

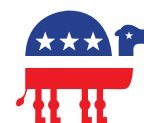


OBAMA ★ ONE YEAR ON

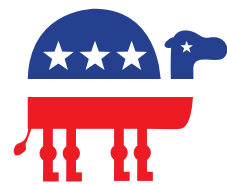
We hope you're  
sitting comfortably,

**Mr.  
President.**

**There are a  
few things  
we need to  
talk to you  
about..**



**No. 1: THE MIDDLE EAST...**



It was an unbelievable moment: On January 20, 2009, a man named Barack Hussein Obama stood before the American people and swore the oath of office to become President of the United States of America. The Middle East watched and hoped for better times. **One year later we ask the question: what has changed?**

OUR PANEL OF EXPERTS



**“No political leader should view the Muslim world as one monolithic entity”**  
**ARSALAN IFTIKHAR**  
 Contributing Editor, Islamica Magazine, Founder, TheMuslimGuy.com



**“The U.S. is like a big ocean liner that doesn’t change direction overnight.”**  
**JAMES ZOGBY**  
 Founder and President of the Arab American Institute



**“He has the chance to have a more profound impact than any other president in my lifetime”**  
**MORRIS REID**  
 Senior staff aide in the Clinton administration



**“President Obama needs to stop bombing Pakistan and start spending on schools”**  
**GEORGE GALLOWAY**  
 British politician, author, broadcaster and anti-war supporter



**“He represents hope for many people across the globe”**  
**DR SHAFEEQ GHABRA**  
 Professor of Political Science at Kuwait University



**“Intentions are important but they are not enough”**  
**ALASTAIR CROOKE**  
 Director and founder of the Conflicts Forum Inheritance



**“It’s a tragically disappointing case of ‘business as usual’ in Washington”**  
**ANAS ALTIKRITI**  
 President of the Cordoba Foundation. Former President of the Muslim Association of Britain



**“Deciding whether or not to allow Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon is the key question for this administration?”**  
**DR THEODORE KARASIK**  
 Director of research, Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis



**“Obama has made the war in Afghanistan his own and he is heading into disaster”**  
**ROBERT FISK**  
 Award-winning journalist and author, based in Beirut



**“There are other forces at work more powerful than the personal inclinations of the president”**  
**DR ILAN PAPPE**  
 Exeter Centre for Ethno-Political Studies



**“I don’t think he has done anything substantive yet”**  
**SARAH REPUCCI**  
 Consultant on Human Rights, based in New York



**“We cannot expect him to perform miracles”**  
**MAYA BOUTROS**  
 Lebanese Youth Activist

WE ASKED OUR PANEL: Should Obama have received the Nobel Peace Prize?  
 VOTES: Yes: ★★★ No: ★★★ We'll see: ★★★★★

PHOTO: AFP/GETTY IMAGES. SUPPLIED. RESEARCH BY SHARIFA AL BADI

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF A PRESIDENT

**January 20:** Inauguration speech: “On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear”



**January 22:** Orders the closure of the Guantanamo Bay facility within a year, and signs a prohibition on the use of torture



**January 23:** Orders the first two Predator airstrikes of his presidency - on Pakistan



**January 26:** Gives his first formal interview as president to the Arab TV network, Al Arabiya



Changing of the guard: President George W. Bush exits the world stage and a new era begins

**THE HANDOVER**

**One can only imagine what was going through the mind of President Obama as he entered the Oval Office for the first time on January 21. Aside from financial collapse, there were two wars to fight and a litany of hangovers to deal with from the previous administration's War on Terror. Resetting the clock on myriad disputes was a vital first step in the early months of 2009.**

**AI** From his early address to the Turkish parliament to his globally-televised speech in Cairo, President Obama has ushered in a new generation of change that people of all colours and religions can embrace. He has also indicated his willingness to utilise multilateral diplomacy in the bid to find lasting and peaceful solutions to the world's problems. **TK** Progress is beginning. There seems to be a lot of momentum towards opening up new avenues of cooperation and discussion in the Arab world. To sum up, I do see some forward movement in the Middle East.

**SR** Obama is trying to create more positive relationships, which are more engaged and less confrontational. Hopefully that will mean countries can work together instead of fearing each other.

**MB** George W. Bush saw things in black and white; Obama seems to see all the shades of grey in-between. He has shown respect to the differences in our cultures and shown respect to the principles of Islam.

