

DEBATE

Christian Graeff, Ambassador of France

Ma question est pour mon collègue Djerejian, mais ce n'est pas à mon collègue diplomate à qui je m'adresse, c'est au fondateur du James A. Baker III Institute. C'est un chercheur français qui interroge un chercheur américain. On entend beaucoup parler dans ce genre de réunions de très haut niveau qui ont un intérêt considérable et j'espère que le retentissement sera à la hauteur de l'intérêt. On entend beaucoup parler des points de vue gouvernementaux. Ma question comme chercheur depuis douze ans et comme acteur depuis six ans et je vous la pose : y a-t-il une place et un rôle pour la société civile dans la résolution des conflits locaux régionaux particulièrement en Méditerranée orientale et au Moyen-Orient ? Alors, vous, dans votre vision pure et dure d'institut américain, n'est-ce pas, de pensée politique, est-ce que vous voyez pour nous autres la petite Europe et ses voisins du Sud, est-ce que vous voyez une place et un rôle pour les ONG, on les appelle comme ça, c'est-à-dire pour des mouvements populaires pris en tenaille entre les gouvernements, les politiques gouvernementales et d'autres puissances, je ne les énumérerai pas toutes, mais on peut citer par exemple puisqu'on parle du Moyen-Orient, les grands groupes et les grandes compagnies, pétrolières par exemple, entre autres. Est-ce que vous croyez qu'il y a dans notre monde d'aujourd'hui au XXIe siècle encore une fois une place et un rôle pour des mouvements de jeunesse pour la rencontre libre et la libre discussion le dialogue non seulement culturel mais total entre des futurs leaders israéliens, malheureusement Meir Sheerit est parti, palestiniens, libanais, syriens, chypriotes du Nord et du Sud, c'est ce que nous avons fait nous aux Brigades internationales pour la Paix, au CREJMO Centre de rencontre de la jeunesse depuis six ans à Larnaca à Chypre et nous allons faire, nous allons vouer à ce thème la première université d'été à Limassol en juillet prochain. Quel est votre opinion, cher Ed ?

Mehmet Ali Birand, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Anchor for Kanal D

Can you keep the question? I will get some more questions. Please, questions 1 minute, answers 1 minute. Otherwise, we are not going to be able to handle this.

Jim Hoagland, Contributing Editor to *The Washington Post*

My question is a quick clarification from Jean-David Levitte. Jean-David you said that we will not allow Iran to acquire, and I am not clear on whether you meant capability to build a bomb or to acquire a bomb. Which position do you take?

Natalie Nougayrède, Journalist at *Le Monde*

Natalie Nougayrède du journal *Le Monde*. Je voulais poser deux petites questions à Jean-David Levitte et l'ambassadeur Djerejian. A propos des deux éléments de dynamite, les deux morceaux de dynamite dans ce que Jean-David Levitte a dit tout à l'heure, à mon avis, un, les sanctions s'agissant de l'Iran sont devenues une partie du problème et non pas une partie de la solution, je voulais savoir, puisqu'il nous a expliqué que de son point de vue les sanctions, l'effet des sanctions accélère le mouvement de l'Iran vers la bombe. A quel moment est-ce que ce pivot a été franchi, c'est-à-dire les sanctions sont un problème et non pas une partie de la solution ? Et est-ce que l'ambassadeur Djerejian pourrait nous dire si, do you think President Obama will be pushing for the lifting of sanctions on Iran as a major element of the solution? Ma deuxième question est sur la Syrie, Jean-David Levitte a dit que, et c'était un point de vue très intéressant je trouve, que l'accélération de la solution sur la Syrie mettra tout le monde en meilleure posture pour résoudre le problème iranien. Est-ce que c'est un avis qui est partagé par l'ambassadeur Djerejian, et comment est-ce que le Président Obama peut accélérer la solution sur la Syrie ? Merci. Yes, Ambassador Djerejian, I wanted to ask how do you think President Obama can accelerate, the end result, the solution of the Syrian problem? If, as Jean-David has said, solving, accelerating the solution of Syria would put us whole in a better position to solve the Iran issue.

Serguei Karaganov, Chairman of the Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy



We have had a very eloquent debate. It is my 1576th debate which I have heard with great interest and it was remarkably interesting. It is clear that we are as far away from the solution of the problem as we used to, maybe a bit further. I have this question for everybody: when the international community and the Israeli-Palestinian people would be ready for a position of peace? Because it is clear that the two sides are unable to solve the problem and we will have to have that forever, I mean with all these bad repercussions. When the international community will send forces there if there is the theoretical possibility? Thank you.

