

RELEASE IN PART  
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**From:** Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 31, 2012 2:59 AM  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** Fw: WP Op Ed - A new doctrine of intervention? (Henry A. Kissinger)

FYI

**From:** Nuland, Victoria J  
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**To:** Sullivan, Jacob J; Schwerin, Daniel B  
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**From:** PA Clips [mailto:paclips@state.gov]  
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A new doctrine of intervention?  
 Washington Post Opinion  
 Friday, March 30, 7:27 PM  
 By Henry A. Kissinger

Not the least significant aspect of the Arab Spring is the redefinition of heretofore prevalent principles of foreign policy. As the United States is withdrawing from military efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan undertaken on the basis (however disputed) of American national security, it is reengaging in several other states in the region (albeit uncertainly) in the name of humanitarian intervention. Will democratic reconstruction replace national interest as the lodestar of Middle East policy? Is democratic reconstruction what the Arab Spring in fact represents?

The evolving consensus is that the United States is morally obliged to align with revolutionary movements in the Middle East as a kind of compensation for Cold War policies — invariably described as “misguided” — in which it cooperated with non-democratic governments in the region for security objectives. Then, it is alleged, supporting fragile governments in the name of international stability generated long-term instability. Even granting that some of those policies were continued beyond their utility, the Cold War structure lasted 30 years and induced decisive strategic transformations, such as Egypt’s abandonment of its alliance with the Soviet Union and the signing of the Camp David accords. The pattern now emerging, if it fails to establish an appropriate relationship to its proclaimed goals, risks being inherently unstable from inception, which could submerge the values it proclaimed.

The Arab Spring is widely presented as a regional, youth-led revolution on behalf of liberal democratic principles. Yet Libya is not ruled by such forces; it hardly continues as a state. Neither is Egypt, whose electoral majority (possibly permanent) is overwhelmingly Islamist. Nor do democrats seem to predominate in the Syrian opposition. The Arab League consensus on Syria is not shaped by countries previously distinguished by the practice or advocacy of democracy. Rather, it largely reflects the millennium-old conflict between Shiite and Sunni and an attempt to reclaim Sunni dominance from a Shiite minority. It is also precisely why so many minority groups, such as Druzes, Kurds and Christians, are uneasy about regime change in Syria.

The confluence of many disparate grievances avowing general slogans is not yet a democratic outcome. With victory comes the need to distill a democratic evolution and establish a new locus of authority. The more sweeping the destruction of the existing order, the more difficult establishment of domestic authority is likely to prove and the more likely is the resort to force or the imposition of a universal ideology. The more fragmented a society grows, the greater the temptation to foster unity by appeals to a vision of a merged nationalism and Islamism targeting Western values.

We must take care lest, in an era of shortened attention spans, revolutions turn, for the outside world, into a transitory Internet experience — watched intently for a few key moments, then tuned out once the main event is deemed over. The revolution will have to be judged by its destination, not its origin; its outcome, not its proclamations.

For the United States, a doctrine of general humanitarian intervention in Middle East revolutions will prove unsustainable unless linked to a concept of American national security. Intervention needs to consider the strategic significance and social cohesion of a country (including the possibility of fracturing its complex sectarian makeup) and evaluate what can plausibly be constructed in place of the old regime. At this writing, traditional fundamentalist political forces, reinforced by alliance with radical revolutionaries, threaten to dominate the process while the social-network elements that shaped the beginning are being marginalized.

U.S. public opinion has already recoiled from the scope of the efforts required to transform Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. Do we believe that a less explicitly strategic involvement disclaiming a U.S. national interest will make nation-building less complex? Do we have a preference as to which groups come to power? Or are we agnostic so long as the mechanisms are electoral? If the latter, how do we avoid fostering a new absolutism legitimized by managed plebiscites and sect-based permanent majorities? What outcomes are compatible with America's core strategic interests in the region? Will it be possible to combine strategic withdrawal from key countries and reduced military expenditures with doctrines of universal humanitarian intervention? Discussion of these issues has been largely absent from the debate over U.S. foreign policy regarding the Arab Spring.

For more than half a century, U.S. policy in the Middle East has been guided by several core security objectives: preventing any power in the region from emerging as a hegemon; ensuring the free flow of energy resources, still vital to the operation of the world economy; and attempting to broker a durable peace between Israel and its neighbors, including a settlement with the Palestinian Arabs. In the past decade, Iran has emerged as the principal challenge to all three. A process that ends with regional governments either too weak or too anti-Western in their orientation to lend support to these outcomes, and in which U.S. partnerships are no longer welcomed, must evoke U.S. strategic concerns — regardless of the electoral mechanisms by which these governments come to power. Within the framework of these general limits, U.S. policy has significant scope for creativity in promoting humanitarian and democratic values.

The United States should be prepared to deal with democratically elected Islamist governments. But it is also free to pursue a standard principle of traditional foreign policy — to condition its stance on the alignment of its interests with the actions of the government in question.

U.S. conduct during the Arab upheavals has so far avoided making America an obstacle to the revolutionary transformations. This is not a minor achievement. But it is one component of a successful approach. U.S. policy will, in the end, also be judged by whether what emerges from the Arab Spring improves the reformed states' responsibility toward the international order and humane institutions.

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