

Foreward

*Sherman Teichman, Executive Director of the Institute for
Global Leadership*

Sixty-five million Americans voted for the President of the United States, Barack Hussein Obama. As Hendrik Hertzberg wrote in the *New Yorker*, “The President of the United States will be a person whose first name is a Swahili word derived from the Arabic (it means ‘blessing’), whose middle name is not only that of a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad but also of the original target of an ongoing American war, and whose last name rhymes nicely with ‘Osama’. That’s not a name; it’s a catastrophe, at least in American politics.”

It is a stunning development for the United States, and his election has transfixed the world, but how it will affect the Middle East is surely uncertain. Already there are scathing critiques of the selection of Rahm Emmanuel as chief of staff for his family’s alleged Lehi/Stern Gang affiliations, full-page ads in support of the Saudi government’s approach to peace, and a *New York Times* op-ed recounting of blogs of the Arab world, indicating that the Middle East is still a region of suspicion, skepticism and deep cynicism.

One pivotal and strident part of the election centered on the desirability, or the dangerous naivety, of Obama’s willingness to meet highly controversial leaders, allegedly “without preconditions.”

This debate is core to NIMEP’s history and trajectory of encounter. It resonates with our Institute’s efforts to prepare our students for the necessity of such controversial encounter, and our pedagogical efforts to hone acute, discerning listening skills, essential for conflict prevention, management and, hopefully, eventual reconciliation. (An account by one of NIMEP’s student creators, Rachel Brandenburg, a Fulbright Fellow to Israel, who remains a very vital force in our deliberations, can be found in her essay in the Spring 2005 edition of *NIMEP Insights*.)

In the introduction to the previous volume of *NIMEP Insights*, I wrote of our forum, “Iraq Moving Forward.” It began a controversial, several-year effort that culminated in a July 2008 Baghdad meeting to announce the “Helsinki II Agreement of Principles and Mechanisms,” our Institute’s effort to contribute to the transcending of sectarian warfare and killings in Iraq. We had initially invited pivotal actors,

including Ali Allawi, former Iraqi minister of defense; Lt. Col. Isaiah (Ike) Wilson III, U.S. Army, one of General Petraeus' most senior officers in Iraq; Ambassador Peter Galbraith; and the proxy of Iraqi National Security Adviser Mouwafak Al-Rubaie, Haider Al Abadi, a senior minister in Maliki's government, and a member of the Iraqi Council of Representatives. We hoped that these invitations would create a climate of dialogue.

Pursuing a vision and process honed previously in Northern Ireland and South Africa by our Institute's INSPIRE Fellow, Padraig O'Malley, the Moakley Professor of the University of Massachusetts Boston, we operated under the premise that "people from divided societies are in the best position to help other people from divided societies."

Padraig is a reconciliation expert who has worked in these regions for three decades. Drawing on the painful pasts of both conflicts, we convened a coterie of extraordinary leaders who had transcended their intense parochialism. They included Martin McGuinness, the former IRA commander and now the deputy first minister of Northern Ireland; Lord Alderdice, the chairman of the Northern Irish decommissioning body; Mac Maharaj, the leader of the ANC underground, a close confidant of Mandela who had been imprisoned with him for twelve years, and who asserted Mac was the most tortured man in the ANC struggle.

Others included Cyril Ramaphosa, the leader of the most powerful trade union in South Africa, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM); and Roelf Meyer, minister of law and constitution in the de Klerck government of the National Party, who had worked closely with Cyril, the lead ANC negotiator during the talks, to bring about a peaceful end to apartheid and steer the country toward its first democratic elections in April 1994.

The principles agreed to by all sectors of the Iraqi political spectrum, from Shi'ite tribal chieftains to Kurdish leaders, ranged from a renunciation of terrorism and factionalism in government to respect for an independent judiciary; and an effort to lay the groundwork for the disbanding militias by having the parties promise to "resolve disputes and a ban on the use of arms by armed groups during negotiations." The full Principles and Mechanisms are reprinted in this volume.

