

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 28, 2011 5:29 PM
To: H
Subject: FW: from politico today

Very solid stuff below.

From: Crocker, Bathsheba N
Sent: Monday, March 28, 2011 4:59 PM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: from politico today

(via Chester Crocker!). Last bit may be useful to our thinking of overarching principles as we approach a new ME strategy...

- Obama should address the nation as if we are thinking adults who are capable of looking beyond breathless correspondents and combative cable news anchors to the hard challenges of coping with a region in turmoil. As Sen. John McCain observed on TV yesterday, these are momentous, historical events that could transform a region and bring it into the modern age, with potential global significance. The stakes are very high. And we are not in charge of the Arab awakening. Arabs are. Nonetheless, as a global power we can and should play a constructive hand and help shape events.

He should describe the reasons for the U.S. to respond and to act in a differentiated way - in recognition of the Arab world's tremendous diversity. He should explain why we need a differentiated strategy and why a cookie cutter won't work in such a diverse geography.

How to explain this? He should explain what the differences are in the Arab nations affected by this awakening:

- they differ by the nature of incumbent regimes (transitioning, ugly autocrats, friendly autocrats).
- they differ by the nature of the societies themselves and especially the opposition forces that are taking to the streets (sectarian, tribal, secular, Islamist, civil society-led, angry unemployed youth, etc.)
- and they differ by the nature of U.S. interests in various countries, ranging from marginal to decisively important.

Obama should say why a global power must make choices based on interests and priorities, and why we must avoid childish conversations in which we debate whether the U.S. is showing "hypocrisy" or "inconsistency" when it reacts differently in different cases. Consistency is hardly a virtue if we are consistently wrong.

Sheba Crocker
 Principal Deputy Director
 Office of Policy Planning