

Report

Clinton versus Trump: Two-Distant Visions for America

*Dr. Mohammed Cherkaoui **

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Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump [Reuters]

Abstract

The war of narratives between Trump and Clinton has revealed some deep ideological contrast and personal animosity between two very ambitious presidential candidates. Ironically, the Obama Doctrine remains a catalyst factor in shaping their political and philosophical differences and nuances of America's future leadership. Clinton's platform embodies status-quo politics with some possible hawkish amendments of the U.S. foreign policy; whereas Trump's vision aspires to create radical change and turn the Obama Administration's policies on their heads. This report analyses the two diverging frameworks of the U.S. foreign policy vis-à-vis six hot issues in the world: the ISIL dilemma, the Syrian crisis, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iran's nuclear ambitions, the geo-strategic alliance with the Gulf States, and the Islamic World. It also weighs on America's hard choice between isolationism and interventionism starting January 20, 2017.

Introduction

During the national conventions of the Republican Party in Cleveland [July 18-22] and the Democratic Party in Philadelphia [July 24-29], Trump and Clinton appeared at the biggest political platform worldwide to present their respective political agendas for America. These monumental exposures have, ten days apart, have energized the stark contention about 'revolutionizing' or 'reforming' national policies and repositioning America's status in the world.

Unlike any other candidate in modern American politics, Trump sums up the most important difference between his plan and that of his opponents by pledging to "put America First. Americanism, not globalism, will be our credo. As long as we are led by

politicians who will not put America First, then we can be assured that other nations will not treat America with respect.”(1)

Before one of them makes the glory walk to the White House in January 2017, America has to face a tough choice between two very different foreign-policy projects: Trump’s interest-based isolationism and Clinton’s calculated interventionism in hot zones. Isolationism derives its meaning from a famous speech delivered by U.S. Secretary of State John Quincy Adams in 1821 when he stated, "America does not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.”(2)

However, Trump’s isolationism does not mean accepting the rise of other nations and America’s inward evolution, but rather maximizing its geo-strategic and monetary interests across the board: domestically, globally, and bilaterally with its allies. He agreed with a suggestion that his foreign policy ideas might best be summed up as “America First.” In other words, the United States will not be engaged in foreign conflicts over ideals like "freedom" and "democracy", and will instead concentrate on strengthening itself at home.

Subsequently, Trump has turned the table against America’s closest allies in NATO which he considers to be “obsolete”, and rejected the utility of the United Nations as the leading diplomatic organization of the world; “I talked about NATO and we fund disproportionately, the United Nations, we get nothing out of the United Nations other than good real estate prices,”(3) he said.

For many Americans, Trump represents a “paranoid style” of politics as he has often indulged in conspiracy theories. Political scientist Kim Holmes notices “Trump has blown the cover off this deceptive game. He’s showing that old-fashioned right-wing paranoia, which had been contained for decades by the decorum and restraint of both mainstream liberalism and conservatism, is back.”(4)

Furthermore, Clinton asserts that electing Trump, as commander in chief, would be "an historic mistake" because of his "dangerously incoherent" foreign policy ideas and his "temperament.”(5) Shortly after the Republican Convention, fifty Republican former national-security officials warned that Trump “would be a dangerous President,” and would “risk our country’s national security and well-being.”(6)

In contrast, interventionism claims that America has a moral duty to stand for the right values by enforcing liberty, democracy, and global order. This power-driven realist perspective emerged during the Cold War era when late President John F. Kennedy sought to defend the ‘ethical’ foundation and inspirational appeal of America’s own

interests abroad. As he said in his inaugural speech in 1961, "We shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty."⁽⁷⁾

From this perspective, Clinton has called for some limited interventionism echoing the foreign-policy playbook that "has ruled Washington for decades."⁽⁸⁾ Her foreign-policy instincts are bred in the bone — grounded in cold realism about human nature and what one aide calls "a textbook view of American exceptionalism."⁽⁹⁾ She is proud of being mentored by Henry Kissinger, the main architect of several wars in Vietnam, East Timor, the Middle East, and Latin America in the 1970s, whose legacy remains controversial. As her Democratic rival Bernie Sanders said in one of the TV debates in February 2016, "I find it rather amazing, because I happen to believe that Henry Kissinger was one of the most destructive secretaries of state in the modern history of this country."⁽¹⁰⁾

Continuity or Rupture of the Obama Doctrine?