The process is still underway. Representative William Delahunt (D-Mass.), a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, and chairman of the Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight, held congressional hearings in October in D.C.

on our efforts at Iraqi political reconciliation trying to facilitate the creation of political space. Our students prepared the briefing materials on the conflicts, staffed the Helsinki II meeting, and witnessed the signings in Finland. One of the students, Institute Synaptic Scholar Kelsi Stine, has continued to intern in South Africa with the Finnish NGO Conflict Management Initiative, founded by our Helsinki host, Finnish President and former Crisis Group Chairman Martti Ahtisaari. Another, J.J. Emru, traveled to Beirut with our Empower poverty alleviation program to intern for Kiva, the microfinance organization. This is the intent, the credo of the Institute, “to educate our students to ‘think beyond boundaries, act across borders.’”

Offering these opportunities is a hallmark of the Institute. Padraig, a longtime ally, took the Institute’s first immersive education research student with him to Northern Ireland in 1986. There they interviewed the families of the IRA hunger strikers, including the family of their leader, Bobby Sands, for Padraig’s book, “Biting At The Grave : The IRA Hunger Strikes and the Politics of Despair”.

This issue of NIMEP Insights presents some of the rich research yield of NIMEP’s recent trip to Syria. In Damascus, Aleppo and on the Golan Heights, trip participants met with a wide spectrum of figures, including Dr. Bouthaina Shaaban, minister of expatriate affairs and former adviser to Foreign Minister Walid Muallem; Waddah Abd Rabbo, founder and editor-in-chief of Al-Watan, as well as first non-government-controlled newspaper; Nabil Maleh, film director and former dissident part of “Damascus Spring”; Major Stefan Eder, the public relations officer for the UNDOF operation in the Golan Heights; Dr. Sami Moubayed, political analyst and Syrian University professor; Khaled Meshal, chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau; Grand Mufti Ahmad Hassoun, the highest-ranked Sunni cleric in Syria; and Patriarch Ignatius Iwas, supreme head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church.

I want to acknowledge the interactions of both our graduate and undergraduate students in the planning and execution of this workshop. Special thanks is due to our excellent Syria group leader, Fletcher School Ph.D. candidate David Ethan Corbin, for his leadership on the ground and his excellent article on Bashar al-Asad here in Insights. It is fascinating, and telling that one of the more prestigious Middle East think tanks of our country, the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, eagerly sought to debrief our NIMEP delegation because of its unusual access to the leadership of Hamas in

Damascus.

We sponsor this type of workshop mindful of the trust we can place in our students, who without exception have arisen to the challenge to comprehend, to contest, to think independently, devoid of cant and ideology. It is the hallmark of NIMEP, and of all of the Institute's initiatives.

This summer, one of the Institute's core programs, Alliance Linking Leaders in Education and the Services (ALLIES), held its second consecutive Joint Research Project with Tufts students, cadets and midshipmen from the USMA at West Point and the USNA in Annapolis, in Amman, Jordan, thinking together and with Jordanian students. Their research centered on the impact of the Iraq war on Jordanian society.

For those with a very particularistic agenda, we have been accused at times of consorting with enemies. There is a radical difference between this baseless accusation and the difficult, highly enervating, at times even odious, but essential work to comprehend and challenge one's antagonists. We believe in this strongly. We are, for instance, now working to assist one of our board members, Tim Phillips, the co-founder of the Project on Justice in Times of Transition (now housed in our Institute), develop and create a film project entitled "Talking with Enemy."

We remain tremendously grateful to the leadership of the University, and the confidence in the Institute and its efforts expressed by Tufts' Provost Jamshed Bharucha and Associate Provost Vincent Manno, who understand our efforts as "transformational education" and as efforts to overcome our "reptilian brains." Pdraig understood that without abandoning the passion for revenge there will never be any chance of reconciliation. It is a powerful challenge.