Dominique Moïsi, Special Advisor at Ifri

Let me try to formulate my question. We have been discussing the two-state solution. Is it still on the table when you see what the Israelis are doing on the ground? And what the Hamas says in Gaza? It is clear that what has happened at the United Nations, the recognition of the Palestinian Authority and Palestine, with a status of observer came much too late. To some extent, this should have come much earlier. But now it seems that history has been moving on, and at the last minute, there is the kind of ultimate hope that America will find and impose a solution but it is too late on the ground, it is too late in the heads of the people and the America we have in front of us is not the America that existed, let's say, a few years ago. So, is it a moment when we can say, well it could have been but it didn't take place?

Edward Djerejian, Founding Director of James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, former US Ambassador to Syria

First Dominique Moïsi. I think in terms of the Arab-Israeli conflict, you are absolutely right. The situation has been too prolonged, many opportunities missed. When we had opportunities and the United States took the lead with our European partners and Arab partners, we were able to do something like the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991. The point is that if you look at the Arab-Israeli conflict, I will try to be as objective as I can on this, I do not believe that Israel can remain a democratic Jewish state if it does not come to a two-state solution with the Palestinians. And the reason I say that is for three compelling reasons: First, demography, between now and 10, 20 years from now, the Palestinian Arab population between the Jordan River and Israel will be increasingly dominant and the Jewish population will become more and more less of the equation. So if Israel wants to define itself as a democratic Jewish state, this is a huge problem. Secondly, I do not believe Israel can remain democratic if it continues to occupy territory and people. You cannot remain a democracy if you are in constant occupation. So there is a compelling reason. Don't take it from me, Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in Washington just last week said that the primary task of any Israeli Prime Minister is to come to a two-state solution. If you want to talk about an existential threat to a democratic Jewish state it is the non-resolution of this issue. So the answer to your question is that the self-interest of the parties, the Israelis and the Palestinians, to have their state is overwhelming. So what we need, and what we do not have frankly, is the necessary political leadership. We do not have the political leadership in Israel. Abu Mazen has been as you mentioned terribly weakened by Hamas and in Washington we have a President that we have to wait and see if he is going to engage on this question. My last point is that, and it is not because I am an American I am saying this, I do not believe that there will be an Israeli-Palestinian agreement without a strong President in Washington bringing the parties together.

In response to civil society and public opinion, I could not agree with you more that this is essential but it has come with the Arab awakening or the Arab Spring. Public opinion in the Arab and the Muslim world has become much more important than it was under the dictatorships. And therefore, the new leaders be they in Cairo, in Tunis, or wherever in the Arab world, they will have to pay much more attention to public opinion, civil society, and therefore there is an opening here, I believe, for civil society, in the broader Middle East that we should take advantage of in building democratic institutions, private entrepreneurship, and all the aspects of civil society that we know in the West that can be adopted in the Arab world should be pursued. And then the third question, if I understood you correctly if Obama accelerates the situation in Syria...

Mehmet Ali Birand, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Anchor for Kanal D

Will that help?



Edward Djerejian, Founding Director of James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, former US Ambassador to Syria

Will that help? I think the argument there is that the longer the Assad regime remains in power and the longer the blood-letting occurs on the ground, the stronger the Salafists and the Islamic radicals will be in the opposition movement in Syria. The question again, as I stated in my remarks, is how does the international community assert itself in Syria without really making the situation worse and how could it intervene in a manner in which there is sustained political transition in Syria?

Manuel Hassassian, Ambassador of Palestine to the United Kingdom

Let me make some few remarks.

First, I believe that the international community owes it to the Palestinian people to resolve their plight by recognizing a Palestinian state. For decades, the Palestinian people have been denied their natural and historical right to independence and freedom. The Israeli occupation has been one of the longest occupations in modern history. I agree with Ambassador Djerejian that Israel cannot claim to be a democratic state while it is occupying another country and violating international law on a daily basis. In response to Mr Meir Sheerit, the reason why we went to the United Nations is because we wanted to reaffirm that Israel has no valid claim to any parts of the territory it occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, and that Israel's colonization of Palestinian land is illegal. Following our recognition as a non-member state we will become a state under occupation and the occupied territories will no longer be considered disputed territories as Israel claims. Implementing international law and the Geneva Conventions should be the name of the game.