The fierce electoral battle between Clinton and Trump can be conceived as a vote on an Obama's "third-term" which is technically banned by the U.S. Constitution. Accordingly, most of Clinton's agenda relies on the promise of extending Obama's reforms and affirming their utility for the working class portrayed as the "middle class". Her socio-economic plan for America seems to be a hybrid of Obama's reforms and her husband's economic policy, which were successful in curbing the unemployment rate and turning America's deficit into a surplus [1993-2001].

Accordingly, the gap between Trump's and Clinton's political visions has not grown in a vacuum; it correlates with two main priorities in the election year: a) the socio-economic decline of the middle class; and b) the security imperative vis-à-vis ISIL's nightmarish silhouette through the chain attacks in Paris, Brussels, Nice, California, Florida, and elsewhere. As the dictum goes, all politics is local.

1. Playing the Middle Class Card

The promise of re-empowering the struggling middle class has been a pivotal theme in both campaigns. Clinton believes "America thrives when the middle class thrives if you believe the minimum wage should be a living wage... and no one working full time should have to raise their children in poverty."⁽¹¹⁾ Accordingly, she has vowed to work in her first 100 days at the White House with both Democratic and Republican congressional leaders to pass "the biggest investment in new, good-paying jobs since World War II. Jobs in manufacturing, clean energy, technology and innovation, small business, and infrastructure."⁽¹²⁾

However, she did not embrace her democratic rival Sanders's proposition of \$15-per-hour minimum wage. This position implies her sense of corporate liberalism which puts

her at odds with his popular liberalism and progressive vision within his philosophy of democratic socialism. Instead, Clinton remains the kind of “progressive” who is a corporate liberal — the kind that is not against corporate capitalism but seeks to sand off its edges; the kind that regards corporations and moneyed interests as legitimate interlocutors.”(13)

In contrast, Trump’s drive for protectionism has served as a launching pad for attacks against Clinton. He accuses her of “supporting virtually every trade agreement that has been destroying our middle class. She supported NAFTA, and she supported China’s entrance into the World Trade Organization – another one of her husband’s colossal mistakes.” He also claims that her support of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) will not “only destroy our manufacturing, but it will make America subject to the rulings of foreign governments.”(14)

American Enterprise Institute scholar Charles Murray believes “the central truth of Trumpism as a phenomenon is that the entire American working class has legitimate reasons to be angry at the ruling class. During the past half-century of economic growth, virtually none of the rewards have gone to the working class.”(15)

In this context, Trump perceives his candidacy as the counter-plan of the Clinton-Obama consensus. “My plan is the exact opposite of the radical and dangerous immigration policy of Hillary Clinton,” he points out, “Americans want relief from uncontrolled immigration. Communities want relief. Yet Hillary Clinton is proposing mass amnesty, mass immigration, and mass lawlessness.”(16)

Trump’s advocacy of economic protectionism also entails the objective of restoring the lost glory and status of the middle class since the 2008 financial crisis. He positions himself as “I am your voice” and having “no patience for injustice, no tolerance for government incompetence, no sympathy for leaders who fail their citizens.”(17) He claims to be “Mr. Fix It” with some ‘sacred’ powers; “I have joined the political arena so that the powerful can no longer beat up on people that cannot defend themselves”, he asserts, “Nobody knows the system better than me, which is why I alone can fix it.”(18)

However, this claim of ‘pragmatic’ governance lacks both clarity and specifics beyond the simple bragging right of having made “billions of dollars in business making deals – now I’m going to make our country rich again... It begins with a new, fair trade policy that protects our jobs and stands up to countries that cheat.”(19)

2. Defending America’s National Security

“There’s nothing I take more seriously than our national security. I’ve offered clear strategies for how to defeat ISIS, strengthen our alliances... And I’m going to keep America’s security at the heart of my campaign.”(20) This is how Clinton captures the significance of the American national security in this year’s election. The counterterrorism paradigm is getting momentum amidst the 24/7 coverage of violence amidst the unprecedented fear of renewed attacks, which has peaked this summer following the upsurge in deadly attacks in America and elsewhere in the last fifteen months.