**GG** The speech in Cairo was the most extraordinary speech about the Middle East any American has ever made. But, of course, in reality, nothing has changed. War continues in Iraq and Afghanistan and the danger of confrontation with Iran is not off the table.

**AC** Many people are attracted to him as a person. One side effect of Obama's policy is that it produced dialogue. You are seeing the beginning of political discussions in the region. His language has allowed internal actors to break down the polarisation and isolation that characterised the Bush years.

**PAKISTAN**

**Pakistan has become increasingly vulnerable to insurgents spilling over the border from Afghanistan. What, if anything, could America do to stabilise a region that - let's not forget - contains nuclear weapons?**

**AI** Pakistan is, sadly, in a very precarious situation right now. The main challenge for the country at the moment is re-establishing the concept of rule of law. If there is no law and order in the country, militancy can never be defeated successfully.

**TK** Pakistan should deal with the issue first because it is their problem, but if it fails then the US and other powers will intervene, which will be very ugly.

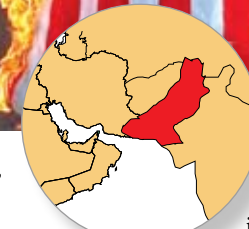
**AA** The Pakistani government needs to be strengthened internally and needs to be able to sort out its problem without interference. Sometimes, the solution may not be to the liking of the West but if it brings security to the region, then it should be pursued. And we must learn to hold back from intervention. The selling point of militant groups who wish to recruit young members is to point to the West's legacy of intervention. Militancy is neither imprinted on the DNA of the Pakistani people, nor is it a sudden realisation of Pakistanis that Islam calls for it.

**MR** Our real ally in that region is India. Whatever we need to do there needs to happen with India, the largest democracy in the world and one that has been an ally of the U.S. since day one. I think they will help us to stabilise that region more than anyone else. Pakistan usually tells us what we want to hear and tells other groups what they want to hear.

**GG** It was the West that armed and financed those so-called Holy Warriors in Afghanistan in the first place. The biggest price for that was paid by the Afghans, but the second biggest price was paid by Pakistan, who throughout the 1980s



Anti-American protesters burn the American flag in Pakistan



absorbed millions of refugees, weapons and unaccountable tonnes of drugs. Corruption seeped throughout the whole body politic and the failed nature of the Pakistani state means more than half of its children don't get any education at all. Instead they are going to the Madrasas and in some of those Madrasas is found the Jihadist outlook that has so bedevilled Afghanistan, and now stalks the streets of Pakistan. Obama needs to stop bombing Pakistan and start spending on schools. He needs to stabilise the price of rice, flour and oil so that the poor have something to lose, rather than nothing to lose.

**IP** I do not think that militancy in Pakistan is an American problem. America should reconcile itself to the fact that it is not wanted as an international policeman; it has abused that role too many times. The situation in Pakistan is not akin to the

rise of Nazism in Europe, which demanded a justified American intervention.

**RF** The real issue here is Kashmir. Obama got it wrong when he told his new Af-Pak envoy, Richard Holbrooke, that Kashmir was an Indian issue and that he wasn't allowed to talk to the Indians. What this meant for the Pakistanis was quite simple: America is building up India and helping it with its nuclear power as a bulwark against China; Pakistan is going to be left out in the cold. America is not interested in being a neutral middle man over Kashmir and the Pakistanis realise this all too well. And while they might, for their own domestic reasons, want to crush internal insurgencies, they're not going to help the Americans in Afghanistan. As long as America takes India's side, the war between the Taliban and America will continue.

**IRAQ**

**A war started in 2003 by President Bush still haunts America, as violence and political unrest continues. President Obama says most troops in Iraq will withdraw by 2011. Will it be a smooth transition to autonomy?**



**TK** The question is: How much violence will erupt after U.S. troops withdraw? Will they get involved again or leave it to the Iraqis?

**SG** Obama inherited a very difficult task, yet I do believe that Iraq will recover. Watching what Iraqis are trying to do in creating political platforms among different groups is a positive sign.

**MR** The U.S. must exit in the right way. If it just leaves and the situation blows up, it will not help the U.S. or the Iraqi people.

**GG** The people who smashed Iraq to pieces are the people who can fix it. I'm not saying peace will come if the foreigners leave, but peace will never come until they withdraw.



