel Hachani-Jaza'ir and the radical Ali Belhadj spoke on behalf of the movement. When the party came under pressure, it split into two: AIS and the more radical GIA.

Today moderate Islamists ally themselves with secular democratic forces

Because moderate Islamists, particularly in the Sunni world, were unable to join forces with the radicals, they have changed their strategy. They are now allying themselves with secular groups in order to gain power. Their emphasis on democracy and human rights, which Amr Hamzawy mentioned, is thus an attempt to find a common language with their new allies. Democracy can be the slogan to unite these two groups in order to oust the often authoritarian incumbents.

There is nothing destined
about the clash of civilizations.

Sajjadpour

Against the background of our theoretical discussion, I would like to move to a specific case, namely the tremendous impact of American culture on international politics. My intention is not to engage in America-bashing, but to offer my interpretation of the link between culture and politics in the United States.

The first aspect of American culture that I would like to mention is the deeply rooted idea of a struggle of good against evil. That idea is inculcated into people from very early on, starting with cartoons such as Tom & Jerry. Most of them feature a good guy, often dressed in red and blue and with an American accent, and a bad guy, who had a Russian accent during the Cold War and now rather an Arab one. You can find the same pattern in other areas. Thus, politicians and even academics claim that the United States has the greatest system in the world, with the best model of democracy and create a sense of mission to save the world and fight against evil.

Another aspect has a lot to do with America's geography: the lack of appreciation for or understanding of the rest of the world. The country is so vast that people believe they have seen the world when they drive from the east coast to the west coast. As a consequence, interest in the outside world is relatively low.

A definite sense of mission, combined with a lack of knowledge about the rest of the world, has an obvious and important impact on political decision-making. And because we are dealing with a superpower that can and does change things in the world, this has very deep implications for the rest of the world, including the Middle East. In this case, culture clearly matters for international politics.

Let me use the opportunity of Mr. Atai's significant contribution to propose that we focus now on how the concepts that we have discussed relate to policies at the international level. Understanding the concepts is of course important. But we can turn them into a practical language to debate where and how cultural differences manifest themselves in international politics today. Given the current power of the United States, it will for example be important to understand the cultural factors that influence American policy decisions. On that basis, we can then begin to construct a better understanding that will help us to avoid the clash of civilizations. For there is nothing destined about the clash of civilizations.

Several people have emphasized that we should analyze culture at the level of the individual. I would like to argue for the contrary. We have to ensure that cultural



Atai

The struggle of "good" against "evil" is a
deeply rooted part of American culture ...

... and the Americans are not interested in
the rest of the world

Sajjadpour

Paya

Cultural phenomena must be made public ...



phenomena are made public so that they can be scrutinized and become as objective as possible.

Karl Popper introduced the notion of three worlds: World one is the physical universe, world two are individual beliefs and ideas and world three is the inter-subjective sphere of meanings produced by humans. Culture and politics have ingredients of all three worlds. Thus, for example, the building of a foreign ministry belongs to the physical world. Predominantly, though, both culture and politics belong to world three, the world of ideas and intellectual products of mankind, i.e., they are socially constructed.

If culture and international politics are socially constructed, then they are created by collective intentionalities. These in turn can be subdivided into two categories: cognitive and volitive intentionalities. Cognitive intentionalities are those that present reality to us. Volitive intentionalities, by contrast, project our desires, hopes and aspirations onto the real world. We should keep in mind that culture and politics are a product of both our cognitive and volitive collective intentionalities.

... so that they can be analyzed
and criticized

Cultural aspects should be made public so that they can be analyzed, assessed and criticized. But even individuals should constantly re-evaluate their ideas and beliefs critically. Because culture and meanings are always evolving, we should analyze the mechanisms that influence this development, including external and internal factors.

Moshirzadeh

World politics is a social construct ...

I would like to come back to the relationships between culture, international relations and power. To me, culture and power mutually constitute each other. At the same time, international politics itself is a cultural phenomenon in that it is the result of specific power relations. World politics is a social construct that is as it is because we define it that way and assign that inter-subjective meaning to it.

... which nowadays is no longer
solely defined by the US ...

What has changed during the last few decades is who constructs international relations. The system used to be defined by the European powers. Later on, other great powers like the United States became part of the process. Today, the group of actors has expanded further. Politicians, intellectuals and international relations theorists from all over the world with different cultural backgrounds now contribute to the social construction of international politics. Coming from a specific cultural background, however, does not imply that monolithic cultures exist. Nor does it mean that anybody can claim to represent the Western or Asian culture, because no culture can be represented by a single person.



As more agents want to partake in the construction of international relations, that process should be democratized. A possible solution might lie in the international public sphere that Mr. Paya mentioned: Here, this process could be negotiated and different voices from all parts of the world could be heard.

The last two statements have shown the extraordinary cultural influence of the language of American political science. This serves as a nice illustration for Michael McFaul's earlier comment about the English language.

Actually, I believe that the German influence is greater, through Alexander Wendt and his social construction of international relations and the critical theories of Habermas and the Frankfurt School.

Before continuing with the discussion, let me support my co-chair's earlier appeal in a slightly provocative way. My impression is that the organizers of this Round Table chose the subject because it seemed that in this part of the world you had to mention culture in order to talk about politics. "Culture," if you wish, as a camouflage for political discussions. It would be interesting, for example, if this debate could explore issues such as the question whether politics has become more pragmatic or whether ideologies are once more on the rise.

It seems to me that we have not yet tackled the problem of definition sufficiently. Our difficulties in defining the nature of the relationship between culture and politics show that this relationship itself is in trouble, because if it were not, we would not need to raise those questions. Maybe these problems are a natural product of the Westphalian era in world politics: Especially during the Cold War, politics dominated over culture and culture only had an instrumental value. While the natural link between culture and politics was disturbed during that period, culture is now gaining significance in our globalized world.

There are many reasons for the growing significance of culture in international politics. Globalization is certainly an important factor, as is an increase in migration that especially Western countries have to deal with and the information and communication revolutions. The most important reason, however, is the end of ideologies that came with the end of the Cold War.

The risk now is that culture and the emphasis of the cultural differences between nations will replace ideology in its function. International politics is more

... and which should be further democratized

Bertram

Moshirzadeh

Bertram

Molaei

Will culture replace ideology in the age of globalization?



and more dominated by culture. This other extreme does not represent a natural relationship either. We therefore need a new approach in this area and a change in the current situation to reassess the role of culture in politics. Thus, culture could be considered a fourth dimension in international relations after politics, the economy and the military. We should also avoid oversimplifying this relationship and keep in mind that culture and politics are interdependent and that they interact.

Bertram

This implies the question of whether it is enough to recognize the differences between cultures or whether they need to be reconciled.

von Maltzahn

Just as Germany's victory over France in 1870
increased interest in Germany ...

I would like to take up the suggestion to focus more on the practical aspects of the relationship between power and culture. Power can create fear, but it can also lead to a renewed cultural interest. Take as an example the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. Maybe following the slogan "know your enemy," the number of people studying the German language rose considerably in its aftermath.

... the West became more interested in the
Islamic world after 9/11

Similarly, the attacks of 9/11 have resulted in a huge rise in popularity of Islamic and Arabic studies among students in Europe and the United States. This might also be why the Frankfurt Book Fair next year will be dedicated to Arab civilization.

The German Foreign Office has also introduced organizational changes. A new Department for Dialog with the Islamic World has been created to gain more knowledge about the Islamic world and to create a better understanding for our culture and civilization in Muslim countries.

Ketabi

In culture and in politics, human beings
want to be recognized

I would like to go back to Hegel once more, because his concepts have important practical implications. His main argument is that human beings are driven by the desire to be recognized. This is central not only to our discussion, but also to contemporary politics. The Iranian Revolution, for instance, as well as other popular movements gained their main impetus from people searching for recognition. Thus, if understood in Hegelian terms, culture is linked to politics in an important way.

Kraig

When trying to find their role
in international politics ...

When talking about power, culture and the need for recognition, a major challenge for rising nations in the international system today is to define what it means to be a regional power, great power or superpower. It is important to gain



an understanding of what these categories mean both in the context of global politics and for the elites governing individual nations.

To my mind, much of the conflict between the United States and prominent countries in other regions goes back to different interpretations of this issue. China, India and Iran are all examples of regional powers that aspire to a more influential role within their region. Their domestic circles of power have a clear idea of what it means to be a respected regional power. This, however, often conflicts with the view held by the US.

Take as an example the current heated debate about unilateralism versus multilateralism in Washington D.C. It assumes that an objective US national interest exists. The debate therefore is not about defining the national interest, but about the best means to achieve it. Thus, in a noted speech at the Heritage Foundation, Dick Cheney argued strongly against international organizations and multilateralism on the grounds that they would not promote America's national interests effectively.

I believe that this is the wrong way to frame the debate. What we should really be talking about is America's role in the world, its national identity and its national interests. Thirteen years after the end of the Cold War, we are still struggling to define a new global role for the United States and this question of identity is intricately bound up with American culture. I would also posit that viewpoints concerning our national interest differ considerably between different political orientations, such as between Dick Cheney and Senator Joseph Biden. These interpretations also have to do with the strategic cultures of different elite communities in the US, with Dick Cheney still representing the strategic culture of the Cold War.

I am glad that Mr. Kraig mentioned the centrality of different subcultures for agents that are becoming more and more diverse. These strategic subcultures, for example, differ in their definition of America's interests and its enemies or friends. These groups might share certain basic values, but they disagree on their interpretation and on deeper points. Given the importance of these differences, we should develop a new paradigm that allows for an adequate analysis of subcultures.

First, a comment on your representation of American culture. I found it interesting that you chose cartoons as an illustration. But despite much experience

... rising nations come into conflict with the US

The United States pursues its national interest ...

... before defining it properly

Sajjadpour

International actors have different strategic subcultures

McFaul



through my 5-year-old son, I have never seen a cartoon where the enemy has an Arabic accent. It is true that 40 years ago they had Russian accents, but we have made some progress and this is no longer the case. In addition, a lot of the cartoon culture is now dominated by Asia. Pokemon, for instance, comes from Japan and is not related to an American framing of the world.

It is tempting, but wrong ...

Concerning the discussion about power and culture, I would like to introduce a note of caution. There is a real danger that people retrospectively trace an international political event back to some supposed cultural factor.

... to trace all international political events to cultural factors

Take for instance President Bush and his decision to go to war with Afghanistan and Iraq. Prior to September 11th, the President, who has since been described as a missionary zealot in the fight of good against evil, did not want to have anything to do with the idea of promoting democratic institutions around the world. Contrary to the ideals of Wilsonian liberals like me, his declared aim in early 2001 was to build a missile defense and cut taxes. At that time, there was no sense of mission and no black-and-white view of the world. After September 11th, however, the culture of his born-again Christian background came to play. Then, his personal cultural disposition had a tremendous impact on the decisions concerning Afghanistan and Iraq. But without September 11th, his cultural background would have been meaningless.

Had Gore won the elections, we would be talking differently about American culture

In addition, had the outcome of the elections in 2000 been different, American culture would have manifested itself in a very different manner. Under a President Gore, this would not have been framed as a struggle of good against evil and we would be talking about American culture in entirely different terms. So please be aware that our generalizations about culture are contingent and depend on specific historical circumstances.

Weisskirchen

Culture as a means of self-assertion ...

Mr. Molaei rightly observed that culture has become increasingly dominant in politics in the last several years. We should ask why this has been happening. Events such as 9-11 have certainly played a part, as have the effects of globalization. To borrow Mr. Reissner's term, culture has become a means of self-assertion for some who feel their interests are underrepresented in the process of globalization. This conceals a great danger, however, that of promoting fundamentalism, which we have observed not only in Islam, but also in Christianity and Judaism.

... is dangerous: what we need is mutual recognition

We also heard the Westphalian era mentioned earlier. The international system introduced by the Treaty of Westphalia bound the religions together through



an edict of tolerance. We are now at a point where this edict could be dissolved. If we are to avoid making Huntington's dark vision reality, cultures must realize they can flourish only if they differentiate and pluralize. If they want recognition, they must recognize other cultures. Sustainable peacemaking- and communications processes can take place only in an atmosphere of mutual respect for personal, religious, and cultural values.

I think one problem of contemporary Islam is its lack of self-reflection. It tries insufficiently to channel and overcome the potential for violence innate to all religions partially because it is insufficiently secularized. Within Christianity, we learned our lesson the hard way, through many mistakes. The corresponding tendencies within Islam are still too feeble and underdeveloped. A dialog of cultures demands this kind of tolerance—dialog means, after all, learning from each other. It would help us avoid repeating all our past mistakes; otherwise, we could come that much closer to Huntington's apocalyptic vision.

But Islam lacks self-reflection

This should also apply to Protestant Evangelicalism, nowadays the fastest growing religion in the world.

Bertram

I would like to relate a Chinese view on culture to you. In Chinese philosophy, it is seen as a basic feature of human society that a variety of civilizations exist. Therefore, we owe respect to the different historical cultures, social systems and development paths of various nations. Recognizing the world's diversity is a precondition for the long-term peaceful co-existence of nations. For China, this means that we should try to learn from others' strengths and to remedy our own deficiencies. This way, we can pursue a common development, where nations maintain their differences while seeking common ground.

Yu

China sees respect for other cultures as indispensable ...

Finally, I would like to introduce some ideas of Confucianism, which stands at the center of Chinese culture. Confucianism is mainly defined through its aspiration to harmony. People like Huntington, however, criticize Chinese culture and call for imposing military limits not only on Islamic nations, but also on Confucian nations. I cannot understand this point of view.

... and Confucianism aspires to harmony

Hopefully my presentation advanced your understanding of Chinese culture so that you can appreciate the declaration of the winners of the Nobel Prize of 1988, which stated that "if human beings want to continue to survive in the coming 21st century, we have to trace back the past 2500 years so as to absorb the positive aspects of Confucian wisdom." As director of policy studies in the Chinese



mission to the UN, I always tried to keep these principles in my mind and based my decisions on them.

Bertram

China sometimes violates the prescriptions of Confucianism

Allow me a brief question. Harmony seems to be an excellent principle, if others accept it as well. But even within China, aren't there provinces such as Xinjiang in which the prescriptions of Confucianism are not followed? Similarly in international relations: How can you follow a policy of harmony when other forces are by no means doing the same? How can the fair-weather culture you describe be applied when the weather turns bad?

Yu

You can implement the principle of peaceful co-existence if you mutually respect each other and conduct negotiations on an equal footing. You also have to grant primacy to sovereignty, even when confronted with globalization. Prior to the open door policy, China followed the principles of Marxist and Leninist theory. Now, by contrast, we are rediscovering the Chinese tradition, which has Confucianism at its core.

Löning

Globalization ...

... creates unifying cultural symbols ...

I'd like to associate three words that are also politically relevant when combined: culture, globalization, and fear. To me, the latter seems at present to be an extraordinarily important determinant.

Culture plays an ambivalent part in globalization, I think. We have already heard some vivid presentations of how multi-layered people's identities are. These layers include global elements that connect us all. I saw a copy of a Tintin comic book at Tehran airport. I loved those books as a kid and today, they and others help foster identities globally.

... but also promotes fear and demarcation

Meanwhile, these figures, who seem to be signaling something like a global identity, are also advancing pro-demarcation, even xenophobic, mentalities. Fear is central in these movements and we should closely investigate it. What fears do images from this region awaken among political and religious groups in Europe? And conversely, what fears do America and Europe raise among people in the Middle East? We should shed more light on where certain fears come from, how we deal with them, and how we might improve the situation.

Manouchehri

I am concerned that we are not sufficiently sophisticated in the way we are referring to culture, particularly when we are discussing the relationship between culture and power.



When we speak about world politics, for example, we can observe an absence of culture, rather than its use. This is because essential notions such as “self” and “other” have very different meanings and implications in the world of politics as compared to the world of culture. It is in the way that the “other” is defined in international politics that the absence of culture is most obvious.

A parallel case in the domestic sphere is commercial advertising. Advertising is a means to reach a specific purpose. But it is not culture because it does not have anything to do with the real life of people and does not represent their culture. Advertising may try to influence individual behavior, but it is not created by a collective human experience in a particular geographical area.

Therefore, we should distinguish as clearly as possible between culture in its proper sense and personal or group behavior, which does not necessarily represent a culture.

You introduced a distinction between “pure culture” and things like politics and advertisements. But do advertisements not also transport values, for example on how women and men interact or the role of material values? If advertising influences how individuals define themselves within a society, how can you really separate it from culture?

Culture to me is something created through a historical process in which people learn how to live with each other in a particular human ecosystem. Trying to sell something or to convince somebody to buy your product does not have anything to do with that process.

We have discussed recognition, tolerance, and self-assertion as central characteristics of culture. I believe there is still one key concept missing from this list, and that is consensus. Discussing mutual recognition and how we deal with diversity only makes sense if we devote some thought on how to establish consensus.

Analyzing the mechanisms of manufacturing consent is especially relevant for international politics. What agents are involved and what power relationships play a role? Analyzing how consensus is made also gives us a methodological framework for further analysis, for instance on how to distribute power sensibly, negotiating methods, and the diversity of subjects.