Both presidential candidates have maximized their potential plans to handle the problem effectively. As Clinton put it, “From Baghdad and Kabul, to Nice and Paris and Brussels, to San Bernardino and Orlando, we're dealing with determined enemies that must be defeated. No wonder people are anxious and looking for reassurance. Looking for steady leadership.”(21)

However, Trump claims to be “the Law and Order candidate” vowing to “work with, and appoint, the best prosecutors and law enforcement officials in the country to get the job done.”(22) He has often reminded his supporters of the imminent threat of terrorism and criticized the Obama Administration for what he considers as inadequate counterterrorism measures.

There seems to be strong correlation between national security concerns and the anticipated shifts in the U.S. foreign policy. There is less distinction between domestic and foreign political agendas boundaries, as the gap deepens between the two contenders as illustrated in the following Table 1.

Table 1: Divergence of political Agendas, Discourses, and Trajectories between Clinton and Trump [compiled by the author]

	Donald Trump	Hillary Clinton
Presidential Campaign Slogan	“Make American Great Again.” “American First.”	“Hillary for America.” “Stronger Together.” “Breaking down barriers.” “Fighting for us.” “I'm with her.”
The We-identification/ Central Identity	Middle class White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASP)	Americans from different ethnicities, backgrounds, and religions
Political philosophy	Between political realism and commercial doctrine	Pragmatism of politics and engagement with global diplomacy and alliances.
World Status of the United States	Constant political and economic decline .	Great and in growing significance.
U.S. Current Foreign Policy	Catastrophic, lacks seasoned negotiators.	Needs more measures to protect the national security.
Use of Hard	Development of the military	Reliance on smart power.

Power	might for a strong break with foreign policy tradition.	The 3-D approach by Integrating diplomacy, development, and defense.
New Rapprochement with Cuba	Did not bring respect for Obama.	The U.S. presence in Cuba is necessary.
Concept of Change	Political leadership matches business management.	Incremental reforms.
Obama Care as Obama's Signature Legislation reform	Should be repealed and substituted with something better.	A major achievement as it tackles the failures of the health system in the 1990s.

It is no wonder the interests of the middle class and how to address the national security dilemma remain the springboard for better understanding of other differences between Clinton's and Trump's agendas. Unlike previous decades, the security paradigm has blurred the lines between domestic and foreign policies. The need for a better counterterrorism policy remains pivotal in deconstructing other areas of difference between both candidates.

The Two-parallel Foreign Policy Plans

1. The ISIL Security Dilemma

Within his typical nihilist view, Trump keeps blasting his rival's Middle East diplomacy and argues mockingly that Clinton "should get an award from them as the founder of ISIL."⁽²³⁾ As he stated at the Cleveland Convention, "Iran is on the path to nuclear weapons. Syria is engulfed in a civil war and a refugee crisis that now threatens the West. After fifteen years of wars in the Middle East, after trillions of dollars spent and thousands of lives lost, the situation is worse than it has ever been before. This is the legacy of Hillary Clinton: death, destruction, and weakness."⁽²⁴⁾

As the 800-pound gorilla in the room, ISIL's threats have turned into a win-lose proposition with Trump's charges against Clinton. He believes "the far greater problem is not Assad, its ISIS."⁽²⁵⁾ He uses deductive reasoning with an accusative tone arguing that "in 2009 pre-Hillary, ISIS was not even on the map. Libya was cooperating. Egypt was peaceful. Iraq was seeing a reduction in violence. Iran was being choked by sanctions. Syria was under control. After four years of Hillary Clinton, what do we have?"⁽²⁶⁾

However, Clinton has countered his accusations by pointing to his lack of knowledge and vision; "Now Donald Trump says, and this is a quote, "I know more about ISIS than the generals do...." No, Donald, you don't. He thinks that he knows more than our military because he claimed our armed forces are "a disaster."⁽²⁷⁾ Instead, she defends her pragmatic approach to dealing with Assad and ISIL simultaneously.