"Peace will never come until the foreigners withdraw"

**February 21:** The Department of Justice says detainees in Afghanistan's Bagram Air Base do not have the right to challenge their detention in U.S. courts, upholding the earlier Bush administration's decision



**February 27:** Outlines plans for gradual troop withdrawal from Iraq's main cities

**March 1-7:** Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visits the Middle East, promising aid for the Gaza Strip



**April 6:** Speaks to the Turkish Parliament in Ankara. "All of us have to change. And sometimes change is hard"



**May 20:** Hillary Clinton demands a total freeze on Israeli settlement activity

IRAN

**Iran is enriching uranium in defiance of UN sanctions. Iran's leadership says it wants fuel for power plants. America believes they are trying to build a bomb. Should President Obama intervene?**

**AI** The Iranian regime showed its true colours with the massive post-electoral crackdowns after the national elections in 2009. A government that has no political legitimacy also has no right to continue to violate international law if its intent is to enrich uranium for military purposes. As an international human rights lawyer, I support an end to all nuclear proliferation.

**SG** With military force, no. It is dangerous and will bring about a mentality of revenge. So the answer is to use diplomacy and treat Iran by the same measurements that the world community is treating Israel, North Korea, India and Pakistan. These are all countries with nuclear proliferation programmes.

**RF** These things are not insular. We have the Iran desk in Washington, there's the Israel/Palestine desk and there's an Iraq desk. But these things are not in isolation. If you live in the Middle East they are all part of the same thing. Iran does not respect Obama, not because they don't think he wants a peaceful settlement over nuclear facilities in Iran, but because he's proved himself to be utterly powerless in producing any kind of justice in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. If he is



Has he learned to love the bomb? President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announces plans to build ten more uranium enrichment facilities

police these things, says there is no evidence. But if I was Iran I would be building a bomb. Iraq was invaded because it did not have weapons of mass destruction, North Korea will never be invaded because it does have weapons of mass destruction. You don't have to be Einstein to work out the moral of that tale. I have always been against nuclear weapons, but I have never accepted the idea that some countries can have nuclear capability and threaten others who don't. The Iran problem will have to be solved by talking, trading and negotiating.

**AC** Iran considers production of nuclear weapons to be un-Islamic and there has been no evidence of a

weapons program. The U.S. should study the case more carefully before deciding to intervene.

respected in the Muslim world then things will happen. But if he's so frightened to lose the respect of Israel supporters in the U.S., well, that's his decision.

**SR** I think he needs to continue with the diplomacy that has already begun. If that is interference, then yes. The use of force would be a really bad idea.

**IP** No, but he should offer to negotiate a total nuclear disarmament in the area.

**MR** We have to take a stance now, open up dialogue, and engage with people. The more the Iranian people get to interact with the rest of the world, the more they will see that their government is not acting in their best interests.

**TK** If Iran is moving towards acquiring a nuclear weapon there should be a kind of interference.

Yet, will it stop Iran from getting a weapon anyway? A confrontation with Iran through a military strike of any sort will change the face of the Middle East dramatically and will have dire consequences. Deciding

**GG** I don't believe that they are building a bomb and the IAEA, whose job it is to

whether or not to allow Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon is the key question for the Obama administration.



**June 4:** Delivers his speech to the Muslim world in Cairo

CAIRO IN HIS WORDS

**"I consider it part of my responsibility as President of the United States to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear"**

PALESTINE-ISRAEL

**The most intractable problem in the region. Negotiations to end the suffering of Palestinians and find a political solution had all but ground to a halt under President Bush. Could progress finally be made?**

**AI** Most Americans now support a two-state solution where both Palestine and Israel can live in peace and prosperity. God willing, we will see that peaceful coexistence within our lifetime.

**TK** The Israel-Palestine conflict is the issue Obama should deal with first, as it is holding up other issues in the region. He should promote unity between the different factions in Palestine; convince it to behave more like a political actor, as opposed to a militant. Then it will be more balanced against Israel in negotiations.

**SG** He must focus on finding a solution and it has to be comprehensive.

However, it was a major mistake to put pressure on the Palestinian Authority to avoid a discussion of the Goldstone report [2009 United Nations fact-finding mission on the Gaza Conflict]. It weakened the Palestinian leader, Mahmoud Abbas.

