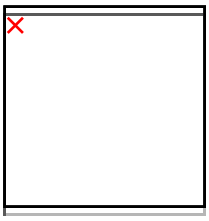
For War or Peace

Issues of war and peace in the twenty first century

FPIF Senior Analysts, "Empire Roundtable," Shamoo, A. E.



Adil E. Shamoo

I agree a great deal with Stephen Zunes's assessment regarding the new administration. And I derive most of my attitude toward this administration on foreign policy from the people appointed to run it. The appointments are in line with standard Democratic Party line on foreign policy. The Democratic Party leadership is derived from the realists' school of thought, as is the Republican leadership. This means that the moral component in our foreign policy is lacking despite some claims to the contrary. Of course, when the moral component accidentally matches our interest, we use it, and when it doesn't we discard it.

The U.S. hegemonic policies of shaping the world to our interest will continue, but the rhetoric will be different. I will call this new policy *neodemocratic* as compared to neoconservative. The new policy will use soft power first, followed by military means to corral other countries to our interest rather than treating them with equal respect.

Some actors on the new policies, to my despair, disdain other cultures and races as lesser gods as evidenced by their policies and not necessarily by their personal behavior. When Obama surrounds himself with these policymakers, he has no choice but to follow most of their advice. I voted for Obama. He has demonstrated a much more respectful attitude toward other nations than a large number of his appointments. I am still hopeful that his attitude and beliefs on social and political issues in foreign policy will prevail.

The biggest test for Obama's foreign policy will come on three issues: Iraq, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and Afghanistan. In Iraq, the exact number of residual troops isn't as important as their purpose. Are the residual troops for ensuring through covert intelligence and other means that the Iraqi government is a puppet government like the one in Egypt, or is it to cooperate with and reconstruct Iraq to become a free democracy like the ones in Western Europe?

In the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, will Obama truly press Israel to go forward on the two-state solution and stop the continued building of settlements? Or will he continue the silence of the Bush administration on Israel's continued negotiation and settlement building and call it just "unhelpful?" Will Obama give the green light, like the Bush administration, to a military onslaught on Palestinians to teach them a lesson? Finally, will Obama follow in Afghanistan a reconstruction strategy rather than purely a military one?

I hope Obama will be able to move in the direction of cooperation and peaceful coexistence in the world. I voted for him for that purpose.