Second, we went to salvage the two-state solution which has an international consensus. The Palestinians for decades have been the underdog succumbing to the over-dog; despite the processes and initiatives that we have been engaged in and the various United Nations resolutions in support of our rights nothing on the ground materialised. This is due to the failure of the United States to use its political teeth by pressuring Israel to accept the two-state solution while we have now a pragmatic and moderate President H.E. Mahmoud Abbas who is willing to go an extra mile and make peace with Israel. Even though I still have hope for the two-state solution, the reality and now I remove my diplomatic hat is the only option left for us and for the same exact reasons that Ambassador Djerejian has states is a one-state solution. And this one-state solution has two interpretations; a Palestinian one which believes in a one man one vote and an Israeli one that maintains the status quo plus; meaning that Israel wants to maintain the territories and give the Palestinians a certain kind of limited autonomy authorising us to deal with health, education, collect our garbage to list a few without any political independence by controlling our borders and sovereignty. This, sir is Israel's interpretation of a one state solution. In regards to Israel creating a Jewish democratic state; we have to understand that a Jewish democratic state would infringe on the rights of 1.5 million Palestinians who live inside Israel by ethnically cleansing them from the State of Israel proper and transferring them to the West Bank or Arab countries and it means that Israel is not willing to accommodate or negotiate the question of the refugees and their right of return.

Jean-David Levitte, Distinguished Fellow, The Brookings Institution; former Diplomatic Advisor and Sherpa of President Nicolas Sarkozy

En deux minutes, pour répondre d'abord à Jim Hoagland sur la question du calendrier de la marche vers l'arme nucléaire, il y a trois marches. La première c'est le seuil d'irréversibilité et pour les Israéliens c'est le moment le plus important, c'est-à-dire, le moment à partir duquel ils ne peuvent plus arrêter la marche de l'Iran vers l'arme nucléaire et on y est pratiquement avec l'usine de Fordo à côté de Rome qui est très enterrée et où de plus en plus est produit l'enrichissement à 20% et c'est très facile et très rapide de passer de 20 à 90%. Donc on est presque au seuil d'irréversibilité. Là c'est la première étape, celle qui concerne les Israéliens parce que après...

Mehmet Ali Birand, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Anchor for Kanal D

C'est quelques mois, alors ?



Jean-David Levitte, Distinguished Fellow, The Brookings Institution; former Diplomatic Advisor and Sherpa of President Nicolas Sarkozy

C'est quelques mois... Personne ne le sait exactement mais ça se compte en mois. Ensuite, il y a une deuxième étape qui est la capacité d'assembler l'arme nucléaire. Et les deux marchent en parallèle en réalité, et là c'est peut-être quelques mois de plus mais pas beaucoup. Autrement dit, ces deux calendriers-là, sont très proches, c'est une question de mois. Et puis il y a la troisième étape qui est importante pour le Président Obama, je crois, sous le contrôle de Ed, qui est le début de l'assemblage d'une arme nucléaire parce que c'est le moment ultime où on peut décider d'agir et c'est en même temps sur le plan diplomatique le moment où on est le plus convaincant pour dire au partenaire éventuel dans une coalition c'est l'époque où on doit agir sinon il sera trop tard. Et donc je crois qu'on est presque à l'irréversibilité, presque à la capacité d'assembler l'arme mais on n'est pas encore à l'assemblage de l'arme, ça, ça peut prendre le temps politique que décideront les Iraniens. Alors deuxièmement pour répondre à Natalie Nougayrède, non seulement moi je suis pour les sanctions économiques mais je crois pouvoir dire que le Président de la République française a été le plus engagé pour imposer à l'Iran les sanctions les plus dures et il faut bien comprendre le raisonnement. Quel est l'objectif numéro un du régime de Khamenei ? Survivre. Et donc la seule façon de l'amener à renoncer à son objectif numéro deux qui est l'arme nucléaire c'est à travers les sanctions économiques menacer la survie du régime à travers les troubles sociaux que provoquent les sanctions économiques. Et à ce moment-là le régime a le choix entre sa survie politique en négociant la suspension du programme nucléaire ou bien prendre le risque de tout perdre pour avoir l'arme nucléaire. Donc je suis complètement pour les sanctions économiques, mais il faut bien savoir qu'elles ont l'effet paradoxal que je soulignais, d'engager une course contre le temps, entre le résultat des troubles sociaux et le résultat espéré d'un succès de la négociation diplomatique.

Mehmet Ali Birand, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Anchor for Kanal D

Mona, mettez les points sur les i et finissons avec le débat.

Mona Makram-Ebeid, Former Member of Parliament, Egypt, Distinguished Lecturer, American University in Cairo, Member of the National Council for Human Rights

I would repeat my question to Ambassador Djerejian. Putin told you that you were naïve if you were supporting the Islamists. You never answered me: are you naïve?

Edward Djerejian, Founding Director of James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, former US Ambassador to Syria

In term of the United States, I do not think we are naïve.

Mehmet Ali Birand, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Anchor for Kanal D

Americans can never be naïve. Well, thank you all very much.