Yet this issue is important to regional politics as well. If we use Habermas’ idea of the public, for example, then manufacturing consensus must be a main func-

Bertram

Manouchehri

Hamzawy

Mechanisms of manufacturing consent ...

... allow different cultural and political entities to coexist

We might hate ourselves for it, but we are the agents of our own Americanization.

Leonhard



tion of this public discussion. In the Arab world, however, this function is neglected and consensus is not given much significance. That, in turn, has to do with a democratic deficit and the question of representation.

Leonard

We talk about culture only because ...

Earlier on, Mr. Bertram pointed out that conferences like this one are framed around the notion of culture because we are allowed to speak about it. This goes back to my previous point about the impotence of people. There is so much focus on culture and cultural politics, because this—as well as the plight of the Palestinians—is a sphere in which people can openly express themselves.

Usually, we treat the topic in such general terms that many Westerners find it difficult to see a real threat of cultural invasion. It has been mentioned that we are all complicit in the spread of Western or American culture, because it is driven by market forces. We might hate ourselves for it, but we are the agents of our own Americanization. The dynamics seem to be push and pull at the same time.

... we can not influence political decision making processes

So is the focus on culture due to a narrowing of the political sphere? Is it because we no longer talk about questions of distribution in the West and political agendas in other parts of the world are often closed that people can only express themselves in the sphere of culture? I would be particularly interested in hearing some Iranian responses to these questions.

Paya

No, culture is an interesting subject in itself

My answer would be “no.” Culture is a significant subject of debate because it is a genuine force to be reckoned with in the modern world. We should not lend too much support to conspiracy theories in that regard. Even those who use brute power to achieve their ends cannot ignore the power of culture. Culture might not be visible at the surface, but it is active underneath and all those who ignore it do so to their own detriment.

It is true that Islamic countries are using culture as a means to wield more influence, but this is not a phoney idea. Culture can be a powerful force because it can create a greater collective intentionality. If dialog is based on mutual recognition and all the parties accept that they can gain something by sharing ideas, this larger collective intentionality can come about. Thus, culture can be a powerful instrument to create a better world, provided that we bring our assumptions and knowledge to a common public sphere.

Kraig

Mark Leonard mentioned the expansion of American culture through free market forces. This is a new phenomenon, as during the Cold War nations were divided



as to whether they should accept free market capitalism at all. More recently, the debate has focused more on how globalization and free markets should be shaped and regulated. Responses to these questions have strongly been shaped by culture.

India for example finally embraced globalization and became a crucial player in information technology. Important members of the Bush administration therefore thought that India would be a natural strategic partner. But in WTO negotiations, among others, they found out time and again that many intractable differences with India remained. Reconciling different definitions of globalization is a key challenge for the future of international relations.

Allow me a comment on the “cultural invasion.” In the Middle East and maybe also in South Asia, people have a very strong feeling that they are invaded by a foreign culture. I agree that the expansion of Western culture is a result of globalization and the way capitalism operates, and not part of a conscious political effort. But many people in this part of the world see this differently and perceive cultural expansion as a Western political act.

I think the preceding contributions have raised some very important points. It’s about time we heard a discussion on how cultures actually spread. The West’s technological and economic hegemony permit it to aggressively promote its culture in the rest of the world. The problem is that the people who are affected often interpret this expansion completely differently than its originators in the West had intended.

This effect is made worse by the fact that the countries on the receiving end have a completely different economic reality than does the West. The result is friction between traditional and Western cultures as they develop in non-synchronous ways. Western culture is spreading with a force that the other side often cannot adequately respond to. The consequence is often a retreat to narrowly-defined cultural identities that would never be defended without this kind of outside pressure. And the most radical expressions of this asymmetrical *Kulturkampf* are fundamentalism and terrorism.

In discussing the dialog of cultures, we mostly assume that the participants are partners that meet on an equal footing and conduct their exchange in a democratic manner. In reality, the West advances its position extremely aggressively, with the help of the latest technologies and economic superiority, which

Culture determines how we deal with the globalized market economy

Atai

In the Middle East, people are afraid of a cultural invasion ...

Tilgner

... even though it might be unintended by the West

Therefore, people retreat to narrowly defined cultural identities

Secularism is nothing but a specifically European experience.

Mohammadi



forces the other side into a defensive position. The reactions are predestined to be distorted. If we are to begin a really new dialog, we have to acknowledge this relationship and then establish conditions for a fair exchange.

Mohammadi

The “invaded” countries also influence the “invaders”

We have been speaking of culture and Eastern societies’ concerns over a cultural assault from the West. Cultural differences are completely normal, since culture is the collected experience of human societies in trying to put all their capacities and abilities into practice. Therefore, culture is something essentially in flux. When culture flows from east to west, or from west to east, it naturally relinquishes its original form and absorbs the influences of its new setting. Iranian history includes numerous examples of positive exchanges with foreign cultures. The influence of Hellenistic culture on ancient Persia and the effects of modern Western culture are but two examples among many.

The West should not force pluralism upon other countries

Today the situation is the same. Iran and other oriental societies are prepared to engage in a mutual exchange with other cultures and the new, globalized culture. We have only one concern: Our partners claim to practice pluralism, which I also accept in its political form. However, our Western partners do not always take into account the specific societal conditions of our countries when promoting this pluralism. For example, why do other countries so vehemently demand that we adopt a secular system? Secularism is nothing but a specifically European experience. Why, then, do people insist on applying this system in other societies? Shouldn’t more respect be given to the unique characteristics of other societies?

Kepel

Culture changes and finds its own channels:
The Iranian girls’ veils slip back a little more each year ...

My epilog consists of three episodes and is about the only thing left to the French after we lost our culture and cuisine: fashion.

The first episode took place on Isfahan’s Emam Khomeini Square, a paradise of monuments to past glory that we had the chance to visit yesterday. Apart from the magnificent monuments, I also took some interest in the young and beautiful Isfahani girls around us. And I noticed that fashion in Iran is changing year by year. When I visited Iran in 2001, some girls started to let their veil slip back just a little. In 2002, most veils started on the top of the head. But now, in 2003, veils barely cover the back of the head. While culture therefore exists and shapes attitudes, it is not a given, but changes over time.

... Iranians buy Dior or Chanel products in Dubai ...

The second episode happened after a flight from Tehran to Dubai, which was crowded as usual with people who travel with empty suitcases to buy goods



abroad and bring them back to Tehran. A Lebanese friend, who imports goods like Dior or Chanel to Dubai asked me whether I had seen his commercials on Iranian television. Surprised, I replied that there were no advertisements on Iranian national television. Then he explained to me that he advertised his goods on Farsi programs broadcast from Los Angeles. Iranian middle class ladies all watch these programs and instruct people to go to Dubai to buy the latest French fashion for them. Cultural transmission can take the most astonishing paths in the era of globalization.

The final episode is again about television. Recently, I hosted the Arabic program “Bil Mirsad,” the Observatory, on a Thursday night on one of the main pan-Arab channels—the equivalent to “Saturday Night Fever” in Muslim culture. The debate focused on anti-Semitism. Arabic satellite channels like this one can be watched everywhere and they reach among others youth of North African origin in Europe. Even though they often don’t understand Arabic, they watch these programs. And while they might not understand the text, they see images of Israeli tanks and fighting Palestinians or of American occupation troops in Iraq. In reaction, some of them later singled out their Jewish classmates in school and beat them up.

In sum, cultures do have a resilient core. But their expansion or a dialog among them is not only organized and directed by states, but also through various channels that civil society and private actors open up.

Our discussion has produced a rich array of concepts dealing with culture and international politics. Among the most important of these were questions concerning the interaction of the two, especially the relationship between culture and power, as well as how to deal constructively with its tensions. Mr. Tilgner introduced the keywords of confident and defensive cultures. Also, Mr. Löning identified fear as a central factor. We should be aware that concepts often serve to suppress things that we fear.

Perhaps we should interpret Kazem Sajjadpour’s statement that, to understand politics, we must understand the concepts underpinning it, as saying we should understand those elements that raise fear on either side. That would help us progress from general statements to concrete political problems. A dialog in which both sides clearly state what is bothering them could help prevent culture and religion from being hijacked and abused. However, problems would not just be suppressed through concepts, and as we know, suppressed fears often re-

... and the anti-Semitism of Arab TV shows influences Arabs in France

Reissner

Defensive vs. confident cultures



emerge twice as acutely. In the practice of dialog, both sides should articulate their fears and concerns more honestly.

Salimi

Distinctions between culture and religion

I would like to emphasize again the importance of the definition of culture and the distinction between the concepts of culture, religion and ideology. Of course, these three fields are inter-related and affect each other, but we must keep them apart to understand the impact that religion has on different cultures and vice versa. The influence of different cultures is the main reason why interpretations of Islam and other religions are so diverse and why they vary throughout the course of history. To be able to account for this diversity within religions, we have to distinguish conceptually between culture and religion.

Sajjadpour

While it would be impossible to sum up this interesting discussion, I would like to offer to you the three “D”s that I am taking away—and you might have noticed my interest in trinity, despite the fact that I am not Christian.

First, “definitions of culture.” We all have different definitions of what culture is, yet our understanding is clear and we know what we are talking about. Whether you see it as norms, or a way to learn to live with each other, as values or symbols, all these definitions essentially relate to our state of being.

Secondly, “dynamism.” The relationship between culture and power is very dynamic. It is influenced by personalities, but also by civilizations. Identities in their multiple layers play a role, but so do occasions and events such as September 11th. All these factors create the dynamism in the relationship between culture and politics or culture and power.

Create the space in which we
can construct and change

Finally, “determining a space.” Not everything is set and we are creating the space in which we can construct and change. If we take our responsibility seriously, we can build the conditions for transforming our differences into commonalities, for example through a meaningful dialog among civilizations.

II. Culture and International Politics in a Regional Context

In our first section, we looked at the entire universe of culture and international relations. Now, we would like to focus on the Middle East to find out how different perceptions of the region influence the behavior and policies of different actors.

My presentation is meant to shed light on some theoretical and practical aspects of the relationship between culture and international politics at the regional level.

The influence of culture on international politics has only recently been theoretically analyzed, mainly because of the predominance after World War II of the Positivist stance of American Realism. However, the field of cultural studies has provided important insights since the 1930s, especially regarding the influence of culture on societies.

With his 1968 paper on “Political Discontinuities in the International System,” Oran Young became one of the first researchers to demonstrate that classical political models could not account for cultural differences in international politics. The bipolar and multipolar models of the time, devised according to Realist principles of thought, made no provisions for the impact of cultural distinctions on policymaking.

Meanwhile the European Economic Community was taking major strides towards regional integration. Early in the 1970s, the EC implemented the resolutions of the Hague Conference of December 1969, which had been convened at the initiative of Georges Pompidou. The Community expanded geographically through the accession of three new member states while continuing to integrate politically and economically.

Given these developments, then, political scientists began paying more attention to regional studies. The region was increasingly seen as a link between the nation state and the international community. The Americans Steven Spiegel and Louis Cantori, for example, put forward a detailed analysis of the concept of the region, as well as of the prerequisites for regional integration. They identified “social coincidence” as a fundamental condition for regional integration. This meant that only a group of states with social, cultural, and historical similarities could successfully enter into a functioning community of states.

In the history of ideas of European integration, cultural and religious parallels emerge repeatedly as themes. That applies to the 1713 “Project of Perpetual Peace” by the Abbé de Saint-Pierre as much as for Tsar Alexander’s “Holy Alliance” from the year 1815. Also, the 19th century efforts of the Romantics that climaxed in

Bertram

Nagheebzadeh
Presentation

Theory of international relations
turns to culture

Political and economic integration ...

... succeeds in culturally homogenous
regions



1848 with Victor Hugo's participation in the 1848 International Peace Congress in Paris; the 1924 Declaration on European Unity by Count Coudenhove-Kalergi; and Aristide Briand's speech before the Assembly of the League of Nations in 1929 were all characterized by these themes. Finally, the strongly religious ideas of the European Community's founding fathers, including Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, and others, indicate how important religion can be for regional integration.

The 1980s saw gaps closed in previous analyses of the relationship between religion and international politics. This new wave of cultural studies known as Culturalism was influenced by Latin American liberation theology, the Islamic revolution in Iran, and perhaps a Western reaction against the suppression of religion.

Cultural mentalities influence national foreign policies

Raymond Aron was a pioneer in applying the findings of sociology to international relations. In the United States, Stanley Hoffman investigated the effects of national mentalities, especially that of the US, on foreign policy. For example, he regarded Charles de Gaulle as an incarnation of French culture and explained de Gaulle's foreign policy in these terms. As for the US, he maintained Americans felt they lived on a secure island around which people drowned. The American people also felt it was their duty, he said, to help these threatened people. Given this mindset, he said, Americans could not understand why Iraqis spit on American soldiers instead of thanking them.

Religion influences political systems

The early 1980s also saw the publication of valuable contributions to the influence of world religions on the development of various political systems. They classified the religions into the three categories of Confucianism, Hinduism, and the Abrahamite religions. This work, in turn, prompted critical reactions that further articulated the differences between Islam and Christianity.

Gradually, analyses of culture and foreign policy extended to more specialized topics such as conflict research. Here, too, cultural convergence and divergence were identified as core elements, e.g. that regional integration depends to a great extent on a cultural convergence among those societies involved. For example, Roger Debray said that European unity would be completed when a German soldier would be willing to sacrifice his life for French interests. The catalysts for this kind of convergence, despite the often contradictory Anglo-Saxon and Latin mentalities, would be a mutual religion, historical experience, and cultural heritage.

Integration is impossible without progress and shared interests

Yet culture alone is insufficient. There are states in the Middle East that, despite cultural similarities, are not yet able to begin integrating regionally. Two



additional factors are necessary. First, there has to be a certain level of progress. Without it, cultural factors could have counterproductive effects, as the bloody wars in Europe's past have shown. Second, there has to be either a shared threat or shared interests, without which states have no reason to cede their national sovereignty to a supranational authority. In the case of Europe it was Europe's comparative weakness against the Soviet Union and the United States after World War II.

Therefore I would like to conclude with a recommendation for this Round Table. We should contribute to developing or understanding cultures, and in so doing to peace, so as to prevent many thousands of victims every year.

I was trying to imagine what the historians of the future will write about our times and which features of it will remain in the collective imagination. Doing so, I could not find many characteristics differentiating the Middle East—an area stretching from Turkey to India—from the rest of the world.

Rather, the historians of the future would identify this time as one in which a number of small groups adopted a very similar posture: They all had the arrogance to believe that they alone possessed the Truth. These groups exist in all continents and countries from East to West and North to South and are thus not characteristic of the Middle East or the West. Due to globalization, these groups can now impact more people than ever before and that makes them one of the worst features of our present times.

A second element that will be identified as characteristic is the perception of many groups around the world that diversity is a threat. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many found it unbearable to live without an enemy and therefore defined diversity as the new enemy.

A third feature will be the success of public institutions. Public institutions from the Central Committee of the Communist Party in China to the US Congress have succeeded in producing collective decision-making processes. These very useful managerial tools for societies were set up in the modern era to create policies independent of the whims of a king. The founders and supporters of these institutions, though, wrongly believed that collective decision-making processes would also produce collective responsibility. This is a major error because real collective responsibility would prevent people from supporting collective decisions.

Finally, the historians of the future will not see this era as one marked by “the

Picco

Presentation

Our era is characterized
by fundamentalists ...

... enemies of diversity ...

... the success of public institutions ...

... asymmetrical power distribution ...



sole remaining superpower.” The era of single-superpower-domination might already have finished in the 1990s. The more relevant and lasting phenomenon is asymmetry. For thousands of years, the big were influencing the small. But in this era, the small are able to affect the large. Thus, one single individual out of six billion was at the origin of the huge HIV/AIDS pandemic. Small groups or individuals committing acts of terrorism can affect the entire world. Others have an effect on the global economy in a way that was inconceivable in the past—such as the 1997 Thai currency crisis that threatened the collapse of the world’s financial markets.

The Middle East’s characteristic feature is ...

But next to these common elements, the Middle East also has some special features. After I resigned from the United Nations in 1992, I received a call from Barzan al-Tikriti, a half-brother of Saddam Hussein. I wondered why he wanted to meet me since I no longer held an official position. He replied to me: “We know you and you know us. There is nothing you can resign from.” In an earlier instance, a prisoner in a Middle Eastern country had asked me for my word on a particular commitment. He wanted my promise not as a UN official, for I only work 8 hours a day for the UN. He wanted my word as Giandomenico Picco, because he said I was myself 24 hours a day.

... a high importance of the individual

The concept and significance of the individual differ a lot between Western and Middle Eastern societies. In a way, the individual is more important in the Middle East and the West has yet to understand this profound difference in meaning.

When discussing the Middle East, we often talk about religion. Instead of doing that, we should speak about the behavior of religious leaders or individuals, who claim to act in the name of religion. Their behavior, rather than any theological arguments, is of interest because it has a practical effect on reality. Theology, by contrast, is often based on dogmas and thus unchangeable. I would therefore suggest analyzing the actions of those who claim to act on behalf of a particular religious or cultural framework when we look at this region. Doing so could impact the conclusions we reach in debates and negotiations.