**AA** The million and a half people in Gaza remain caged in the largest open prison cell in the world. Israel continues to expand its illegal occupation regardless of any consideration.

**SR** The situation seems to be less violent, so that is good. But the Israeli government is hostile to peace and the growth of settlements continues. I am more pessimistic than I have been in a long time, but that is because of [Israel PM] Netanyahu, not President Obama.

**MR** America should get Israel to stick to its promises. Israel needs America more than America needs Israel.

**RF** President Obama demanded a total freeze on settlements but has now dropped that entire condition and has instead told the Palestinians to negotiate with the Israelis - without a freeze on settlements. He also persuaded Mahmoud Abbas to try to postpone a debate on the Goldstone report, which made him even more powerless than he was before.

**JZ** I said months ago that if you want peace in the Middle East, pray that Obama gets healthcare reform passed



quickly. Obama is in the middle of a budget and jobs crisis. The question for him is this: which fight do you pick first?

**MB** President Obama has managed to gain the trust of the common man in Arab countries. Now he needs to deliver by stopping the illegal settlements and removing the wall of hatred between Palestinians and Israelis. He needs to rally the majority moderate Jews around the world, just like he did with the Arabs, and say, "Let's unite for peace".

**GG** The Palestine policy is little short of disastrous. The building of settlements - which is illegal and which Obama said must stop - is continuing. And now Mrs. Clinton has validated their continuation by backing Netanyahu. This marks a significant retreat and one can only speculate as to why that would be. Maybe he's in such trouble on the domestic track that he's afraid to open a confrontation with Israel's supporters in the United States.



Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas sign up to peace talks

**"I know that Islam has always been a part of America's history... The first nation to recognise my country was Morocco"**

**"There's one rule that lies at the heart of every religion - that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us"**

**YEMEN**

Yemen, a poor country with few resources, has never been the most stable of countries. But insurgency is now increasing and threatens to spill across its borders. Could it also become another haven for terrorists? And if so, what should the U.S. do about it?

**AI** Since non-violence is always preferred to violence, public diplomacy initiatives with regional partners are needed. If you take away people's incentive to fight, then they will focus on building a more productive future for their families.



Over 150,000 refugees have been created as a result of the Middle East's "Forgotten War"

**SG** It cannot be ignored because Yemen is on the verge of becoming another Somalia. There has to be a political resolution involving the surrounding countries.

**AA** First Rule: Problems happen. It's not the concern of America to get involved every time a conflict erupts. Second Rule: The best resolution is a local resolution. Third Rule: involvement by the U.S. is more likely to worsen the situation. Yemen, like many other Arab countries, is ruled by an unsavoury regime that has caused destruction of the country's social, economic, political and even religious fabric. However, it has done so with the continued blessings of the West, in exchange for safe-guarding our "interests". The conflict is an outcome of this unethical policy.

**RF** It has been a problem for a long time, but we were able to sort of ignore it. It isn't yet a failed state, but I was in Yemen before there was any union and the South was a pretty unruly place. The union was a very forced one; it should have remained a separate country for a longer period. You can't just stick two countries together.

**MB** America should help Yemen fight the more serious problems of poverty and ignorance. He should give Yemen pens not guns.

**AC** I do not believe the United States is capable of solving the issues, nor has it the intention. Like Somalia, it will offer weapons, which will increase the conflict. So it is best not to intervene.

**THE LEGACY**

President Obama has spent his first year in office fighting a barrage of foreign policy issues, while trying to keep his domestic agenda on track. Most commentators agree that, in tone at least, he made the right start. Does he have enough political capital left to secure any real victories for his Presidency?

**AI** The majority of Americans are sleeping better at night knowing that President Obama is presiding over an era of increased public diplomacy rather than military conflict. Sadly, we have eight years of George Bush's follies to remedy, and it will take more than one year of an Obama administration to fix that mess.

**AA** Obama inherited a complex situation, and expectations of him to change everything were unwarranted. However, apart from the change in rhetoric, it's a tragically disappointing case of "business as usual" in Washington. It is time the U.S. saw that ongoing suffering in the Middle East is down to the fact that most countries are governed by ruthless regimes - who gain their support from the U.S. and the West. This is inhumane and unsustainable. Either we support democracy, or we don't.