Unlike Clinton’s multilateral pursuit of defeating ISIL, Trump focuses mainly on the source of its wealth by using air power to destroy the oil installations; “Take the oil. They still haven’t taken the oil... And they hardly hit the oil. They hardly make a dent in the oil.”(28) Trump opposes any deployment of U.S. troops on the ground, and remains hopeful Russian raids would weaken the Islamic State. He does not shy away criticizing Arab nations for not doing enough to curb the rise of the Islamic State in the Middle East. He also believes it is high time to revisit the mandate of NATO to take up the challenge of counterterrorism.

2. The Syrian Crisis

The political impasse and humanitarian crisis in Syria have revealed the most extreme polarizing theme between Trump and Clinton. The following Table 2 summarizes the complexity of the Syrian conflict and its interference with a wider array of sensitive issues, which shape their diverted frameworks of dealing with the new protracted conflict in the Middle East.

Table 2: Republican and Democratic Agendas for the Syrian Conflict and Humanitarian crisis [conceptualized by the author]

	Donald Trump	Hillary Clinton
Main Narrative	Syrian refugees could be members of ISIL.	I would like to see us move from what is a good start with 10,000, to 65,000, and begin immediately to put into place the mechanisms for vetting the people that we would take in.
Cognitive representations	Attacks in Europe and California highlight the terrorists’ success.	I want the United States to lead the world. We should do more.
Alleged Evidence	One of the suicide bombers in Paris was affiliated with ISIL. How do some refugees pay their mobile phone bills while having ISIL’s flag image on their phone screens?	We’ve seen a lot of hateful rhetoric from the GOP. But the idea that we’d turn away refugees because of religion is a new low. This is not the time to score political points.
Normative Judgment	No tolerance with America’s enemy and suspects even they are refugees. Another humiliation came when president Obama drew a red line in Syria – and the whole world knew it meant nothing. I only want to admit individuals into our country who will support our values and love our people. Let’s build safe zones in Syria.	We have always welcomed immigrants and refugees. There should be an emergency global gathering where the U.N. literally tries to get commitments. We should do more to help mitigate the crisis and no less than that.
Meaning Categories	Fragmented social identity: WASP/minorities. A we/they dichotomy: Americans/ the rest of the world. Elastic perceived identity of the other as ‘terrorists/refugees’.	American values have precedence over the growing trend of fear. We can't act as though we are shutting the door to people in need without undermining who

	Fear of the other due to suspicion Need for pro-active measures against terror.	we are as Americans.
Discourse Tone	Fear mongering, suspicious, alarming.	Motivating, optimistic, practical.
Philosophical Reference	Conspiracy theory Plotting against America Clash of civilizations	The identity and glory of American are defined by opening up to immigrants and refugees.

3. The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

“We must work with those Israeli and Palestinian leaders who are committed to peace security and statehood rather than to empty rhetoric and violence. A two-state solution must include compromises from both sides to achieve a fair and lasting peace in the region.”(29) This is how Bernie Sanders defined a historic turning point in American politics in one of the TV debates. He insisted “we are gonna have to treat the Palestinian people with respect and dignity”, and criticized Israel’s “disproportionate” attacks in Gaza.(30)

This promise of impartiality toward the Israelis and Palestinians was echoed across the electoral campaigns. Trump vowed to be “a sort of neutral guy” as a new strategy toward “probably the toughest negotiation of any kind anywhere in the world.”

However, Clinton feels less enthusiastic now to revisit the two-state framework of negotiation. Instead, she vowed to “do everything I can to enhance our strategic partnership and strengthen America’s security commitment to Israel, ensuring that it always has the qualitative military edge to defend itself.” This may not be good news to the Palestinians who have relinquished real hopes of the 23-year old Oslo Accord.