But let me finish with some questions: Are there children of a lesser God? Are there lives which are less worth? Is there a truth, which is truer than others?

Sajjadpour

When trying to apply all those very interesting ideas concerning the relationship between culture and politics to a specific region such as the Middle East, difficulties emerge. How can we define this region and what are its characteristics? How



is the Middle East connected to the international system? Mr. Nagheebzadeh laid out the conditions for regional integration and peace and Mr. Picco mentioned the special significance of individuals. I am curious to hear more opinions on that subject.

I would like to address the term responsibility, which Mr. Picco has mentioned. As someone who has been observing this region from the outside, I sometimes have the impression that the political elite only feels itself to be partially responsible and only for certain areas. But the situation can only improve if all those who live in the region recognize their common responsibility for it. Israel is one subject involved in this. Everyone in the Middle East must understand that Israel's right to exist has to be recognized and respected without any ifs, ands or buts.

A very positive sign is the initiative of the three foreign ministers from London, Paris, and Berlin, who have just opened up a process to suspend all uranium enrichment- and reprocessing activities and to introduce stricter IAEA safeguards.

Europe has learned from its terrible experiences, in which Germany in particular was a perpetrator, in the Holocaust. We have invented a region in which we carry common political responsibility. That doesn't mean that everyone must follow our example. But it does demonstrate that a new construct can be developed out of a terrible past, and then conflicts can be approached in a constructive way. The process that has now begun in Iran could lead to more wide-reaching developments. But a further constructive and positive development is only possible if the people understand their common responsibility for the region.

Today, we can define the Middle East as a multi-polar region, i.e. as an area with various centers of power. 15 years ago, by contrast, it was mainly shaped by the conflict between the two superpowers and players inside the region had little influence. These regional forces and their interrelationships are now much more important than even crucial actors such as the United States.

To my mind, the region represents a separate framework for politics, which interacts with the global political system. Within the region, policies and arguments refer more to specific historical experiences than to the general principles that international politics are based on. Here, every player, be it Iran, Israel, Iraq or others, has a rich culture and historical tradition. Because of that, they all consider themselves equal players. In this respect the situation is different to for ex-

Weisskirchen

Political elites in the Middle East lack responsibility ...

... while Europe has learned responsibility from its history

Fedorov

Today, the Middle East is a multipolar region ...

... which interacts as a separate framework with the global political system



Nations should develop specific models of democracy based on their cultures

ample the Balkans, where some countries are much younger than others. We should take this difference into consideration.

Another important question for our discussion concerns the “universal model of democracy.” I believe that attempts, such as the one by the current US Administration, to export the traditional model of democracy to the Middle East will create more problems than positive results. Every country in the region should have the chance to define its own model of democracy. Of course, they would need to respect some basic principles, but beyond that each country should create its own system of governance, based on its historical experience, religion and culture.

My final comment is about regional politics from a Russian perspective. Today, culture and the Russian language are the only remaining elements that link the former Soviet areas. Losing these cultural connections would therefore represent a great loss to Russia.

Paya
The Middle East’s problems have multiple causes

While I agree with most of what Mr. Picco said, I have one remark about the role of the individual. We should be careful not to use any one explanatory model to cover the entire region of the Middle East. Even though the region as a whole has suffered from a long history of despotism, depriving individuals of their freedom of expression, differences exist between Shiite and Sunni Islam, and Iran is culturally distinct from the rest of the region.

An interesting example illustrating the important role played by individuals in shaping the development of the region has recently emerged in Iran. The so-called Muslim Intellectuals are a rather powerful movement that consists of a new generation of thinkers who are more independent in their approaches. Contrary to their fathers and grandfathers, they are not only following the traditional teachings of religious leaders. Instead, they are using their intellect in a critical fashion and reach conclusions backed through available evidence. This intellectual development might influence other political and social spheres in the region.

Let me end with a response to Mr. Weisskirchen. In your analysis of the situation in the Middle East, you seem to forget the plight of those who have been denied a voice and who cannot articulate their viewpoints. Thus, you spoke about the need for accepting Israel’s right to existence, which even the Palestinians have no qualms about. But I have not heard from you any word in support of the Palestinians, who are being mistreated on a daily basis. To be just, we should side with them as well.



I agree.

If only all problems could be solved so quickly!

When trying to determine what differentiates the Middle East from other parts of the world, no single explanation is sufficient. Take for example the Palestinian-Israeli problem, where Mr. Paya is certainly not alone in thinking that Israel behaves in an unacceptable way. Even if that problem were solved, the Middle East would not change fundamentally. Others thought that overthrowing Saddam Hussein would solve the problems of the region. A recent UNDP report mainly written by Arab intellectuals suggested that economic underperformance was the region's fundamental problem. Yet others see the religious antagonism as a defining element for the region.

None of these factors on its own explains the Middle East's difficulties. Even solving a crucial problem like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will only allow easier progress on other issues, but it will not change things significantly.

I believe that we face two fundamental challenges concerning the region: to understand it and to organize change.

Let me tell you a joke about the importance of comprehending the region. Recently in Southern Iraq, a shepherd was herding a large number of sheep. A helicopter landed nearby and the stylish and professional foreigner who emerged asked the Iraqi shepherd: "Shepherd, if I tell you exactly how many sheep you have, would you give me one of your sheep?" The shepherd agreed and the foreigner opened a suitcase, sent signals to a satellite and analyzed the pictures he received. He then told the shepherd: "You have 3599 sheep." But when he took one of the animals and turned to fly back, the Iraqi shepherd said: "I have an offer. If I tell you exactly what your job is, will you give me back my animal?" The foreigner agreed and the Iraqi said: "You are a Neo-Conservative American expert on the Middle East." "How did you know that?"—"Because you have taken my dog, instead of a sheep."

The second challenge concerns change and where it should come from. Some outside forces assume that if you change the regime in Iraq, all governments in the region will be good. Others, like Mr. Weisskirchen, demand that everybody should recognize Israel. But even if that happened, essential problems like the fate

Weisskirchen

Sajjadpour

Bertram

There is no single explanation for the Middle East's peculiarity ...

... because a multitude of factors is responsible for the region's problems

Sajjadpour

Outside influence is useful only to support internal developments in the region

This region is one of the last without serious democratization or political transformation.

Hamzawy



of the Palestinian refugees around the world would not be solved. The imposition of change from the outside is therefore problematic and can contain errors. If changes come from within, by contrast, outsiders can play a positive role by supporting local players.

McFaul

Positive correlation between Islam and dictatorship?

Let me come back to the Neo-Conservative experts you joked about and see whether we can develop some arguments I could take back to them. While they recognize many of the reasons for the region's problems mentioned here, they would probably point to another factor, namely that there is a positive correlation between Islam and dictatorship in the Middle East. If you don't know anything about the region, this correlation—which is not the same as causation—is striking. How should our Neo-Conservative friends in Washington interpret this relationship between Islam and dictatorship? And why does the correlation break down in other regions, such as with Muslims living in India or next to me in Palo Alto, California?

Kraig

I see a fundamental problem in your argument. If you wanted to claim that there is a special relationship between Islam and dictatorship, then your statistic should be global. All you were really saying is that dictatorship correlates with the region of the Middle East, but not with Islam.

Manouchehri

To my mind, the problem stems from the way we name things. Your claim was that because we can observe that many countries with a Muslim population have dictators, there is a correlation between Islam and dictatorship. But that inference is not correct.

Dictators in Muslim countries are not often Islamic dictators

Rather, as I already emphasized, we should be aware that the political behavior of certain groups or individuals is not representative of a larger population. In reality, dictators in Muslim countries are often not Islamic dictators. In addition, the fact that many Muslim citizens protest against their own governments breaks any causal relationship between Islam and dictatorship.

Hamzawy

Why are Mideast countries installing, at best, sham democracies?

The question has more validity when it is raised in a different way. It is more interesting to ask why we have such an exceptional situation in the Middle East, than whether a correlation between Islam and dictatorship exists. Today, this region is one of the last without serious democratization or political transformation. Most countries in the Middle East claim they are reforming, but usually they are



only installing a sham of democracy. Egypt, Jordan and Morocco all only have a semblance of democracy.

When we reformulate the question in this way, we come closer to the real issue. The crucial factor is Arab political culture. Modern Arab political thought since the end of the 19th century did not create a consensus about what the ideal relationship between the state and society should look like. Democracy as a model is still contested, as is the model of an Islamic State implementing Sharia law. Neither could the public sphere establish such a consensus, because in a normative sense it does not exist in the Middle East. A public sphere requires free and democratic conditions, which are not present in the majority of Arab countries.

If we want to understand what is really taking place in the region, we have to be aware about how elites are instrumentalizing some concepts. What they say might sound good in Western, and particularly in American ears, but they mean something very different by it. An example is democracy. Democracy depends on the normative underpinnings of tolerance, pluralism and respect for differences, but the Jordanian and Egyptian governments have reduced this to a technical question of modernizing state institutions and introducing a limited elite change. When government officials tell Western ambassadors that they respect democracy, they are delighted, because they speak the same language. But what they say has no practical relevance.

But let me end on a more positive note. A promising development started in the late 1990s and gained momentum after the war in Iraq: Serious discussions are taking place within ruling elites and intellectual circles, seeking to reach a consensual understanding of what is the best political system. These debates are not yet socially relevant, but moderate Islamists do take up the concept of democracy in an authentic and serious manner. Some of them are really trying to reach a new understanding of politics and so are some other opposition movements and fractions of the ruling elites. A key question is therefore whether this development will gain momentum or not.

Let me just ask a question on Iran: What would have happened if the United States had not interfered and toppled Mossadeq in 1953? How far would we have progressed along the path of democracy in Iran, if the CIA had not organized the coup, which brought the Shah back and brought a lot of misery upon the county? So, how much is democracy due to culture and how much to history?

Arab elites use Western concepts to please the West

But moderate Islamists are opening up to democracy

Alnajjar



Atai

Not long ago, the US supported dictators in Latin America

Concerning the correlation between Islam and dictatorship seen by Mr. McFaul's conservative friends, I would like to ask whether their observation is timeless or only relevant in the present time? Not too long ago, in the 1970s and 80s, most dictators supported by the United States government were Christians in Latin America. At the same time, we have to remind ourselves that the Middle East is not the Islamic world. The population of Indonesia alone is almost as big as that of the Middle East. We should therefore be careful about drawing conclusions too quickly.

When does the West accept an Islamic country as a democracy?

My other question would be what the Neo- or Ultra-Conservatives consider to be a democracy? Is Indonesia seen as a democratic country? And what about Iran, where elections take place and where the democratic movement is powerful, even though struggling against existing dictatorial tendencies? Are these cases considered as non-democratic and thus used to support the correlation hypothesis?

Mohammadi

I wish to add only one comment: practically every dictatorship in the Middle East is a secular regime. Their relationship to Islam is purely traditional and cultural. They do not even claim to put Islam into practice. Therefore one cannot properly associate these countries with Islam.

Sajjadpour

It was good that we raised this issue because it shows that some of the Neo-Conservatives' ideas are based on the wrong assumptions. This is the case with the notion that the Middle East could be changed through the Iraqi gate. And it is true for the supposed correlation between dictatorship and Islam, which they seem to take for a fact. These ideas are based on the assumptions that there is only one version of Islam and one version of democracy. They also assume that the Middle East completely opposes democracy and that this has to be changed. Ironically, the Neo-Conservatives are now advocating regime change for the very dictators they had supported for a long time.

McFaul

If Islam is not the reason for dictatorships in the Middle East, then what is?

Two brief responses: First, it is by no means only the Neo-Conservatives in Western societies who believe this correlation is significant.

Secondly, if you think that this is oversimplified, as I do myself, I challenge everybody from the Middle East to articulate the arguments concerning other causal factors much more deliberately and openly. Otherwise, the hegemony of these ideas will remain unchallenged.



In order not to use the region only as a fig leaf, as we did with culture earlier in the discussion, I would like to go a little deeper into the question of how to define the Middle East. A region can be demarcated by its borders or by its essence.

With regard to borders, we tried to define the religious and political frontiers of Europe in a recent meeting in Barcelona. This proved to be a difficult task and my suggestion was that the borders of Europe are where people sink in order to get to it. South of Gibraltar and south of Sicily Africans sink trying to reach Europe illegally. Similarly, people from the Balkans who are smuggled by the Mafia perish east of Italy's region of Puglia on their way to Europe.

The frontiers of the Middle East have been defined by my colleague Zaky Laidy in Paris as the boundaries of an "espace de sens," an "area of meaning." Accordingly, a region is an area with a sufficient element of commonality and within which people who are fighting for hegemony use a language that does not really apply in other parts of the world.

But the Middle East can also be defined through its essence, and this way, Michael McFaul's provocation can be addressed. In French, essence means not only essence but also oil. And oil is key in determining the region. Oil is the region's main and almost only export. It makes it so important in international politics and gives rise to the paradox outlined in a recent UNDP report: How can a region with so much of the crucial commodity oil be in such a bad economic condition?

Oil is also to a large extent responsible for the creation of authoritarian regimes. Typically, a small group in power relies on a small and efficient army to control the oil resources. This provides the ruling group with so much influence that it does not need to negotiate with civil society. Take Algeria, Saudi Arabia and Iran: they all have important oil resources and a limited group of people with a tight grip on political power. In Algeria, it is the military, in Saudi Arabia the royal family and I don't need to explain who it is in Iran.

How do cultural factors like Islam play out in this context? The groups in power use religion to lend legitimacy to their regime. Religion has to compensate for the fact that the power elites are not chosen through elections and that there is no rotation of them. Even the former socialist countries, such as Syria, Libya and tomorrow Egypt are slowly turning into monarchies.

There is a misunderstanding in the dialog of cultures. The West seems to have forgotten how long it took to make democracy and human rights a reality. Yet it

Kepel

What is the Middle East?

An area of meaning with a common language?

Or the region of oil ...

... where elites control the resources ...

... and use religion to lend legitimacy to their regime?

Nagheebzadeh

Cultural processes cannot be realized through the use of force.

Nagheebzadeh



Even though it took centuries for democracy to develop in the West ...

... you want to force democracy upon us, disturbing internal developments

demands that developing countries immediately put these goals into practice. Let us consider for a moment, however, what concepts like freedom of opinion and of the press mean in countries where most people are illiterate. Whoever is serious about attaining these objectives must first help the Developing World, and especially the Middle East, to establish the conditions necessary for these kinds of reforms.

Furthermore, we also have a problem with American pressure to establish a “McWorld,” or simplified global culture. This leads to defensive reactions among other cultures and thus becomes a real obstacle to cultural dialog. In Iran, for example, there have been important transformation processes in culture and society. Yet American interference and support for these processes has only diverted and frustrated them from reaching their goals. Cultural processes cannot be realized through the use of force or threatening to do so. This is a key point of departure between politics and culture, even if we must regard politics in the context of its cultural systems.

Picco

Islamic countries demand more time for democratization ...

... but make fast progress in the realm of technology – how can that be?

I would be very careful about using the argument of time. Despite the fact that Western countries did take long to reach democracy and despite my usually very pro-Islamic stance, I would like to share my concerns about this with you.

The other side of the story is that this part of the world managed to jump many stages of development in other areas. Saudi leaders often state that 30 years ago Saudi Arabia was at the level of development of Europe in the Middle Ages, but that they are now using third generation GSM mobile phone technology. But if you can jump a thousand years of development in a few decades in one dimension of society, then logically you cannot claim that other areas of life will take just as long as in Europe. This is why I would urge you to be very careful about claiming that time cannot be beaten in some aspects of life. You can argue that it takes longer, but you have to make a better case.

Takeishi

The Middle East’s oil resources and the world economy

I would like to raise a point about economic development and the need for energy resources that is relevant for the relations of the Middle East to the wider world. Asia is a huge importer of oil: Japan imports 4.5 million barrels a day and that could soon be surpassed by China, because it is growing rapidly and its domestic production of oil is fixed at 3.25 million barrels per day. As a result, Japan and China are competing in a positive way over imports of oil and gas from Siberia / Russia.



At the same time, Europe is also worried about its high dependency on energy imports from Russia. China and Japan negotiating about the conditions for imports on Russia's eastern side and European countries on its western side means good co-operation and competition between East and West.

This creates good conditions for the world energy balance and the situation of the Middle East. The Middle East can not only benefit from China's rapid economic development by exporting oil, but also by investing and thereby participating more directly in the Asian economy.

From the perspective of the Middle East as an oil producing region, but also for the region's culture and its relation to international politics, the question of Iraq is central. I would appreciate if we could explore that issue more comprehensively.

My question is directed at our Iranian colleagues: Does an Iranian regional policy exist? If so, what is its framework? If not, is there a vision for a regional policy?

I would like to link the question of Iraq to our earlier provocative discussion about the conditions leading to dictatorship or democracy. It is important to remember that the greatest cause of authoritarianism is pre-existing authoritarianism. The established elites in an authoritarian political system are in an excellent position to use all the resources of the state to prolong their rule. By controlling the state's financial, organizational, military and police power and by playing off different ethnic groups against each other, they cement their position.

It is therefore too simplistic to point to any domestic cultural variable as an explanation. George Well for example believed that the Soviet Union lasted so long because Slavic culture was prone to authoritarianism. But I would say that this had more to do with the operations of the KGB.