**MR** This president has the chance to have a more profound impact on Middle East relationships than any other president in my lifetime. He has engaged the Muslim world and they have responded positively. Now it's time to capitalise on that momentum. However he cannot do it alone; you need exchange programmes, you need to foster opportunities. The more people get to deal with each other, the more they will relate to one another.

**SG** He realises he represents an important hope for people across the globe. The question remains as to what extent the policymakers and the institutions are capable of making changes on the ground.

**RF** Governments are not about good guys and bad guys, which is what people thought

when they did the happy-clappy bit when Obama was elected. Governments are about power and the use of power, and we have to remember that at all times. Obama wants to be elected a second time round, and he's got a secretary of state who also wants to be president at some point. Is she going to stand up against the Israelis? Of course she's not. To address issues of real justice in the Middle East, it would require a one-term president on a suicide mission. You could argue President Carter tried it, and look what happened to him.

**MB** We understand the significance of the son of an African emigrant becoming President of the United States. We also understand that U.S. diplomacy is a complicated process and involves many factors that even the president cannot change. We cannot expect him to perform miracles overnight.

**IP** It seems that there are other forces at work more powerful than the personal inclinations of a president, so we should not hold our breath and wait for a shift in policy. This disappointment is shared by many people in the area.

**JZ** This was a great president elected at the worst time. So he was right to use the metaphor of guiding a big ocean liner that doesn't change direction overnight. The point is to keep it turning. I would argue that he has inherited some of the most difficult problems that any president has faced since Abraham Lincoln. Can he get out of it? Sure he can, but how many more distractions does he need? The focus has to be on the economy and jobs. In 2010, when Congress starts running for office, they won't give a damn about settlements and the Middle East.

**GG** The airplanes on 9/11 might have seemed to come out of a clear blue sky, but in fact they emerged from a swamp of hatred and bitterness. You have to drain the swamp of the bitterness and hatred and that means doing the very reverse of what we have been doing for half a century in the region. ☹

**AFGHANISTAN**

Much of Afghanistan remains ungovernable six years on from the U.S. invasion. President Obama agonised over what to do, and finally decided on a grand last push. 30,000 extra U.S. troops will try to flush out militancy once and for all. Can they be successful where so many other foreign armies have miserably failed?

**AI** We have to ensure that the Afghan government has credibility within the Afghan populace. With rampant evidence of fraud in the recent elections, we have to make sure that there is a transparent election in the future. If there is no legitimate government, an American troop surge will do nothing to help the situation on the ground.

**AC** No.

**SG** It is a possibility, but it must have clear goals. The military cannot be isolated from the political. Resolution will require dialogue within the Afghan



region and help from surrounding states, including Iran. The U.S. cannot govern the world on its own anymore.

**RF** He has made it his war and he's heading into a disaster. Now we have the most grotesque situation where Obama congratulated the president of Afghanistan on winning an election that the Americans themselves said was a



fraud. We're back to the same old situation of America supporting a dictator.

**MR** The U.S. has to make sure that it deals with the right person. It will never be the perfect situation, but the leader has to be someone who respects the rule of law. Right now, if America pulls out it would be a de-stabilising force.

The administration needs to be clear to the American people about why U.S. troops are there, and why it's in their best interests. They cannot just leave it for terrorists.

**MB** It might work in the short term, but America needs to build roads, schools and hospitals in Afghanistan, not more military bases.

**GG** The war is unwinnable, even with ten times the number of soldiers. We ought to have a peace conference with all the forces involved, including those fighting occupation. It's not our business to govern Afghanistan. All we have is a legitimate interest in ensuring that Afghanistan's territory is not used as a base for ignorance or terrorism to harm us. And I don't believe that such a solution is beyond our grasp. Of course it will be an Afghanistan that will scarcely be a Westminster-style model of democracy, but that's not our business. As I always say in Parliament, I'm not ready to sacrifice my son for voting in Helmand province, so why should I ask someone else to do so?

**June 27:** Troops begin to withdraw from Iraqi cities



**September 25:** Accuses Iran of constructing a secret nuclear facility near Qom

**November 1:** U.S. drops demand for Israeli settlement freeze and calls for a Palestinian return to negotiations without preconditions

**December 1:** Outlines his new Afghanistan battle strategy, including a troop surge of 30,000 soldiers



**December 10:** Collects the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize at a ceremony in Oslo

**"I am at the beginning of my labours on the world stage. Compared to some of the giants of history who have received this prize... my accomplishments are slight"**

