

PolicyWatch #1438

## In Her Own Words: Hillary Clinton on the Middle East

By Larisa Baste

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On December 1, President-elect Obama announced his nomination of Senator Hillary Clinton as U.S. secretary of state. The following are her remarks on key Middle East issues made during the course of the Democratic presidential primary campaign.

### Arab-Israeli Peace Process

- October 3, 2007: "Peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved without a full diplomatic effort by the administration that encourages America's Arab allies in the region to take an active and positive role in the process. . . . [This is a] pivotal opportunity to reach out to these nations to enlist their aid. However, we must also insist that their participation must be substantial, visible, and constructive as we take the next steps in attempting to bring peace and stability to the region."
- Nov/Dec 2007 *Foreign Affairs*: "The fundamental elements of a final agreement have been clear since 2000: a Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank in return for a declaration that the conflict is over, recognition of Israel's right to exist, guarantees of Israeli security, diplomatic recognition of Israel, and normalization of its relations with Arab states."
- June 4, 2008: "We need to talk to all sides, but all parties must know we will always stand with Israel in its struggle for peace and security. . . . We must be clear about how we feel about our next president negotiating directly with Hamas. Here is how I feel: until Hamas renounces terrorism and recognizes Israel, negotiating with Hamas is unacceptable for the United States."

### Iraq

- August 9, 2007: "I think that Iran, Syria, and the other countries in the neighborhood are going to find themselves in a very difficult position as we withdraw. . . . They will be dragged into sectarian divisiveness with many different factions among the three main groups. Therefore, we need to start diplomatic efforts immediately, getting the Iranians, the Syrians, and others to the table. It's in their interest, it's in our interest, and it certainly is in the Iraqis' interest."
- April 16, 2008: "I will also make it clear to the Iraqis that they no longer have a blank check from the president of the United States because I believe that it will be only through our commitment to withdraw that the Iraqis will begin to do what they have failed to do for all of these years."

### Iran

- October 30, 2007: "I believe we should be engaged in diplomacy right now with the Iranians. Everything should be on the table, not just their nuclear program. . . . You need both carrots and sticks. . . . Having those economic sanctions hanging over their heads gives our negotiators one of the set of sticks that we need to try to make progress in dealing with a very complicated situation."

- April 16, 2008: "We should be looking to create an umbrella of deterrence that goes much further than just Israel. . . . You can't go to the Saudis or the Kuwaitis or the UAE and others who have a legitimate concern about Iran and say, 'Well, don't acquire these weapons to defend yourself,' unless you're also willing to say, 'We will provide a deterrent backup and we will let the Iranians know that, yes, an attack on Israel would trigger massive retaliation, but so would an attack on those countries that are willing to go under this security umbrella and forswear their own nuclear ambitions.'"
- April 22, 2008: "I want the Iranians to know that if I'm the president, we will attack Iran [if Iran attacked Israel with nuclear weapons]. In the next ten years, during which they might foolishly consider launching an attack on Israel, we would be able to totally obliterate them."
- June 4, 2008: "We should start by developing an international consensus against Iran's nuclear program, with a set of tougher sanctions if Iran continues to defy the international community."

## **Syria**

- February 1, 2007: "[Syria] is becoming an even greater problem because of its support for Hamas, because of its involvement in both Lebanon and Iraq against Israeli and American interests; we also have to do more to figure out what, if any, real leverage we can bring to bear. And all during the Cold War we met with the Soviet Union. . . . That was a smart strategy even though it was a difficult one."
- September 26, 2007: "We don't have as much information as we wish we did [about Israel's September 6, 2007, strike on Syria]. But what we think we know is that with North Korean help, both financial and technical and material, the Syrians apparently were putting together, and perhaps over some period of years, a nuclear facility, and the Israelis took it out. I strongly support that."

## **Democracy**

- Nov/Dec 2007 *Foreign Affairs*: "Calls for expanding civil and political rights in countries plagued by mass poverty and ruled by tiny wealthy elites will fall on deaf ears unless democracy actually delivers enough material benefits to improve people's lives. . . . In the cities of Europe and Asia . . . terrorist cells are preparing for future attacks. We must understand not only their methods but their motives: a rejection of modernity, women's rights, and democracy, as well as a dangerous nostalgia for a mythical past. We must develop a comprehensive strategy focusing on education, intelligence, and law enforcement to counter not only the terrorists themselves but also the larger forces fueling support for their extremism."
- December 4, 2007: "[A hypothetical Clinton Doctrine] will be a doctrine that demonstrates that the United States is not afraid to cooperate; that through cooperation in our interdependent world, we actually can build a stronger country and a stronger world that will be more reflective of our values."

## **Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Terrorism**

- June 3, 2007: "I asked them [Presidents Karzai and Musharraf] if it would help to have a high-level presidential envoy working with both of them to try to figure out how we can move toward what are American interests and how we can keep Pakistan from undermining the war against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. And unfortunately when I got back and I called the White House and I made this suggestion, it fell on deaf ears."
- Nov/Dec 2007 *Foreign Affairs*: "We must seek to dry up recruiting opportunities for the Taliban by funding crop-substitution programs, a large-scale road-building initiative, institutions that train and prepare Afghans for honest and effective governance, and programs to enable women to play a larger role in society."
- May 22, 2008: "If the United States is going to suffer another attack on our own soil, it will most certainly originate from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region."

## Methods of Diplomacy

- July 23, 2007: "I will pursue very vigorous diplomacy. And I will use a lot of high-level presidential envoys to test the waters, to feel the way. But certainly, we're not going to just have our president meet with Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez and, you know, the president of North Korea, Iran, and Syria until we know better what the way forward would be."

- Nov/Dec 2007 *Foreign Affairs*: "The United States must be prepared to act on its own to defend its vital interests, but effective international institutions make it much less likely that we will have to do so. . . . [I]nstead of disparaging these institutions for their failures, we should bring them in line with the power realities of the twenty-first century and the basic values embodied in such documents as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

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