For Iraq this means that if we want to avoid authoritarianism, we must prevent any one group from assuming as much power as Saddam Hussein held. Saddam modeled himself explicitly after Stalin and followed his techniques. And because authoritarianism perpetuates itself, we must make sure that no one group of people gains all the different levels and spheres of power in Iraq today.

We have presented enough arguments why it is historically wrong to establish a correlation between dictatorship and Islam. Such a conclusion is particularly ina-

Sajjadpour

von Maltzahn

Kraig

Dictatorships breed dictators ...

... this is a more important factor than cultural predispositions ...

... therefore we must avoid a concentration of power in Iraq

Tilgner



Colonialism and oil hindered modernization in the Middle East

adequate at a time when the region is undergoing serious processes of change. To me, the real question is why modernization has not been successful in this part of the world.

Some common factors in the region contribute to an explanation. First, the consequences of colonialism. Secondly oil, which makes it easy to finance dictatorship. Dictatorship, then, is not based on religion and we have to ask why reform-oriented political forces are so powerless in most Middle Eastern countries. Take Iran's President Khatami as an example. He was elected with overwhelming majority several years ago, but support for him is fading quickly now. The reformists might not win the next elections and the question is why.

In Iran as well as in the Gulf States and the Arab world in general, reformists have not been able to transform their societies into modern political systems. As a result, they are not getting their fair share of globalization. Because the societies have not adapted to the modern world, they cannot choose those elements of the Western world that would benefit them, but have to accept what is imposed on them.

Alnajjar

Before coming back to the question of Iraq, I would like to raise some more general and conceptual issues concerning culture and its influence on foreign policy decisions.

In my capacity as an independent expert on human rights in Somalia, I urged the President of Somalia to sign the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. He replied that he would not, because this was the only thing Somalia had in common with the United States—the only other state that is not a member of that convention. Is there a cultural reasoning behind the similarity between Somalia and the US in this matter?

Individuals have more influence on international politics than cultural factors

And I still find it problematic to explain American foreign policy through culture. Why for example did the United States join the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1994? This happened because the Undersecretary of State responsible for human rights had a personal background in a human rights NGO and convinced his government to join. Or take the International Criminal Court. The United States had signed its founding document. At the time, John Ashcroft had made a strong statement against the court and when he came to power, he withdrew the American signature.

I cannot see to what kind of culture these events should be related. The current dominance of Neo-Conservative forces is probably a passing stage in Ameri-

can history. They represent a part of American society that is, as Mr. Picco put it, similar to other small groups around the world. Osama bin Laden and some people in the Pentagon hold equally extreme views and the rest of the world suffers because of it.

For Iraq, tribal culture is a very important factor. Jordan and Iraq have institutionalized their tribal culture to a large degree. Thus, tribal councils have considerable rights, even in the legal process. The influence that tribes and clans have gained now during this period of a political vacuum in Iraq is incredible. Clans have turned into a state within the state, with institutional rights recognized by law whose acceptance is necessary to move anything forward. The Americans who come to Iraq unfortunately often do not understand this. This applies not only to politicians and army officers, but also to businesspeople. They created many problems and many of these stories were not reported in the media.

In this case, then, the issue of culture clearly needs to be addressed. But I am still puzzled as to where culture ends and where politics begins and what that teaches us for the future.

I agree with Mr. Picco's rendering of the cultural peculiarities of the Middle East and would like to take one of his points a bit further. Protecting human dignity is an exceedingly important issue for Mideast societies and political systems. We must ensure that it is guaranteed if we are going to develop durable solutions to the region's two main crisis areas, Palestine and Iraq.

Robbing the Palestinian people's land and then offering them a few billion dollars to give up their right of return represents a gross violation of human dignity. This kind of solution is therefore unacceptable in the Middle East. Furthermore, the arrogance of a small clique that believes itself in possession of the full and unadulterated truth will not help improve matters for any length of time. The people might permit themselves to be placated for a short while, but stable and long-term development would demand that the situation's entire complexity be taken into account. Oversimplifying the problem will not make it any more soluble.

Mr. Kraig's statement on Iraq, that no single group must be allowed to take power, is absolutely right. Yet chaos has to be avoided as well. The country is facing an extraordinary challenge. Success will depend largely on whether Iraq's ethnic realities are sufficiently respected, as Mr. Alnajjar has said. Yet the dignity of all Iraqis also has to be respected as well, otherwise there will be no stability or peace in the country.

Nevertheless, the US should try to understand Iraq's culture

Mohammadi

Protecting human dignity is an important issue for Mideast societies ...

... but the Palestinians' human rights are grossly violated



Polenz

Whatever we think about the war in Iraq,
we must now solve Iraq's problems

As a politician you have to deal with reality the way you find it. No matter what you think about the war in Iraq and the reasons which led to it, a new situation has been created and we have to react to it. Our common goal should be to try and avoid that the situation in Iraq deteriorates into something akin to Lebanon in the 1980s or Afghanistan. Because it is a tribal society, its new constitution will have to establish a balance among Shiites, Sunnites and Kurds and maybe within each of these groups as well. At the same time, power at the local as well as the central level should be transferred to Iraqi citizens as quickly as possible.

Can Iran's help in Iraq contribute
to improving US-Iranian relations?

An interesting open question is what the neighboring countries can and will contribute to the stabilization of Iraq without misusing the situation to promote their own interests. Should for example Turkish troops be sent to Iraq? Personally, I would see this as a big mistake. And how could and should Iran act, given that it has such a strong connection to the Shiite community in Iraq? Would a constructive Iranian policy towards Iraq be better received by the Americans than Iran's initiatives in the Afghan conflict? Iran took important steps to help stabilize Afghanistan and signaled this to the United States. I would appreciate finding out more about Iran's current policy or plans regarding Iraq.

Bertram

International pressure makes it hard
for Iran to play a constructive role in Iraq ...

When talking about Iranian contributions to stability in Iraq and in the region, we should keep Mr. Nagheebzadeh's arguments in mind. To me, it seems difficult for Iran to play a major stabilizing role, because it has been on the receiving end of international pressure. In addition, any attempt to influence the events in Iraq comes up against many unknown factors and difficult questions, such as whether or not one should do the job of the Americans? How long should one wait? What means does one have to influence stability?

Yet the agreement on nuclear issues that was just reached between Iran and the three European foreign ministers constitutes a genuine and profound contribution to regional stability and should be recognized as such. It seems implausible to me that Iran took this decision merely because of international pressure. Rather, I see it as an encouraging sign of an Iranian sense of responsibility for the wider region. I wonder whether our Iranian colleagues and friends agree with this interpretation.

Sajjadpour

Let me try to answer some of the questions raised concerning Iran's regional role. Generally, Iran's regional policy is indeed shaped by a strong sense of responsibility.

Iran took a very responsible position in Afghanistan, but in return we were branded as part of the “axis of evil”.

Sajjadpour

The process that led to the signing of the nuclear agreement was a very interesting and controversial one. The question was debated at all levels of Iranian society. In no other country was the entire text of the 93 + 2 Additional Protocol printed in popular newspapers and discussed in detail by ordinary people. The decision-making process was very elaborate, included various political committees and took all dimensions into account. Therefore the results reflect both the requirements of the regional and international political situation and the needs of Iran.

But it is also true that Iran is at the receiving end of international sanctions and pressure. Why Iran is so badly mistreated remains a puzzle to me. Mr. Polenz mentioned Iran’s policy in Afghanistan. It was a very responsible position, but in return we were branded as part of the “axis of evil.” Our policy towards Iraq is seen by most as similarly responsible, but we do not count on getting a responsible reaction.

Ultimately, though, Iran’s regional policy is not motivated by what we receive for it, but by our national interests. And regional stability is a crucial Iranian interest. If Iraq or Afghanistan descended into chaos, Iran would be among the first victims. In fact, we were a victim of the Taliban, who killed a group of our diplomats.

Iran’s interest in stability is reinforced by the fact that it borders on many different sub-regions, yet belongs to none of them. Iran is a neighbor, but not a part, to the Arab countries, the Indian subcontinent, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Turkey and Slavic or Christian Orthodox countries. Instability in any of these sub-regions would have a negative impact on Iran. Iran can and does play an important constructive role in this regard, even though it is sometimes impossible to incorporate all aspects into our regional security policy.

As an academic and critic of the Islamic Republic’s foreign policy I would like to comment on Mr. Sajjadpour’s remarks.

Iran’s regional policies are influenced by two main factors: culture and the country’s geopolitical situation. It has already been mentioned that our cultural bonds extend well beyond our national borders. For example, millions of Shi’ite pilgrims would travel to Iran if the border to Iraq would be opened. Also, thousands of Iranian intellectuals are inspired by Central Asian societies. This was the location of the Iranian Renaissance, the rediscovery of the wellsprings of Iranian culture. Culturally, then, we are involved in the entire region.

... and Iran’s responsible position in Afghanistan was not rewarded

Regional stability is a crucial Iranian interest

Nagheebzadeh

Iran has cultural ties to many bordering countries ...



... and the country's geopolitical interests demand military security

Within these coordinates, Iran should pursue its interests

Central concept of Iranian political tradition: justice

Historically, because of its central geopolitical location, Iran was always invaded when there was a power vacuum within the country. That is why a strong military position is so important to us. If the US does not like that, it would have to provide us with defense guarantees similar to those it has with Germany, Austria, or Switzerland. Then, Iran might even be willing to disband its army.

Within these coordinates, Iran's foreign policy is oriented, somewhat too strongly in my opinion, toward the Arab world. This is a waste of energy because there is little gain for us to be found in the Arabian deserts. We should simply make sure that the instability of this region does not spill over our borders.

As an independent nation state, we should instead act on the basis of our national interest, as Mr. Sajjadpour has stressed. Our regional interests lie rather in Central Asia. This is illustrated, again, by our close cultural ties. The capitals of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, Astana and Ashkhabad, both have Persian names. The name Baghdad also has a Persian root, "bag," which was one of the early Iranian gods. This alone binds us with the region.

In conclusion, I'd like to comment on a linguistic peculiarity of Iranian political culture. The central concept in our political tradition is "justice" in its Platonic sense, i.e. that each person be given a certain position within society. In the West, on the other hand, the concept of liberty plays a much greater role. In the Iranian context, liberty is often equated with licentiousness. That is why Western calls for more liberty in Iran are often misunderstood.

If these kinds of differences in meaning would be given more respect, the dialog of cultures would lead to a better mutual understanding. Otherwise, it can lead to harsh reactions and resistance especially among members of ancient and rich cultures such as Iran, China, and Japan.

Kepel

If I understood you correctly, Iran is surrounded by 15 threatening neighbors, from locust eating Arabs to rogue states. These arguments make a good case for either defensive Iranian nuclear weapons or for an alliance with a major country like the United States that will guarantee Iran's security. How would you respond to that?

Sajjadpour

You misunderstood. We do not have 15 threatening, but 15 different neighbors. Still, the question of how to create security for Iran is delicate and is debated with a lot of sophistication. An important position is that Iran needs a sufficient de-



fense capability to repel any attack, but that our security mostly comes from diplomatic interactions.

Mr. Nagheebzadeh, you said that Iran's interests are defined by culture and geopolitics and that they focus on Central Asia. But where does that leave your economic interests? Is the question of where to sell your commodities not a major interest of this country? Economic interactions are crucial for security considerations. And the economy is a central concern and interest of the people, who have a right to benefit from the income derived from your national wealth and resources.

The countries which purchase Iranian products, however, are either in the Far East or in Europe. Central Asia may be an important partner on the cultural level, but I thought that a responsible government would also be concerned about using the available resources to create economic opportunities for the population. Iran could play a tremendous role in that respect. But one should keep in mind that your neighbors are not important trading partners because they either produce the same commodities as Iran or they do not need them.

I agree entirely that the economy is a central interest of the country. But at the moment one of our major markets is Iraq and another is Afghanistan.

Currently, the Middle East is at the heart of world politics and security. Building a regional security system, however, is not just a political or economic issue. For all countries of the region, security is closely linked to cultural factors.

To reach permanent security in the Middle East, we must recognize and address many cultural tensions that exist in the region. Among these are the tensions between traditionalism and modernism, cultural nationalism and cultural globalization or traditional and secular interpretations of religion. Tribal conflicts in countries like Iraq, Afghanistan and some parts of Iran also create important dynamics. Even the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has a cultural problem at its heart. For Palestinians and many people who sympathize with them, Israel has become a symbol of violence and aggression. To create a peaceful solution, Israel and its supporters therefore have to address the mindsets of the people in the Middle East.

Finally, a comment on Iran. We cannot compare the modernization process of Iran with that of other countries in the region. In Iran, modernization has not failed. We can observe important progress for example in terms of democracy and

Picco

Iran must pursue its economic interests

Sajjadpour

Salimi

Modernization is more successful in Iran than in other Middle East countries



creating a strong civil society. As so often with processes of change, we do encounter some difficulties. While we must try and solve them, they are not signs of failure.

Reissner

Why doesn't Iran present its position on Iraq more openly?

Concerning Iran's policy on Iraq, I noticed that Iranian statements are often very vague. A typical reply to the question of what its policy was, is evasive and relies on very general principles, such as that the UN should assume control. But there is no real answer on how to achieve this. It also took me repeated questions to find out that Iran was one of the first countries to recognize the interim regime in Iraq and that the Iranian Ministry of Economics now has a special department for trade with Iraq. Of course, there are problems with pilgrims killed at the border by mines and similar issues, but things are moving forward. I wonder why Iran does not present its position and actions more openly.

In Iraq, Iran and Europe could act together

I agree with my Iranian colleagues that one should not put too much hope on being rewarded for "good behavior" in Iraq, just as this was not rewarded in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, it remains important that Iran articulates its concrete interests and actions clearly. Maybe Iran could point out opportunities for joint activities in Iraq that would have a positive impact. This might also help to dissipate the feeling of both Europeans and Iranians of just being objects rather than active subjects in international politics.

But Europe needs a vision for its policy towards the Middle East ...

Concerning international policies towards the Middle East and the question of whether and how Iran should be subject to pressures and demands, I would like to focus on the European position. I am really missing a vision for a European policy towards the Middle East and Europe's role in Iran. I do not believe, as was claimed here, that a better definition of the region would help much in defining our policy. Europe is always part of the international policy in the Middle East and definitions can be very artificial and deliberate.

... and should recognize positive trends

Our policy should look for trends, rather than just demand results from our partners in the Middle East. This applies not only to the big issue of democracy, but also for example to the very difficult question of recognizing Israel. All too often, our "dialog" is reduced to a "you have to." But it would be much more fruitful to look at the practical details of Iran's policy towards Israel. Thus, the leader of the Islamic Republic recently received King Abdullah of Jordan, a country that has a peace agreement with Israel. We should not read too much into this move, but we should recognize it as an interesting signal and have an open eye for these things.



We are now exclusively discussing local and regional politics. While this is a fascinating subject, this meeting does not seem the right place to do so. We should rather try to focus on cultural differences and the relationship between culture and politics within the region.

Iran now has a window of opportunity. The agreement that was concluded on the 21st of October 2003 between the three European foreign ministers and the Iranian government contains among others the following provision: Once all specified concerns of the international community are fully resolved, Iran will gain easier access to modern technology and other imports. This is an unprecedented opportunity for Iran to start a process of cooperation. Complying with the stipulations on nuclear weapons would avoid similar developments to Iraq and could be turned to Iran's advantage.

On European policy towards Iran, a common EU position was defined in 1998. At its core is support for President Khatami, but the momentum of his reformist movement could be lost in the next elections in February 2004. It might therefore be one of the last possibilities to initiate cooperation between reform-oriented politicians in Iran and the European Union.

As Mr. Reissner criticized Europe, I will criticize some aspects of Iran's policy that have to do with the relation between culture and politics.

We have been speaking about the lack of democracy in the Middle East and it is true that there are few democratic countries between Morocco and the Indian subcontinent. But as my former instructor Prof. Nagheebzadeh mentioned, it would not be the right way to impose democracy from without.

This is particularly the case since we have some doubts about the quality of democracy in Europe. The last Bergedorf Round Table in Florence dealt with democracy in Europe. In the course of it, we did not only criticize what the West did to Mossadeq in Teheran, but also how France acted in Algeria. The policy of the EU after the election of Haider in Austria was seen as problematic, as was the prospect of a possible EU reaction if Turkey became an EU member and freely and democratically elected an Islamist government.

But we also have to look at problems within the region of the Middle East. Mr. Picco mentioned that the individual occupies a very dominant place in our mindset. In politics, this often leads to people expecting a single heroic individual to provide the solution. Our President Mr. Khatami warned people not to look for a

Alnajjar

Weisskirchen

The European-Iranian agreement on nuclear technology provides opportunities

Jafari

Those who criticize the lack of democracy in the Middle East ...

... must not ignore the flaws of Western democracies

But the Middle East does have problems, e.g. the focus on heroic individuals



hero and reminded them that each person is his own hero; nobody will come from outer space to solve your problems. But people still do search for heroes, including in Iraq. That is why many are satisfied with authoritarian governments.