We witnessed this during the wrenching moments of EPIIC's symposium, "The Politics of Fear," which included encounters between officers of the South African secret police and their victims; the tearful exchanges between leaders of the ANC and students from our service academies over the tactics of resistance and torture, the recounting of imprisonment and interrogation. Such moments stimulated our Board Chair Robert Bendetson, a Tufts alumnus trustee, to create the Helsinki effort and to underwrite it.

We are acutely mindful of the complexity inherent in these exchanges and of the imperfections and limitations of truth and reconciliation commissions. Yet we are determined to continue to think about how to

create ethical and sophisticated leadership. The first in our occasional series on transformational leadership, in collaboration with the Office of the Provost, honored President Martti Ahtasaari, our host in Helsinki, several weeks before the announcement of his richly deserved Nobel Peace Prize.

Through her inquiry into the Muslim Brotherhood's impact on the Arab Republic of Egypt, Michele Paison's scholarship seeks to understand the links between politics and religions and the impact of theological ideas and messianic passions alive in every religion. This edition's dedicated and thoughtful core of editors includes Khaled Al-Sharikh, a sophomore from Kuwait, the son of a diplomat, majoring in International Relations and economics; junior James Kennedy, who studied in Israel at the Hebrew University and at the American Task Force on Palestine in D.C.; and an Institute Synaptic Scholar, David Mou, a Chinese-American and a chair of the IR Director's Leadership Council .

We believe that we are building a community. Khaled's sister, Shamael Al-Sharikh, an Institute student in 1997, went on to complete her master's degree at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London. Now a columnist for the Kuwait Times, writing mostly on socio-political issues, and a team leader in the Oil Sector Services Company, she is a political activist for women's rights issues in Kuwait.

It is a community dedicated to dialogue, persistent efforts to understand, to probe, to suspend preconceptions. The excellent articles on society and inequality dilemmas in Israel by Hana Agha and Jessica Herrmann were derived from their research for the 2007/08 EPIIC "Global Poverty and Inequality" colloquium. Palestinian-Jordanian and Jewish American students, they also learned about insight, openness and maturity from their personal interactions conducting their research.

As part of our commitment to the Clinton Global Initiative and the internationalization of EPIIC, they were paired with Israeli-Palestinians, an Ethiopian Jewish immigrant, and the top law school student at Haifa University, and were hosted by the University of Haifa Law School.

A special thanks is due to Fletcher student and Israeli lawyer Dahlia Shaham, our current EPIIC TA and NIMEP adviser, for her consultation and perspective on these issues. She was formerly an analyst at the Reut Institute in Israel, a non-partisan nonprofit policy group designed to provide real-time, long-term, strategic, pro-bono decision support

to the government of Israel.

This year, NIMEP will revisit its origins and return to Israel and the West Bank in January under the valued and caring leadership of James Kennedy, David Mou and Israeli-American sophomore Amit Paz.

Dahlia will be its escort. She was chosen as the sole student speaker to commemorate the Fletcher School's 75th anniversary. This excerpt is from her address:

From personal experience I can say that it has been a rewarding choice. I came to Fletcher from Israel quite jaded from the old paradigms surrounding the conflict in the Middle East, and from the vicious cycle of violence and despair that they create. I came here hoping to find a new outlook and I found a lot more than that.

I found friends from Lebanon, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia who are just as unwilling as I am to cooperate with prejudice. I found a multidisciplinary faculty who were willing and able to guide me through paths of economic, financial and legal analysis that are rarely applied to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Most importantly, I found a community of free thinkers, not only in Fletcher, but in the greater Tufts community as well, through my exposure to the Institute for Global Leadership. Ours is a community that nurtures creativity instead of slamming it down with doubt. For many of us who come from areas of protracted conflict and failed politics, this wealth of perspectives is literally a breath of fresh air.

Well said . Thank you.