
A NEW AND POTENTIALLY DECISIVE FACTOR IN THE MAKING OF U.S. MIDDLE EAST POLICY

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In a democracy, most major policy issues, both foreign and domestic, are decided or influenced by public debate. This involvement of the electorate in decision-making is not only one of the exciting features of our system, but it is also our principal source of strength. Especially in an election year, we see the dynamic unleashed by the interaction among candidates in public debate, followed by the public reaction: at candidates' public forums, in opinion polls, and, finally, in voting booths.

Through this process of public democratic debate, we have established on the most fundamental of levels a system of checks and balances acting as a corrective, especially with regard to those critical questions of policy which require broad public support for resolution and/or implementation.

We have all seen this dynamic at work in such major issues of public importance as equal rights for blacks and women, the nuclear arms race, East-West relations, and the state of the economy.

There is, however, one major issue of national importance that has not, until now, been debated in a presidential election year. This is, of course, the direction of U.S. policy in the Middle East.



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