Let me finally say that Europe as well has a window of opportunity. The European track record in supporting democracy in Iran is not very good. As a consequence, its policies did not yield good results when they used a “you have to,” as Mr. Reissner put it. And if our help in securing the stability of Afghanistan was rewarded by branding us as part of the “axis of evil,” Europe now has a chance to react differently to our engagement in Iraq.

Atai

Oil and Israel are responsible for the Middle East’s problems

We were speaking about the root-cause of the Middle East’s problems. I do not believe that it is culture. The real roots of the problem are oil and Israel. Culture is only the way these challenges and frustrations manifest themselves. Both the Western world and the Middle East should try to understand and appreciate how other problems can trigger cultural and religious responses.

Iran’s policy for Central Asia now focuses on economic cooperation

Then a brief comment on Ambassador Maltzahn’s question concerning Iran’s regional policy. Immediately after the break-up of the Soviet Union, Iran’s policies towards Central Asia focused on cultural aspects. Policy-makers here, as everyone else, approached the post-Soviet era slightly naively. They thought that these countries would have a great affinity to Iran or emulate its political system because they were Muslims and shared our past. But this did not happen and as the foreign ministry realized this, its policy changed. Now, the cornerstones of our policy are economic cooperation and an attempt to understand the sensitivities of Russia relating to our neighbors.

Finally, we would very much like to see the common European policy towards the Middle East that Mr. Reissner demanded. That would be a welcome change to the past fifty years, when there was no united European policy. Relations have mainly been bilateral, with each country pursuing its own economic and political interests and most often following US actions or proposals.

Löning

I would like to once again take up some of the questions we’ve heard, because I don’t think they’ve been answered adequately.

First, on Mr. McFaul’s provocative presentation, in which he established a correlation between faith and dictatorship. By itself, this relationship is not relevant to our debate. More important, surely, is that this region includes many countries where the degree of liberty is not particularly high and where there is



only limited respect for human rights. We have already spoken about the dignity of people in the Palestinian territories and Iraq. We should do the same for people in other countries in the region, such as Saudi Arabia.

I would like to know why this debate has been conducted so defensively. Our topic is not meant as an attack. The question is, simply put, why are there so few impulses for reform coming out of these countries? Why don't leaders in the region acknowledge that they have to address the problem in their own interest, and not just on behalf of someone else? This recognition would also put relations with Europe on a much firmer footing.

Mr. Reissner also raised an essential point. I am always criticizing the German government for failing to define its interests clearly enough, and that there is no public debate over our national interest. This also applies to all other Europeans. Why can't we openly articulate our primary interests regarding the Middle East? It is no secret that we have security, economic, and energy-related interests in this region. Therefore, they should be laid down on the table. And that is why I'd be interested to know about the attitude of the Iranian colleagues. Would a more open dialog over more concrete topics be helpful? Could that also, in your opinion, move our relations forward and perhaps facilitate a bigger dialog?

To conclude, I have one short question. Why are relations between Iran and Israel so difficult? I can understand Israel's stance toward its direct neighbors, such as Syria, but not Iran. I'd be very grateful if you could enlighten me on this matter.

Let me just restate my earlier question: Why are the reformist movements in Iran and in other states in the region facing a set-back? These dynamics are difficult to understand for an outsider.

Let me try to answer your questions with respect to Iran. You have been less than charitable with President Khatami's reform program. A significant achievement of the reformists is that a number of crucial concepts introduced by them are now being used in the common social and political discourse. Even the hard-liners are now using concepts such as human rights, women's rights, public participation, public accountability, civil society and the rule of law. These ideas used to be completely alien to conservative hard-liners, but they have come to employ them in the same way as the reformers.

One of the main weaknesses of the reformists is that they failed to establish

Why are there so few impulses for reform coming out of the Middle East ...

... and why does Europe not define its interests in the Middle East more clearly?

Tilgner

Why are reformers in Iran and in other states in the region losing support?

Paya

Because the reformers have introduced democratic concepts in political discourse ...

Had the Europeans supported Mr. Khatami's reform program more generously, the result would have been very different.

Paya



... but have failed to establish themselves institutionally ...

themselves institutionally. As individuals they might be articulate and able to promulgate some powerful views, but they do not enjoy institutional support. One of the reasons for this, which Mr. Sajjadpour and Mr. Naghebzadeh already alluded to, is the fact that Iranians suffer from a siege mentality. Historically, Iran has been suffering from a multitude of real threats. The conservative hard-liners use this continuing threat perception to consolidate their position. Unfortunately, the West failed to support the reformers on this critical issue.

... partly because the West did not support them sufficiently

Iranians have high esteem for themselves. They believe they can make a meaningful contribution to world civilization and world peace and stability. The reformists expected that their good will would be reciprocated by the Western countries, but this was not the case. This meant that they had no arguments to oppose the conservatives who were playing on the siege mentality by saying that current policies were leading Iran to disaster. Had the Europeans supported Mr. Khatami's reform program more generously, the result would have been very different.

Some cynics say that the West is not really interested in spreading democracy to the region, because it benefits from maintaining the status quo. But it is not too late. If today the West offered something tangible, meaningful and significant in support of the reform programs, we could use it to show the conservatives that our projects have borne fruit. That would weaken their argument that the reforms result in a sell-out of the country. For our internal debate, then, a tangible result on the table would be very important.

Leonard

The reformers demand intervention by the West, but at the same time reject it ...

What you have just described seems like a Catch 22 situation: On the one hand, countries do not want to be objectified and reject interference from the West. At the same time, though, you are asking for tangible support. So while you are attacking the principle of conditionality, you are calling for it.

... because it does not respect their cultural identity

Another dilemma is that framing the problem in cultural terms indicates that people should not interfere. We used to say that patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel, but culture might be the one after that. If a problem is defined as a cultural one, this implies first that nobody should intervene, because "this is our culture," and secondly that it cannot be changed anyway, because culture has a certain rigidity about it.

It would be interesting for both reasons to hear what an ideal European policy should look like more concretely and how Europeans could intervene without being imperial.



You should reconsider your assumptions. Important groups in Iran, like the reform movement and others advocating educational and reformist processes, do not look for the causes of our problems in the West. Rather, we seek to identify the internal conditions responsible for any problems. This new, self-critical attitude is among others reflected in the title of a book published recently in Iran: “How we became who we are.”

Human dignity, Mr. Löning, also plays an important part in Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and all other societies in the region. The West, on the other hand, often sacrifices people’s dignity in allied countries on the altar of its political and economic interests. On the subject of human rights, then, we have demands to make of the West rather than vice-versa.

There is an expression in Egypt, “take and demand more.” It means that one is never satisfied with what has been accomplished, and always wants more. I sometimes get the feeling that some states base their foreign policies on this motto. Give them an inch, they take a mile and keep doing so.

In Iran, democratization did not even begin until the Islamic revolution. Before then, people had absolutely no possibility of participation. After the revolution, democracy developed unevenly in several phases. Some restrictions were necessary during the war with Iraq. In general, however, democracy progressed, and this process will continue.

This is not the policy of one or the other political party in Iran, but a process supported by the entire political establishment. One might say that a particularly large number of people in a certain party welcome this process while another group rejects it, yet altogether the entire system recognizes the necessity of continued democratization. The reformers will not succeed in completely transforming the system. Yet if they want to contribute to strengthening civil society and democratization, then this process will continue, provided that we treat the present situation reasonably and constructively.

Finally I’d like to comment on Iraq. We have forgotten a fundamental aspect of the problem, namely the Kurdish question. Not only do the Shi’ites feel closer to Iran than to any other state in the region; so do the Kurds, and for three reasons: We belong to the same race, because Kurds also consider themselves Aryans. We are related linguistically, because Kurdish is a Persian dialect. And finally, we share many traditions and customs.

As for Iran’s position toward Iraq, it has a unique significance. To understand

Sajjadpour

There are self-critical tendencies in Iran

Mohammadi

Even though the West has severe shortcomings in the area of human rights ...

... Western governments keep on pressing the Middle East to democratize



it better one must precisely analyze the behavior of Iran's friends in Iraq. In a situation in which we cannot say some things more outspokenly, this kind of analysis would reveal much about Iranian policy towards Iraq.

Kraig

To foster democratization from outside ...

One of the questions that have been going around the table is what Europe and the US can do to encourage the growth of a liberal and democratic political culture without being overly imperial. In a task force on US national security strategy, initiated by the Stanley Foundation, we tried to find an answer to the difficult questions of what it means to support democracy and whether such ingrained cultural and domestic variables can really be changed.

... the West should restrict itself to supporting indigenous processes of liberalization

To me, the only satisfactory solution is to identify nations with an ongoing indigenous process of liberalization and to encourage and support this process as much as possible within a given foreign policy interest. At least one should try to avoid smothering a development that is already underway. The United States often does exactly the opposite. Thus, Iran shows the most positive signs of a political opening in the region. If we followed that logic, the US would therefore support Iran much more or at least not put an embargo on it and the Conaco oil deal in the mid 1990s would probably have come through.

The Central Asian states, including Pakistan, by contrast, show probably the worst trends in that regard. But some of these countries are very close American allies; we have military bases there and Bush recently called Pervez Musharraf a close friend and ally.

McFaul

What kind of reward did Iran expect for its actions in Afghanistan?

During this discussion, I heard at least three times the argument that Iran was not "rewarded" for its actions in Afghanistan or Iraq. But I wonder, what is the reward you are looking for?

Sajjadpour

We did not want anything in particular. But as a reaction to our constructive engagement, we were branded as part of the "axis of evil." It is this asymmetry between our actions and the labeling we received that we object to.

McFaul

Was fighting Iran's enemies, the Taliban and Saddam, not enough of a reward?

If one were provocative, one could say that fighting the Taliban and Saddam Hussein—two major enemies of Iran—was enough of a reward.

But on a more serious note, I believe that your understanding of American policy needs to be updated. The "axis of evil speech" is dead. It no longer defines American foreign policy; it was only a passing moment in time. That policy on



Iran was devised by a group called “the Vulcans,” who advised George W. Bush during his election campaign. It is lead by Condoleezza Rice, a colleague from Stanford. During the 1990s, we argued about America’s policy towards Iran. She proposed a policy defined by two “red lines”: nuclear weapons and support for Hezbollah. This means that American policy towards Iran would not change until those two problems were solved and she even indicated that force could be used in order to achieve that—which is not a credible position. We formulated our response in an article called “Blurred Vision.” In it, we criticize the Republican stance on Iran, because simply defining “red lines” does not amount to a policy.

Nevertheless, Iran could react differently: With the agreement on nuclear weapons reached only a few days ago, one of those “red lines” has been addressed. Somebody told me that Iran’s policy on Palestine and Israel was peripheral to its national interest. If that is true, Iran could clarify its relationship with Hezbollah and thereby compel the United States to adopt a real policy. Taking the other “red line” off the table would give those people within the current Administration who want a different approach to Iran a chance.

The “axis of evil speech,” by contrast, seems an excuse not only for the Bush Administration not to have a policy towards Iran, but also for Iran not to have a constructive policy towards the United States.

Mr. McFaul and Mr. Löning raised the question whether Islamic culture and democracy conflict. A research project by Prof. Ronald Inglehart has analyzed cultural, economic and political values in different countries, including democratic values in the Islamic world. Interestingly, the answers given on democracy in the Middle East do not differ much from many Western countries. You should therefore keep in mind that societies in the Middle East are not against democratically elected governments.

To me, the question of democracy in the Middle East is a legitimate one, and we should not try to avoid it. Let me try to connect various themes of our discussion to address why the Middle East is an exception in world politics.

The overthrow of Saddam Hussein would have presented a fantastic chance to address one major issue: the legacy of the modern authoritarian nation state in the Arab world. In this Round Table, oil, Israel and the failure to modernize were given as reasons for the lack of democracy. But the nation state played a much more central role in hampering processes of democratization. This has nothing to

Iranian concessions might improve relations with the US

Ketabi

Societies in the Middle East support democracy

Hamzawy

Problematic role of the state in Arab political culture



The West must raise questions of human rights in a more direct manner

do with Islam, as nation states are secular, but with Arab political culture. The war in Iraq would have been an opportunity to discuss the role of the state, its dominance over civil society and where things went wrong. Instead, we are preoccupied with criticizing the American policy in Iraq. Debating what many see as America's failed policy in Iraq has become an excuse for not analyzing the problems of our nation states.

You have asked how Europe and the West more generally should behave with respect to the Arab world. Arab intellectuals, be they liberals, Islamists or pan-Arabs, perceive American policy as representative of "Western" policy. That, in turn, is seen as purely functional behavior trying to defend its own interests. As a result, they prefer cooperating with other Arab states, rather than Europe or the US. To counteract this perception, the West should give its policies more normative content. Questions of human rights, democracy and pluralism should be raised in a much more direct manner. Several Arab governments have very negative records on human rights and democracy, but the West hesitates to address this issue seriously out of strategic interests. Western governments should be more open and direct in criticizing these shortcomings.

Finally, Arab political culture really lacks what I would call "structuring issues." Since the 1920s, we have been discussing the relationship between Islam and politics, but we are not reaching any consensual solutions. This is also because we have no central theme that could structure our public debates. If Europe focused on one such issue, such as good governance, this could be very helpful for us. But it is important that this issue would not be reduced to a technical question, if it is to have a tangible effect.

Picco
Al-Jazeera has changed the political culture of the Middle East

An important cultural and political factor for the Middle East as a region that we have not addressed sufficiently is the so-called Al-Jazeera phenomenon. To have a television network that spans the entire Middle East is a new development which could have tremendous effects on the cultural, social and political developments in this region. Could this be a tool to help us understand not only the region's past, but its future? Maybe those who come from this region could enlighten us on the significance of this new development.

The Middle East is a politically and culturally more homogeneous region ...

Then, we often seem to assume that the Middle East is a socially, politically and culturally homogeneous region. This does not correspond to reality. Take the very specific, but highly relevant example of different political alignments. On various issues, unexpected alliances have emerged, such as between Iran and Ar-

menia, Iran and India or Israel and Turkey. These issue-specific relationships that have developed in the region are as diverse as Qatar is different from Syria. To me, this diversity is very positive. It demonstrates that neither religion nor traditional culture is sufficient to determine the policies of a country. In addition, ideologies, culture and religion change over time and that must also be taken into account when speaking about the influence of culture on politics.

My last comment concerns the economic dimension of the region and Iraq. The entire region of the Middle East, from Iran through Morocco, has received an annual average of 3-4 billion dollars in foreign direct investment over the last decade. Iraq, by comparison, has just received a pledge of 33 billion dollars over several years in reconstruction aid by the Madrid donor conference. These figures say much about the relevance of Iraq. But they also dissipate the myth that the region receives huge amounts of money because it has oil. Compared to other regions, the money going to the Middle East is peanuts. The collective imagination in both the East and the West is that the Middle East swims in money. But these numbers should tell you that we have to be more realistic about the region.

In the course of our discussion we have shifted more and more away from culture and towards political and social psychology. I'd like to give some examples of this from Iran that can be applied to other countries in the region as well.

One very important factor is the often unconscious sense among people in all the region's states of being threatened by the West. Iran's relations with the West were profoundly influenced by the Russian-Iranian wars early in the 19th century. At the time, Iran sought Napoleon's support. He, however, left the Iranians to their fate and allied himself with Russia. These events have remained entrenched in the Iranian people's collective political consciousness.

I recently produced a study on the "Sociology of Neutrality and the Psychology of Isolationism in the History of Iranian Diplomacy," commissioned by the foreign ministry. In contrast to the expectations of my clients, I reached the conclusion that Iranian history exhibits a continuity of mistrusting foreign countries, from Nasereddin Shah in the 19th century through Reza Shah and the Pahlavi dynasty to the Islamic Revolution.

It would be a great service to everyone if you could help clear away this mistrust. Mr. Mohammadi described some states as insatiable. I do not wish to accuse anyone of that, but the conduct of the United States bears some of its hallmarks. In our neighborhood, for example, criticism of Saddam Hussein mounted until he

... and less wealthy than most people believe

Nagheebzadeh

Iran feels threatened by the West

To clear away this mistrust ...



... the West must learn some of
Iran's customs and traditions

was toppled from power. The Palestinians were brought to the negotiating table then sent home empty handed. Easing this fundamental anxiety would certainly invigorate the intercultural dialog.

In addition, the West must learn some of our customs and traditions. I have already referred to the significance of justice as a concept in Iranian political culture. Through our contact with the West we have embraced the concept of liberty instead. Yet it is a mistake to take something away from the people and replace it with something else. The struggle between justice and liberty has been going on for at least 100 years and will require many more to be brought to an end.

Finally, getting to know each other is very important. For us intellectuals, the blond, blue-eyed Europeans are like brothers and each meeting a pleasure. Yet the average citizen does not know you or your culture and therefore feels threatened. These feelings have to be respected.

Traditions play an important role in practically every society in the region. They have deep roots and are slow to develop. Also, there are the already-mentioned threat perceptions that can also be expressed through aggression. When a country feels threatened it goes on the attack if it is strong, or, if it is weak, it closes itself off. This reaction can be observed throughout the region.

Bertram

A number of comments made are relevant for the next session on the future perspectives of culture and international politics and you might want to keep them in mind.

Mr. Hamzawy has mentioned the importance of nation states, and our omission of nationalism as one of the most powerful forces in the region is striking. In Iran, Iraq and probably many other societies, nationalism is on the rise and we have to find ways to cope with that.

Then, Mr. Nagheebzadeh mentioned regional structures at the outset. Which regional structures are compatible with the trends we observe could be another question worth pursuing.

Finally, a range of people have mentioned Iraq. Could this be an area in which a new degree of cooperation on concrete issues might develop? When treating that question, we have to consider the dual problem that both Iranians and Europeans find it difficult to think of themselves as active powers in the region.

Sajjadpour

My recapitulation of this interesting discussion consists of three "A"s, three "B"s and three "C"s.



The three “A”s are the Assumptions, which both the region and the West should reexamine. Then Aspirations, which are an essential part of human dignity. When discussing the Middle East, we should therefore pay attention to the democratic aspirations of the region. Finally, Approaches. Individuals, societies and the international community need to revisit their practical approaches to the region.

The first “B” are Borders. The borders of this region are multi-dimensional and it is both difficult and important to define them. Is oil, religion, history or culture the defining characteristic? Secondly, Boredom. We are all bored of the existing difficulties, be it the Arab/Israeli conflict, the lack of democracy in the region or the way the Middle East is blamed for all the problems of international society. Thirdly, Broadening the scope. To make progress, we need to broaden the scope of our visions.

My three “C”s are all Culture. First, despite all debates, culture remains a contested concept. Secondly, culture is multi-dimensional and Iran for example has a pre-Islamic, an Islamic and maybe a modern, secular culture. Finally, culture can be shaped and constructed. This is crucial to keep in mind, for dialog can construct a better culture.

We have to overcome prejudices ...

... and clearly define our political concepts ...

... to construct a better culture in a dialog

III. What's Ahead?—Perspectives for the Future

Bertram

Before we start, I would like to inform you about a rocket attack on the hotel in Baghdad where US Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz was staying. CNN reported that about ten rockets hit the hotel at 6.00 a.m., but Mr. Wolfowitz has escaped unhurt. Yesterday, an American Black Hawk helicopter was downed near Tikrit shortly after Mr. Wolfowitz had left the city by helicopter.

Sajjadpour

Today's discussion will focus on the future of the relationship between culture and international politics. I am glad that Ms. Moshirzadeh and Mr. McFaul have accepted to open our session.

Moshirzadeh

Not only statesmen shape world politics, so does culture

In the name of God.

Culture entered the focus of international relations theory only about 20 years ago. The dominance of realist ideas and security issues was challenged by the "English School" focusing on the concept of an international society. Its protagonists pointed out that not only statesmen striving for power shape world politics, but also culturally determined sets of understandings and norms. This criticism was originally aimed at the Euro-centeredness of the international system. But it turned out to call into question the very principles of the Westphalian system of states.

Since then, the concepts of identity politics, cultural politics and politics of difference have been applied to international relations. This direction of thought certainly gained momentum through the simultaneous fragmentation and growing connectedness of cultures brought about by globalization. As a result, many theorists today emphasize the impact of culture, perceptions and identities on world politics.

Perspectives on culture in the theory of international relations

The effect of culture on security and peace in international relations is conceptualized mainly through the notions of the "self," the "other" and "difference." There are two main perspectives, each with a number of subcategories, with radically different implications for the chances of cooperation and peace. The first approach does not tolerate cultural differences and sees them as the source of disorder and violence, as the chief obstacle to peace and security. Adherents of this view believe that only creating worldwide cultural homogeneity will render international peace possible.

Cultural homogenization leading to lasting peace ...

I would like to distinguish three subcategories of the difference intolerant approach: Accommodationists believe that only the assimilation of the other to the self can provide a foundation for peace. Those accommodationists who are



optimistic about modernity see a world culture emerging that will be based on the universal norms of modern rationality. Extreme versions of the “democratic peace” or the “end of history” are examples for that strand. From this perspective, globalization is a necessary process of homogenization leading to lasting peace.

Confrontationists also emphasize that differences are an obstacle to peace, but they deny the possibility of assimilation. Examples for this attitude include the so-called “Jihad vs. McWorld,” as well as those who see a “Clash of Civilizations” as inevitable. Proponents of this view tend to focus on the conflict between modern and non-modern cultures and all too often assume either implicitly or explicitly their own superiority. Peace between these opposing sides is seen as impossible and, if taken to its logical extreme, a unified world can only emerge through the elimination of the other.

Separatists or isolationists see impenetrable walls between the self and the other as the best way to preserve cultural identity and thus peace and security. They advocate neither assimilation nor elimination of the other, but protection of the self through isolation. Taking into account the interdependencies of today’s globalized world, this approach might seem out of touch with reality. Nevertheless, it is popular among various groups, including some in Iran.

The second main perspective on how culture affects international relations, the difference tolerant approach, sees cultural differences not as an obstacle, but as an asset. It celebrates difference because diversity enriches human culture. There are two currents of this approach:

Cultural relativists believe that each culture is a closed world attributing meaning to things in a way incommensurable with other cultures. There are no doors connecting the separate worlds. Neither can there be dialog between cultures, nor can anyone compare their validity or the objective truth of their claims. While this approach excludes the possibility of the formation of a global human community, it leads at least to tolerance towards others.

Cultural dialogists, by contrast, do not only see different cultures as equally valid, but believe that a fair, balanced dialog among them is possible. Human beings have a common basis for communication and mutual understanding. Dialogists believe that universal values exist, but—even if they see their own cultural values as universally valid—do not think that any single culture has a monopoly for determining what these values are. The way to determine a common basis is through dialog free from power and violence, in which all sides are open to the arguments of the others. Dialog is possible as cultures are not seen as incommensurable, but as constituting a common life world. While proponents of this ap-

... or conflict resulting in the victory of one culture ...

... or isolation as a means of ensuring peace between different cultures?

Cultural diversity: coexistence of incommensurable worlds ...

... or dialog of cultures?



Powerful groups oppose the
dialog of civilizations

proach criticize many features of the existing system, they do not advocate violent solutions, but believe that dialog will pave the way for a more balanced, justice-oriented political order. The institutionalization of dialog will lead to persisting peace.

It seems to me that many international relations theorists, intellectuals and domestic publics are ready to accept and promote cultural pluralism. But this is opposed by some powerful groups, both among the ruling elites of the most advanced countries and various movements across the world. These represent the biggest challenge for the dialog of civilizations and a future world order based on respect for others and their differences.

McFaul

I would like to think about the future “out of the box” and consider what situation we could face in 50 years or more. Underlying my reflections is the assumption that the future can be a better world. This admittedly more normative than analytical approach will, I hope, stimulate our discussion.

There are universal “goods” and “bads”
going beyond cultural specifics ...

My hypothesis is that there are some minimal universal values going beyond cultural specifics, “universal goods” as well as “universal bads,” and that the future will bring a progressive realization of the “goods” and elimination of the “bads.” To be sure, the acceptance of norms and cultural practices in the international system is deeply intertwined with the distribution of power and material interest. But cultural concepts brought about by the powerful can acquire a force of their own. Thus, they can lead to progress in the international system.

... and the “universal good” will replace
the “universal bad”. As slavery ...

Let me try to substantiate this with three examples of “universal bads” that either have ceased or will soon cease to be acceptable concepts for organizing society. First, slavery. For thousands of years, slavery was a legitimate cultural practice based on the normative claim that some individuals are better than others. The so-called “Southern culture” still existing in the US was in many ways associated with this practice. But even though there still is slavery in the world, I challenge anybody who would try to defend slavery as a value. This was considered a legitimate position 200 years ago, but it no longer is.

... and colonialism have disappeared ...

The same is true for colonialism, which for thousands of years had been a central concept for organizing the international system. Only 100 years ago, many scholars wrote large papers on its normative value. Today, colonialism still exists. Some might call my country’s strategy for the Middle East neo-colonialist. But as a norm, colonialism is dead. When some of the US Neoconservatives tried to de-

Some countries believe that acquiring nuclear weapons is the best way to prevent foreign invasion.

McFaul

find it as a value and resurrect the idea of empire, they were made fun of even by their own party.

Third and more provocatively, let me submit another “universal bad” which might and should soon share the fate of slavery and colonialism: dictatorship. This cultural practice also has a very respectable lineage. Only 50 years ago, it was in competition with democracy as a legitimate and more efficient, even more just way to organize society. The Soviet Union as well as a number of Latin American dictatorships and South Africa brought forth a wealth of normative arguments to justify their existence.

Interestingly, culture was regularly invoked as the main reason why a given society could not be democratic. Let me give you an example from my own family. For my grandfather, an Irish factory worker, the week’s major cultural event was American bowling. After the Nazis came to power in Germany, he wouldn’t bowl with Germans any longer, because he considered all of them to be Fascists. But around 1965 he began bowling with them again. Reality had forced him to acknowledge that German culture was not inevitably linked to Fascism.

Scholars have been susceptible to the same fallacy as my grandfather. Thirty years ago, the correlation between Catholicism and dictatorship seemed very robust to American social scientists. But the empirical evidence has changed, in Europe as well as in Latin America. It has also been said that Asians can never be democratic because of some specific “Asian values” going back to Confucius or that orthodox Christians and Slavs cannot live in a democracy. These ideas are still alive and well in some circles but they are being challenged, both by reality and intellectually.

Earlier in this debate, we discussed the same argument concerning Islam and dictatorship. But Mr. Ketabi rightly pointed to the world value surveys of Ron Inglehart. Inglehart’s surveys show that support for democratic values in the Muslim world is no different from other cultures, even though there are differences with respect to human rights, particularly women. Given the speed of change in other areas, I am convinced that dictatorship is not the “Muslim way” of organizing society and that it is not going to be with us for all times.

I chose the example of democracy and dictatorship—instead of the death penalty, for instance, to react to what has been said earlier. I do believe that the theory of “democratic peace” is right and central to the issues of war and peace that we have been discussing. Some countries believe that acquiring nuclear weap-

... so will dictatorship

Are some societies unable to be democratic for cultural reasons?

No! Dictatorship is not the “Muslim way” of organizing societies

Democracies do not wage war against one another



The end of dictatorship does not immediately lead to real democracy

ons is the best way to prevent foreign invasion. But promoting the universal value of democracy is certainly a much more effective strategy for ensuring peace. Immanuel Kant’s hypothesis has been borne out by reality: Democracies do not wage war against one another. My country does—in general—not invade democratic states.

I do not want to claim that democracy eliminates international conflict. The recent tensions in US/German relations show that there remains a lot to clash about, but I simply cannot imagine that there will be war between Germany and the United States in the next 200 years.

Let me end on a cautionary note. The elimination of bad cultural practices does not automatically lead to the emergence of good practices. It was not until 100 years after the end of slavery in the United States that African-Americans were allowed to vote. The end of colonialism has in many cases created “failed states” that are sovereign only by name. Likewise, the end of dictatorship does not immediately lead to real democracy. It is interesting to ask whether pseudo-democracies emerging out of colonies or dictatorships are obstacles or stepping stones on the way to full democracy.

But problems in implementing the universal norm of democracy do not prove that there is something wrong with the norm. In all of our individual lives we subscribe to many norms without being able to fully implement them. The road to implementation can be long and stony.

I also advise caution when deciding whether to bring about democratic change from outside or not. I agree with Mr. Fedorov that democratization is impossible without internal forces supporting it. We on the outside have to be incredibly humble about what we can do, because democracy usually does not come through the barrel of a gun, be it Napoleon’s or George W. Bush’s. But the historical record also shows that just sitting on your hands, waiting for history to happen and for the universal value to realize itself is not a wise strategy either. Rather, we need a strategy in-between, fitted to the situation of each country, to indicate what different actors should do.

Bertram

I would like to ask Ms. Moshirzadeh what she thinks of Michael McFaul’s ideas about universal goods and their potential for changing societies.

Moshirzadeh

The idea of universal goods triggering cultural transformations independent of power relations might be very appealing to the Western camp. But look behind

I, for one, freely admit that
I oppose democracy, at least in Iran.

Nagheebzadeh

that beautiful façade, look at the reality in our region. Here, external pressure for change is immense. As I emphasized before, fair dialog in the course of which people can change the way they construct the other and exchange ideas on an equal footing seems to me the only viable way to induce enduring societal transformation.

The result of such a dialog may well be that some interpretations of Islam are absolutely compatible with democratic ideas. Different cultures have similar values which might result in similar institutions. But the result will and can only be determined through open-ended dialog. Neither of us is in a position to predict which values and cultural practices will prevail in the international as well as our internal dialog.

Mr. McFaul, it is simply not true that nobody speaks out publicly against democracy anymore. I, for one, freely admit that I oppose democracy, at least in Iran. If the masses were to take power here, then we intellectuals would recede into political insignificance, which would be fatal for public security. The people cannot yet assume political responsibility. If the people have not attained a certain political awareness, democracy leads easily to new dictatorships. How do you think Hitler and Mussolini came to power? If you would like still more Ba'athist dictators and Qaddafis in this region, then please forcibly install democracy as quickly as possible in all these countries.

If, however, you hope for gradual and reasonable political development, then please take an unbiased look at the Islamic Republic of Iran. We are no liberal democracy, but our system includes democratic elements. Also, through the expansion of the university system, Iran has laid the groundwork for our people to demand their rights during the next decade. We will then reach the stage that England entered in the 17th Century with its guarantee of the Bill of Rights.

We should and will continue developing in phases. In the West, too, democracy emerged gradually, over a period of 200 years. Why, then, do you demand that Iran and the Developing World change overnight?

I agree with Mr. Nagheebzadeh that a long time can pass before dictators are prepared to allow the people to decide what kind of government they want. Yet the important thing is to instate the rule of law as quickly as possible and allow the people to remove a bad government without bloodshed, to quote Karl Popper. Several Asian states have demonstrated that this can happen in a relatively short time.



There are no universal goods independent
of power relations

We need an open and fair dialog

Nagheebzadeh

Immediate democratization of Iran
would lead to chaos

The Iranian government is building a basis
for democratization

Polenz

Iran should quickly instate the rule of law



How can different religions
live together peacefully?

Returning to the dialog of cultures, and especially the issue of cultural relativism, we must remember that religion is a particularly sensitive topic. Groups of people who believe they possess the absolute truth are intolerant and potentially violent, as we all agreed. Religious conviction is always belief in an absolute truth, namely, that of one's own religion. How, then, can people believe in differing absolute truths yet still live together peacefully? This question is especially relevant for Islam, which, more than Christianity, simultaneously represents a way of life and a political statement. What experiences and suggestions do our Iranian partners have to share in this respect? How do Iran's state-sanctioned religious absolutes translate into everyday practice, and how can one imagine coexistence with other religions?

What the the Quran and the Bible share

During my first visit to Isfahan, the director of a Quran school, who also helped lead Friday prayers, made an interesting suggestion. Many passages in the Quran and the Bible, he said, say practically the same thing. These could be interpreted as mutual principles shared by the two religions, which in turn would represent an initial step towards a dialog, he suggested. The following step could be to consider how to deal constructively and peacefully with the two religions' substantial number of divergent principles.

Manouchehri
A dialog of cultures needs a
common sphere ...

Let me introduce a philosophical perspective on the topic of dialog by applying the phenomenological concepts of *Lebenswelt* (life world) and *Intersubjektivität* (intersubjectivity). Both notions emphasize that we all live in one world and are related to each other. There is no single, isolated subject. These philosophical assumptions are useful for taking a different look at the conflict between strengthening cultural identities and the leveling tendencies of globalization, or in other words the conflict between the world of culture and the world of power.

... without any privileges

The notions of *Intersubjektivität* and *Lebenswelt* allow us to overcome these dichotomies by using the concept of a third world. This third world is not geographical, but is constituted by gathering, as the word "logic" in the Greek language originally meant. It can be anywhere at any time, as soon as several identities decide to be with each other. In this poly-logical sphere of commonality, every culture has a chance to be present without any privileges. This third world, which in German is called *Inzwischen* (in between), does not belong to anybody but everybody belongs to it.

I think that the major danger today is the construction of a new Berlin Wall after September 11th, this time between the West and the Islamic world.

Fedorov

I would like to complement that with a notion Mr. Tilgner mentioned earlier on: *Ungleichzeitigkeit*, non-simultaneity. Can we imagine multiple modernities existing at the same time? Especially Westerners have to think about that, because we are in danger of using for example development theories only to show that the West is ahead, rather than really developing something somewhere else. It is imperative that we get beyond that. And, more importantly, we have to translate our theoretical insights following from a dialog of cultures into real policies.

I think that dictatorship as a norm is already dead by now. Even totalitarian states like China find it necessary to call themselves democratic republics. What I am concerned with is the reappearance of “universal bads” in new forms. For example, slave labor still exists in the developing world and is used by large multi-national companies. Similarly, dictatorship appears under new guises. Only the forms of the “bads” have changed, and therefore we have to find new ways of dealing with them.

Following Mr. Reissner’s suggestion, I would like to address concrete political aspects of the dialog of cultures. I think that the major danger today is the construction of a new Berlin Wall after September 11th, this time between the West and the Islamic world. I do not only mean the wall being built between the Palestinian territories and Israel, but the hostile attitude towards Islam taken by the Western powers as well as Russia. Islam sometimes is depicted as equal to terrorism. Sadly enough, this is done at the highest political level.

We have to make it known that Islam is a multi-faceted, rich and highly developed culture, in which the extremist factions are only that: extremist factions. Top politicians have a special responsibility for this very delicate task.

Let me end with a joke about democracy from Soviet times: An American and a Russian talk about democracy. The American boasts: “Our democracy is the best in the world. I can walk onto the lawn in front of the White House and proclaim: ‘The American president is a stupid, capitalist idiot!’ Nothing will happen to me.” The Russian smiles: “Our democracy is no less perfect. I can go to the middle of the Red Square and shout: ‘The American president is a stupid, capitalist idiot!’ Nothing will happen to me, either.”

I suggest applying a more concrete perspective to another phenomenon as well, namely the cultural effects of globalization. Globalization might impose global



Reissner

Can multiple modernities exist at the same time?

Atai

Fedorov

Prejudices against Islam are dangerous

Bertram

Some democracies pursue the kinds of global policies that emphasize power much more than the noble principle of spreading democracy.

von Weizsäcker

Globalization gives regional cultures new opportunities to express themselves

values on regional cultures, but does it not also provide new opportunities to these cultures to express themselves?

von Weizsäcker

If we advocate the spread of democracy ...

Up to this point in our discussion of the future of culture and international politics, we have concentrated on the spread of democracy. I would like to ask you all not to lose sight of the deficits in our Western democracies. As a person dedicated to democracy, I of course recognize the great blessings that democracy has brought us. It put an end to slavery, overcame colonialism, and above all, it spread freedom. It is a fact that democracies hardly ever go to war against one another.

... we must also take a look at the deficits in our own democracies

However, while voicing our concerns that other countries have a harder time establishing democracy, we must also take a hard look at the deficits in our own democracies. We cannot deny that democratic principles are often weaker than they should be against the logic of political or economic power. Some democracies pursue the kinds of global policies that emphasize power much more than the noble principle of spreading democracy. Also, within our own societies, the struggle for power between the political parties within a democracy often overshadows efforts to solve the actual political problems.

Of course we should stand up and fight for democracy around the world. Yet we can do this credibly only if we candidly admit the shortcomings of our own systems. As much as I value Mr. McFaul's enthusiasm, I think it is missing an element of Churchill. His famous statement that "democracy is the worst form of government—with the exception of all others" should be more for us than just comforting and witty. We must take his words seriously if we are going to preach democracy around the world, and especially here in Isfahan.

Mohammadi

Outside pressure for democratization can harm democracy

I agree with you completely. I am convinced that the outside pressure for immediate Western-style democratization ultimately harms democracy in the Developing World. We have nothing against the democratic system as such, but democratization requires a foundation and it requires time. A stable, non-democratic government can help its people and democratic development more during a transitional period than can pell-mell democratization. Ultimately, we agree in substance and have differing ideas only regarding the process over time.

Kraig

In contrast to what Michael McFaul said, I think that democracies can conflict in extremely antagonistic ways. Currently existing democracies have adopted Western political culture and melted into the mainstream of Western political values. But once China or Iran become democratic, in the sense that they introduce



democratic institutions and procedures, I still do not think they will agree with the substance of US foreign policy. We therefore need concepts that allow for cooperation between democracies which radically disagree on foreign policy objectives.

I thus want to advocate a fourth category of interaction between different cultures, besides the accommodationist, confrontationist and isolationist approaches Ms. Moshirzadeh mentioned. This fourth category, the concept of peaceful co-existence or cooperative security, recognizes that there will never be complete cultural homogeneity, but sees cooperative interaction between different cultures as possible. Global non-proliferation regimes are an example of this cooperative security concept.

Just to be clear, I do not think that conflict between democracies is impossible. Hopefully, democratic China and democratic Iran will disagree with the substance of American foreign policy; I happen to do that myself. What I think will not occur between democracies is war, and I stick to that. There will not be war between the US and democratic China or democratic Iran.

I would like to take up Michael McFaul's argument that the identification of universal bads and even their elimination does not automatically lead to the emergence of universal goods. To understand the grey zone in between and deal with it, I suggest applying the concept of ambivalence in a positive sense. For regions and systems that escape our categories of universal goods or universal bads, such as the current situation in Iraq, we have to give up our modern habit of demanding normative clarity and clear-cut judgments.

Second, when talking about democratization, we have to decide which agents we count on. Which forces in the region are promoting democracy and what are their views on world politics and on the relations between state and society? Which target group do we want to focus on: do we want to induce democratization by influencing mainly the political sphere, i.e. national governments which may not be willing to accept a limitation of their authority, or do we want to concentrate on influencing the intermediate sphere of civil society?

As to the cultural effects of globalization, I agree with Mr. Bertram that our understanding is too one-sided. Imposing Western values and norms is not the only thing the internet or satellite channels do. For the first time, they also give local cultures a chance to express themselves.

McFaul

Hamzawy

Governments or civil societies as agents of democratization?



Let me finish with a joke about democracy in Egypt. George W. Bush meets Egypt's Husni Mubarak. Bush complains that he is worried about the outcome of the forthcoming presidential elections in the US. "Don't worry, Mr. President," says Mubarak, "we have extraordinary expertise in dealing with presidential elections. My Minister of Intelligence will solve your problems." The Egyptian Minister gets on a plane to Washington and after three months returns in high spirits. He claims that nothing can possibly go wrong. But at the time of the first exit polls, Bush calls Mubarak and screams: "Disaster! Everything is lost!" Mubarak shouts at his minister: "What did you do, idiot? I thought nothing could go wrong!" The minister points to a TV screen showing the election results and answers: "See for yourself, our strategy for presidential elections worked out perfectly well. You have been elected President of the United States with 99.9 percent of the votes."

Polenz
When are interventions in the interest
of democracy justified?

To effectively spread democracy we mainly need solid strategies and a culture of intervention. Otherwise, long-term concepts and positive utopias and the weighing of universal values against cultural diversity and tolerance will be of little use to us. We have all seen the rows that can erupt because of intervention. Conflicts in this region or in Southeast Asia could soon require renewed interventions. How would these be conducted, in what form and with what standards? As long as we can reach an understanding only on ideal forms of international coexistence, any state could come along at will and unilaterally intervene, claiming that someone had broken the rules. Personally, I favor UN mandates as a basis for all interventions, but in every case we have to agree on some form of legitimacy.

Bertram I absolutely agree with you, but when we talk about intervention, we should be careful to distinguish between cultural intervention—for which rules and norms cannot be clearly defined—and military intervention.

Alnajjar I would like to start with a joke from Iraq illustrating the difficulties of democratization. The police apprehend a looter. At the police station, the officer tells him that marauding for state property is no longer justified, because from now on Iraq will be a democracy. "What is that supposed to mean?" he asks full of astonishment. The policeman proudly proclaims: "We will elect a president every four years." "Oh, now I understand what democracy means: we will be free to loot every four years..."

Democracy in Iraq?
Many Iraqis do not believe that

When talking to Iraqis, I came to acknowledge that especially those who never left the country simply do not believe that they will choose their government in



fair elections. People think that their votes will be tampered with and will thus not change anything. Nevertheless, the experience of the last six months leads more and more of them to believe that there might be a real change. When you think about it, it is only natural that people traumatized from 35 years of dictatorship need some time to become firm believers in democracy. Achieving this goal will take some time and also considerable efforts by the West and credibility in the political process.

To promote democracy in the region, the West first and foremost has to live up to its own democratic standards to gain credibility. People in this part of the world are cynical about democracy also because Western countries talk about democracy and at the same time support dictatorships throughout the world. In the so-called war against terrorism they cooperate with dictators in Central Asia for instance. If the West manages to establish democratic credibility, I can assure you that the majority of Arabs in this region will support democracy. Bin Laden represents only a small fraction even of the extreme circles.

The West has also overstated its role in promoting universal values, for example in bringing about the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. I studied the history of the declaration thoroughly, only to find out that the Western countries, the USA, the UK or France in the person of René Cassin, were not the only key players. Small Latin American countries like Cuba, Panama, Chile and Lebanon played a central role. Among the 48 signatory states, there were also five Arab countries.

Historically, there were also important traditions of intercultural dialog in the Islamic world. These may provide a model for dealing with cultural differences in a future global order. In pre-modern Iraq, different cultures considered each other as equal partners, not as enemies. It was only in the modern era that ethnocentrism led groups to consider different cultures as the “other.” Concepts like “Orient” or, today, “Southern countries,” have emerged from that. We should avoid this kind of ethnocentric and reductionist logic.

The life of migrants in Western countries is a typical example of non-simultaneity. Their life in-between societies at various stages of development also calls for seeing the relations between cultures from different perspectives, for allowing different versions of modernity and for avoiding biased approaches. The idea of one universal and uniform world order is mainly a cover for American interests.

The West must live up to its own democratic standards ...

... instead of priding itself on its alleged achievements

Molaei

Islamic traditions of intercultural dialog as a model for international politics



Sajjadpour

Our discussion brought us to three paradoxes, three “Ps.” One is the paradox of prescription—in prescribing what the future should be, you predict something you can never be entirely sure about. The second is the paradox of particularity. We want our values and norms to prevail everywhere even though they are rooted in our particular societies. Knowing that, we should avoid seeing the particularities of other societies as peculiarities and get rid of prejudices against “the” Arabs or “the” Muslims or “the” Non-Westerners. The third paradox is the paradox of planning. Even though we can never plan the future 100 percent, we have to develop prospects. Prospects for the region are the topic that we should turn to now.

Fedorov

The untenable status quo in the Middle East will change in four areas:

I would like to evaluate the political prospects of the region for the next five to ten years. During this time, the Middle East will no doubt remain a hot spot of world politics. The region will change fundamentally because internal and external forces are pressing to move beyond the untenable status quo. I see at least four areas of dynamic change:

democratization of Iraq and a coup d'état in Saudi Arabia ...

First of all, two important regional powers will adopt new political systems. Iraq will become a more or less normal and democratic society within the next three years. It will play a less dominant political role than it did under Saddam. Even more important for the balance of power in the region will be a regime change in Saudi Arabia. The change might not be radical, but internal forces will, I think, stage something like a coup d'état in favor of a more progressive, more pro-Western government.

... US will try to isolate Iran ...

Second, the US will try to use these regime changes to build up a growing opposition between the Arab world and Iran. Iran with its natural and human resources and its distinctive foreign policy will remain the United States' main challenger in the region. It is only natural that the US should try to isolate it, building up pressure directly as well as via the Arab countries.

... there will be an attempt to abolish OPEC ...

Third, as soon as Iraq will restore its oil industry, there will be an attempt to abolish OPEC. Important forces see OPEC as an anachronistic instrument to defend the interests of certain regional powers and as an obstacle to economic development. If OPEC ceases to exist, this will change the world economy much more than any war. A small group of consumer countries, headed by the United States, will be able to largely control the oil market.

... Turkey will join the European Union

Fourth and last, Turkey's joining the European Union, which might take place around 2012, will be an absolute break-through for the whole region. It will be a

A culture of modernity from within is developing in Iran.

Sajjadpour

unique testing ground for integrating Islam in the Western world. A success in this experiment will provide a real chance to fundamentally change the attitude of Islamic societies towards Europe and the West.

I will focus on the impact of culture on political developments in Iran and the broader Middle East, and their implications for the international community.

Iran, in contrast to other Middle Eastern countries, has a very strong and deeply rooted national identity. This distinctiveness will continue to be a strong influence for Iran's national, regional and international policies.

But even more important are Iran's internal social forces that will drive a drastic cultural transformation of the country. This transformation will affect Iran much more deeply than the political conflicts the West usually focuses on—reformers versus conservatives, neo-conservatives versus neo-liberals. The social forces causing fundamental changes are education—the literacy rate has risen to 87 percent –, rapid urbanization and the changing role of women. More than 60 percent of all newly admitted university students are women, and the awareness of women's rights is growing. These developments are creating a culture of modernity from within.

I am convinced that a modern Iran will achieve a balance that will allow it to detach itself from many Middle Eastern conflicts. We will overcome the debates that have divided our country for centuries: what should be the role of Islam, of Persian culture, of the concepts of justice and liberty, of the economic sphere? Iran is about to find a synthesis that allows it at the same time to remain Muslim, retain elements of Persian culture and achieve economic growth. This will provide the basis for a mature and well calculated foreign policy.

My views on the future of the Middle East are rather pessimistic. I think that the prospects for Iraq are bleak, and I contradict Mr. Fedorov's prediction that a democracy will emerge any time soon. The chaos there will have negative impacts on the region. Furthermore, the radicalization of the Palestinian people has been increasing over the past years and will keep doing so, especially if the US government does not change its policies. Radicalization caused by a feeling of humiliation might spread to the whole Middle East and reinforce the existing culture of defensiveness. This does not apply to Iran, since we have already passed the stage of radicalism.

Solving the problems of the Middle East is a precondition for stabilizing world politics. The region itself carries the main responsibility, but it will not succeed

Sajjadpour

Cultural trends will determine Iran's role in the Middle East

Iran has a strong national identity ...

... Iran's society is modernizing rapidly ...

The situation in Iraq and Palestine will destabilize the Middle East ...

... if the region, the US and Europe do not join their efforts to solve the problems



without support from the US. Europe should also be more active, especially in institutionalizing a culture of dialog. Iran, with its newly won self-confidence and balance, is a natural partner for this dialog.

Polenz

Europe can contribute its experience with the OSCE

I think that Europe can contribute its long experience with the OSCE in helping to stabilize the Middle East. Political tensions, a spiraling arms race, and an explosive nuclear dimension—I ask you to recall the EU foreign ministers' visit to Iran—are problems that Europe was facing during the Cold War. At that time, the CSCE was established as a forum for the region's countries to discuss regional security and their respective perceptions of the regional threat.

A multilateral framework for all actors in the region could ...

For the Middle East there was a similar attempt made during the early 1990s in the wake of the Madrid Conference. The idea failed ultimately because not all countries concerned had been invited. A multilateral framework for all actors in the region could open up new opportunities for stability and security, especially for Iran, as well as for the US and Europe.

... sweep away blockades and open the door for bilateral talks

A conference of this kind could also sweep away blockades. The Syrians, for example, have said they would not accept bilateral talks with the US on the American allegation that Damascus is seeking weapons of mass destruction, but they said they would be willing to do so in an international framework. And as we also all know, Iran and the Americans also have an extraordinarily hard time talking to each another officially. Multilateral talks could set a process moving that would open the door to bilateral contacts in the intermediate term.

One advantage of democracy is that people can pursue the same objectives even though they have differing motivations. The objective of greater security in this region should be enough of an incentive for all concerned to sit down at one table.

Takeishi

To the Japanese, Western and Middle East culture seem very similar

It may sound new to Westerners, but we Japanese often say that Western and Middle Eastern culture seem very similar. East Asia and South East Asia are completely different worlds because of our Confucian and Buddhist traditions. Our religions are, other than Islam and Christianity, not based on the idea that God still exists.

Nevertheless, I would recommend the Middle East to strengthen its ties to the Asian region. Japan is promoting Asian integration, first in the economic sphere and later on a political level, after we have seen some progress in China. We have started this process with the establishment of ASEAN. From that an integrated



economic block will emerge around 2010 that will constitute one of three major economic regions of the world. Even an Asian Monetary Fund and a single currency are real possibilities. If countries in the Middle East want to avoid marginalization, they should enter into negotiations about free trade agreements with Asian countries. Iran may use economic agreements with China or Japan as a balance to the Western powers.

Mr. Picco, what do you think about Mr. Polenz' idea of a regional dialog in the Middle East, similar to that of the CSCE?

Bertram

I agree strongly with Mr. Polenz. A Helsinki agreement for the region was suggested already in 1988, but today there is real possibility for success. This is because the alignments in the area have changed over the last 10 years. The links between India and Iran, for example, are quite revolutionary, particularly because India has also developed relations with Israel. The idea of a Helsinki process for the region has been tested tentatively already in different political camps, and to my opinion presents the only possibility to reconcile the region's animosities.

Picco

As much as I agree with Mr. Polenz, I disagree with Mr. Fedorov's thesis of an existing and growing gap between Iran and the United States. The gap between some Arab countries and the US is and will be much wider than the one between Iran and the US, where common interests are self-evident in many areas.

The US and Iran have many common interests

Let me add a brief remark about the democratization of the region. The key to success lies in functioning and acceptable political concepts. I think that when democracy is defined as a system of checks and balances, this could constitute a common ground for Western powers and the people in the region.

Last, I would like to analyze the economic prospects of the region in the context of the world economy. When talking about energy, we should not only mention oil. Within the next ten years, the focus of the world economy will shift to gas as the importance of oil will decrease. In addition, an important practical development is taking place: tactical connections are emerging in the region's infrastructure, as for example linkages of electricity networks, water suppliers and transportation systems. Irrespective of political crises, the future of the region will depend on its economic development.

The economy of the Middle East ...

Since the end of the war in Iraq, stock markets in the region have outperformed all others, the Tehran Stock Exchange being the uncontested leader. The

... is booming since the end of the Iraq war

Thanks to the United States' antagonistic stance,
our internal conflicts have not intensified and
do not represent a threat to our political stability.



Nagheebzadeh

number of contracts tendered in the region has skyrocketed from 300 Mio. US dollars in February 2003 to 29 Billion in June! Even though the Palestinian question and similar political problems are an important aspect of the region, the daily life and economic activity is quite something else. Especially the business community says: "Now that the war is over, let us move on to the future."

Atai

Globalization is homogenizing
culture in the Middle East, too

I would like to come back to the homogenization of world culture through globalization and new communication technologies. Satellite TV and the internet have a tremendous influence on how people think, how they dress and what they value in their lives. Television brings people around the world closer together, even though some cultural pockets will remain unchanged.

As to Iran, the Islamic revolution had the short-term effect of presenting a—rather radical—alternative to the Muslims of the world. But in the long run, the Iranian contribution will be to change the role of Islam in society and within our daily lives towards more secularism.

Nagheebzadeh

It would serve Iran's interests if the
US isolates us from the Arab world ...

Mr. Fedorov predicted that the US would turn up the pressure on Iran and drive a wedge between Iran and the Arab states. I also believe this will take place. But I see it positively. Mr. Sajjadpour rightly praised the new balance between the national and Islamic identity of Iran. Iran was previously too pro-Arab and concentrated overly on maintaining Arab-Islamic unity.

Outside pressure, on the other hand, strengthens our national consciousness and our inner unity. Thanks to the United States' antagonistic stance, our internal conflicts have not intensified and do not represent a threat to our political stability.

... and if our oil revenues decline

Mr. Fedorov predicted the demise of OPEC. I would welcome this, because oil revenues do not lead to productivity or investment within societies and often lead to corruption. Happily, our non-oil sector has a strong growth potential that can even replace the income from oil.

I will now say goodbye to you all, because I will accompany Mr. Kepel to a meeting with leading ayatollahs in Ghom. The ayatollahs are impressed by Mr. Kepel's relations with the Sunni world and would like to bring him closer to Shi'a Islam. They hope to gain him as a spokesman among the Sunnis.

Kepel

I guess our top secret Shi'a-Sunni reconciliation meeting is not so secret any more...

I would like to again point out one deficit of our discussion. We are still unable to define what we call “the region.” But geographically and culturally well defined concepts are indispensable to analyze future alignments and conflicts.

What will be the identity of the Gulf area vis-à-vis the more Mediterranean Middle East, Central Asia or the Indian Sub-Continent? Which groups of countries will compete for which kind of access to the oil markets? With these questions I will leave you and travel to Ghom with Mr. Nagheebzadeh.

God speed to both of you! Mr. Mohammadi, would you say something about the idea of Mr. Polenz and Mr. Picco to set up a Helsinki conference for the Middle East? What do people in the region think about that?

For the stability of the entire region, the Israeli-Palestinian problem remains central. Yet here, there is no political solution in sight. The US pro-Israeli bias has made US and Israeli policies practically indistinguishable. Still, Europe might stand to gain from improving relations with those states that turn away from the US.

The radicalization of the Arab people caused by the United States’ policy has greatly diminished the influence of political moderates. The secular and religious intellectuals who, in the past, stood up for moderate solutions, now play only a marginal role. Even secular states, ones that have traditionally had good relations with the West, will have to adjust their foreign policies to their countries’ respective social climates.

The growing radicalization of the political climate in Iraq and the emerging conflicts within the country pose a major threat. Iran, perhaps more than any other state, is dependent on a stable Iraq.

As to Iran, the cultural changes that Mr. Sajjadpour has described also affect Iranian conservatives. I am therefore convinced that, over time, a more pragmatic tendency will gain the upper hand within the conservative camp.

Anyone who tries to resolve conflicts in the region and between the West and Middle East will have to grapple with the key problem of perceptions. I am amazed at how alienated Europe and its neighboring regions in the Middle East are from one another. This is although Christianity, Judaism, and Islam have a long mutual history and have been intimately tied to one another for more than a thousand years. Yet many Germans are unaware of this, as the discussion of Turkey’s candi-

Bertram

Mohammadi

The US pro-Israeli bias makes Middle Eastern states lean more towards the EU ...

... and radicalizes Arab societies

Löning

Europe and the Middle East are alienated from one another ...

Iran is a normal state, striving for security,
economic well-being and respect for its culture.

Sajjadpour



... even though they have many
common interests

dacy for EU accession has shown. By the same token, my impression is that a sense of distance and alienation from the West predominates in Iran.

A whole series of similarities would come to light if only the two sides would articulate their expectations and interests more clearly. Both want more economic development in the region, and countries like Iran or Iraq are potentially very important economic partners for Europe. The two sides could also have similar interests towards multilateral organizations—even if their motives are different.

I think that the dynamic population growth of the Islamic world is causing irrational fears in Europe and, conversely, has not yet resulted in the self-assured and sober foreign policies among Islamic countries that it would justify. Europe demands that the region embrace democracy, while the region demands more support from Europe—couldn't one try instead to use the region's existing dynamism together and steer it in a sensible direction?

Sajjadpour

Europe wrongly perceives Iran as
an abnormal society

Mr. Löning, you have analyzed the prejudices standing in the way of the Iranian-European relationship. Very rightly, you have pointed to the differences between the reality in Iran and the way Europeans see our country. The latent assumption underlying this distorted perception is that Iran is an abnormal society. If you reflect on and overcome this assumption you will see that our country is particular but not peculiar.

The crises in Iraq have a very negative impact on Iran. Economic and social progress are impeded because the state must concentrate on guaranteeing security. We must fight terrorism and similar diseases, even though we need all our energy to discuss and implement Iran's Fourth Economic Plan. Failed states make bad neighbors, as we have seen in Afghanistan.

Reissner

The West must find out what people
from the region see as central problems

If we want to search for political solutions for the region, we have to have a clear idea of the problems. Regarding the slogan "Islam is the solution," a clever friend once said to me, "I doubt that as long as the Muslims don't say what problems Islam is supposed to solve." We must ask the region's people what changes they want to see in their lives. Mr. Picco and Mr. Atai rightly placed developments in everyday life at the center of their observations. Only when people's day-to-day needs are met will it be possible to contribute usefully from the outside to the issue of democratization in the region.

The same applies to Mr. Polenz' and Mr. Pico's suggestions for a Helsinki Pro-



cess for the region. Both have pointed out that the idea has existed for the past fifteen years. Why has nothing come of it thus far? I think that if a new attempt is to have any chance of success, we need answers from the region that clearly express the varying threat perceptions.

I would like to come back to our general topic and warn against a deterministic view of the future relationship between culture and politics. The confrontational approach predicting that globalization will create a homogenous global culture contradicts our historical experience. A plurality of societies and cultures are here to stay. Thus, intercultural dialog is and will remain the most effective instrument of international relations.

I think that Europe has a special role to play in establishing a dialog with this region. The European Union has a lot of experience in dealing with other cultures, and its future lies in multilateralism and soft power. Europe will gain from considering diversity as an asset, not as a threat in international relations.

The Iraq crisis has led to aftershocks in the region that I think are very helpful. Political impasses are dissolving and a new momentum is gathering, a willingness to finally tackle old problems. The best example is the EU foreign ministers' visit to Iran last Tuesday that resulted in an "agreed protocol" on Iran's nuclear program. This kind of declaration of intent is uncommon. Iran was prepared to go down a new path because the Iraq war brought up the disadvantages of isolation and the real possibility of a regime change from outside.

Iraq also gives the Iranians opportunities to make constructive contributions. Regional cooperation can begin in Iraq if Iran is willing to use its close ties to the Iraqi Shi'ites to help quell religious tensions within Iraq.

Iraq also gives the Europeans the chance to help the US out of its unilateralist cul-de-sac. Failure in Iraq can have catastrophic effects; therefore, the problems there have to be solved internationally. And if a solution for Iraq can be found, it will furthermore provide the impetus the international community needs to establish a new culture of conflict resolution. Part of this must be, as Mr. Polenz rightly pointed out, a culture of intervention as a last resort. Unilateral actions like those of the United States have to become a thing of the past.

Allowing the US to fail in Iraq and gloating would be fatal. Other states such as Iran would gain a dangerous sense of power. I could even imagine Saudi Arabia deliberately promoting instability in Iraq so as to protect itself from growing US

Molaei

Europe can play a special role in establishing a dialog with the Middle East

Tilgner

Helpful aftershocks of the Iraq crisis: EU-Iranian agreement on nuclear technology ...

... constructive role of Iran in Iraq ...

... end of American unilateralism



pressure. As long as the US is preoccupied with Iraq, the United States will not have sufficient resources to pursue regime change elsewhere. I hope the Europeans do not allow themselves to be played off against America. Rather, they should function as a hinge between the United States and the region, so that these dangers can be met effectively.

Manouchehri

The international community must be democratized

I would like to answer Mr. Reissner's question as to where we Iranians see the problems of democratization. To me, it seems important to take a critical look at the democratic structure of the international community, instead of only prescribing democracy for certain countries. As long as there is no democratic world order, how can we criticize single countries for not being democratic?

Kraig

A Helsinki process for the region would require the West to change its understanding of cooperation. During the Cold War, Western integration was possible only because it was complemented by a massive confrontation with the Soviet Union. A Helsinki process for the Gulf region would imply that countries stop defining each other strictly as either friends or enemies. We need a new kind of multilateral framework, where confrontation has no place. The failure of the US strategy of dual containment showed that the picking of friends and enemies does not work well in the Gulf region.

Hamzawy

A Helsinki Process for the region must include normative principles

Such a Helsinki process will only work if it combines security issues with a catalogue of normative principles. Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia devised a "regional project of democratic reform," which might be a good starting point for a real discussion about norms.

As to Mr. Mohammadi's warning against growing radicalism in the Arab World, stagnation seems to me a much greater danger than radicalization.

Lastly, I would like to come back to the idea of ambivalence. Mr. Tilgner evaluated the US intervention in Iraq as a disaster, and there might be good reasons for this. But at the same time I think that most Iraqis see themselves as winners of what happened. We should not ignore this aspect, even if that prevents a clear-cut judgment.

Jafari

Iran could never choose its international partners

Mr. Reissner asked for the Iranian perspective on democratization. Pressure for democratization from outside stands in a long tradition of foreign interference in the domestic affairs of Iran. Our country has no chance to freely select its inter-

Most Americans do not really care about democracy in the Middle East.

McFaul

national partners today, and our internal development is still determined by structures imposed on us during the last century. We would appreciate if we were allowed to find our own way. For that, it would be very helpful if the EU made its intentions clear and lent us support.

I would like to thank Mr. von Weizsäcker for his reminder to keep a critical eye on our own democracies, which I think is completely justified. As an American, I find it embarrassing what we are doing in Guantanamo Bay; as a Californian, that and how Arnold Schwarzenegger won our gubernatorial race. It was hard for me to explain these events on Russian BBC a couple of weeks ago. Nevertheless, the fact that our Western democracies are flawed in many ways does not diminish the value of democracy. These weaknesses merely prove that there is no Nirvana called democracy that you have to reach to be freed from all problems. Democracy is a work in progress.

But I object strongly to the position that in some countries people are not ready for democracy, and that democratization would ultimately result in anarchy. Even though you talked on an abstract level, Mr. Mohammadi, I think you spoke about Iran. When Iran's elites elaborate on the lack of democratic maturity of their fellow citizens, they forget that this country has a very special history and a literacy rate of almost 90 percent. To me, this place is ripe for full democracy, which would bring not chaos but a wealth of opportunities, especially economic opportunities.

The opposite side of the medal is the present state of affairs. Iran today is unique, Mr. Sajjadpour. It is not just peculiar or even, as you suggested, particular. I dare say that because, as a comparative political scientist, I have been to 80 countries and have never seen anything like the political regime in Iran. If you have doubts, just take a look at the Gentleman staring at us from the picture on the wall, Mr. Khamenei. No other country I know has a supreme leader of that kind.

Many participants have pointed out the negative effects of pressure for democratization from the United States. What you might not be aware of is that most Americans do not really care about democracy in the Middle East. It is a myth that the vast majority of American citizens want their country's power used to spread democracy. Let me remind you that our President had to make up a threat by Iraqi weapons of mass destruction to get support for his war against Saddam. Freeing and democratizing Iraq was not important enough a goal for the American people.

McFaul

Even though our Western democracies are flawed ...

... immediate democratization would still be good for Iran

Because most Americans do not care for democracy in the Middle East



So to my opinion, the growing disconnect and an emerging new Berlin Wall between the West and the Middle East are a much greater danger to the Islamic world than pressure for democratization from the outside.

We might need further debate on the relative importance of internal vs. external forces for change, as well as on the respective role of the US and Europe. But I would like Iran's decision makers to keep in mind that reforms, if they proceed too slowly, often lead to revolutionary outcomes.

I would like to end with something I hold as a deep conviction. If there is one thing that needs to be fought to bring about democracy, that is ignorance. Certain elite groups in the USA want the American people to perceive Iran as a totalitarian dictatorship, because otherwise billion dollar military contracts would have to be cancelled. Ignorance for them is as important as it is for the enemies of democracy in Iran. This is why meetings like this one are so important, where individuals from both sides get the opportunity to meet each other, to look them in the eye and to see that they are not "the enemy."

Moshirzadeh

Michael Kraig's suggestion of a peaceful co-existence regardless of the differences between cultures is the best short-term solution for pragmatically managing interstate relationships. Nevertheless, bracketing cultural differences is not enough in the long run. I think that only through a cultural dialog you can tap the full potential of the cultural treasures of different civilizations.

Democratization needs time ...

As to democratization, Mr. Hamzawy correctly pointed to many structural issues that hamper processes of democratization in the region. The ongoing formation of nation states and social and ethnic cleavages do not make the introduction of democracy impossible, but they certainly make it a very lengthy process. Democracy can therefore neither be invented overnight, nor imposed.

... and should be based on indigenous developments

At the same time, democratization should be based on endogenous developments. External forces do also have an important impact. Thus, a critical, but constructive dialog between the EU and Iran can support positive trends. But external forces can also have negative impacts because they cause radicalization, which in its turn is a chief obstacle to democratization. The unconditional support of the US for Israel is also a very important cause for the radicalization and therefore de-democratization of the region.

Sajjadpour

I would like to sum up our discussion with three "M"s. The first concept underlying our talks is the concept of mutuality. Mankind has a mutual destiny, because



developments in different parts of the world have an impact on each other. Especially the destiny of the Middle East is intricately linked to world politics. Recognizing this mutuality is a precondition for living together.

The second concept is mission. Analytical approaches are of no use if you do not act. Human conscience guides us to our mission, as Martin Luther impressively put it when refusing the Catholic Church's orders in April 1521: "to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen." Goethe emphasized the importance of concrete action in his line "All theory, dear friend, is grey but the golden tree of actual life springs ever green." And his soulmate, our beloved Persian poet Hafis, wrote: "Life is passing without wine and love," which means that you need to attach yourself to the real world, to act in it.

The modality in which to implement our mission is my third "M," moderation. We need to be moderate to understand and approach the other. As our first Imam put it in his prayer for the start of Ramadan: "God give us the power to be fair even with those who have oppressed us, even with our enemies." I think this is the true meaning of moderation.

Probably I am not the only one at the table thinking about how our conversation would have been conducted if the US had triumphantly succeeded in Iraq. The superpower's failure provides a basis for new thoughts about international relations and the future of the region.

Europeans should not pretend to know all the answers and recipes, while we leave the cooking and eating to our Iranian friends. We should be modest, but at the same time, I would like to see Europe more present and active in the Middle East. It is high time to realize that Iran may be a very important strategic partner in the region, not least because it can help enhance stability and therefore ultimately democracy in the region.

May I just follow up by expressing my deep gratitude and happiness about this meeting. After four years of planning and after overcoming many obstacles, we managed to arrange an open and very inspiring joint Iranian-German Bergedorf Round Table here in Isfahan.

We talked about modern television and communication technology bringing the world closer together. Even though this is true, the image of the West displayed through worldwide television might make it so unpopular that we end up, as Robert Putnam said, "Bowling Alone." Michael McFaul's story about his grand-

Bertram

von Weizsäcker

Modern communication technology brings the world closer together ...

father refusing to bowl with Germans in the 1940s gave a very good example of what this means.

... but it might also harm the development
of democracy

Italy provides another example of how TV does not foster, but impedes open democratic exchange. The country's prime minister owns most TV channels and turns them into pure entertainment to maximize profits. So modernization and new communication technologies are not by themselves a guarantee for the advancement of human rights and democracy.

Our Round Table helped build trust

I am therefore all the more grateful to the interpreters here who used the electronic equipment so beneficially to overcome the language barrier. My heartfelt thanks also go to Mr. Sajjadpour and Mr. Bertram. Usually, moderators either take care of discipline or contribute to the substance of the discussion. This time, our team managed to combine these two aspects in a most convincing way. Our particular gratitude is due to the Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS), headed by Mr. Sajjadpour, that made this meeting possible by bringing many participants to the table and creating an atmosphere of open dialog. I am sure that our Round Table helped to increase trust in Iran from the outside and hope that the trust of Iranians in those countries assembled here is also growing. Finally, I would like to thank all participants for their honest and open remarks and wish all of you a good journey home.