Some observers point to Clinton’s long-term commitment to Israeli interests. As Stephen Zunes argues, “the favoritism toward Israel is all the more glaring given America’s failure or unwillingness to stop Israel’s colonization on its own... Clinton equated the PA’s pursuit of its legal right to have Palestine statehood recognized by the United Nations with Israel’s illegal settlements policy as factors undermining the peace process.”(31)

Table 3: Management of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict [conceptualized by the author]

	Donald Trump	Hillary Clinton
Main Narrative	Let me be a neutral guy.	I’ll be better for Israel. The two-state solution remains a principle.
Cognitive representations	Obama has hurt Israel. I’d want to go in there as evenly as possible and we’ll see if we can negotiate a deal. The United Nations cannot shape a solution. We will move the American embassy to the eternal	A Hillary Clinton administration will affirm the United States has a strong and sustainable interest in securing Israel’s security.

	capital of the Jewish people.	
Alleged Evidence	People that I know from Israel, many people, many, many people - and almost everybody would love to see a deal on the side of Israel.	Achieving peace and security is possible and remains the only path toward the long-term existence of a Jewish and democratic state.
Normative Judgment	They [Palestinians] have to stop the terror, stop the attacks, stop the teaching of hatred, you know? I stand on the future of American relations with our strategic ally, our unbreakable friendship, and our cultural brother, the only democracy in the Middle East, the State of Israel.	Israel's security is not negotiable. Palestinians should be to govern themselves in their own state in peace and dignity.
Meaning Categories	Basically, I support a two-state solution on Israel. The Palestinian Authority has to recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state. The UN is not a friend of Israel or democracy. The days of treating Israel like a second-class citizen will end from day one at my presidency.	The United States needs Israel strong enough to deter its enemies. Palestinian leaders should end incitement of violence and celebration of terrorists as martyrs, and stop giving financial awards to their families.
Discourse Tone	Conformist to the long-term support for Israel. Political pragmatism vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.	Promising, motivating, affirmative of the U.S.-Israeli alliance. Oriented toward the U.S. support for Israel's military superiority. Predictive of Israel's supremacy in the Middle East.
Philosophical Reference	Possibility of a political deal despite the difficulty of negotiations. In order to negotiate a deal, I'd want to go in there as evenly as possible and we'll see if we can negotiate a deal.	We've always shared an unwavering, unshakable commitment to our alliance and to Israel's future as a secure and democratic homeland for the Jewish people. The foundation of U.S.-Israeli alliance.

4. Iran's Nuclear Ambitions

The Iran nuclear deal of July 2016 could not have come at a better time to highlight the differences between Republicans and Democrats over one of the main achievements of Obama's foreign policy. Clinton argued "diplomacy deserves a chance to succeed", and claimed the deal to be part of her diplomatic success at the helm of the State Department. "I did put together the coalition to impose sanctions. I actually started the negotiations that led to the nuclear agreement, sending ... my closest aides to begin the conversations with the Iranians," she stated.

While Clinton made a clear-cut pledge that Iran "can never be permitted to acquire a nuclear weapon," the anti-Iran rhetoric has taken a nationalistic tone in Trump's discourse implying a typical realist win-lose equation in international relations. "We all

remember the images of our sailors being forced to their knees by their Iranian captors at gunpoint. This was just prior to the signing of the Iran deal, which gave back to Iran \$150 billion and gave us nothing.”(32) He believes the deal was a ‘victory’ for the Ayatollahs in Tehran and a ‘defeat’ for the Obama Administration, and “will go down in history as one of the worst deals ever made.”(33)

Beyond any objective or subjective assessment of Iran’s nuclear deal, the new rapprochement between Washington and Teheran has fueled fresh questions about the Arab Gulf-US relations.

5. The Geo-strategic Alliance with the Arab Gulf States

Most Gulf capitals are skeptical of Obama’s new overture with Tehran after prior disappointment in his U-turn on Syria. However, they remain protective of their historical alliance with the United States. Obama’s two-dimension U.S. Gulf policy was clearly articulated in his April 2016 interview with the Atlantic. “The competition between the Saudis and the Iranians—which has helped to feed proxy wars and chaos in Syria and Iraq and Yemen—”, he argues, “ requires us to say to our friends as well as to the Iranians that they need to find an effective way to share the neighborhood and institute some sort of cold peace.”(34)

Like President Obama, Clinton believes the U.S. foreign policy can achieve a twin-pillar containment policy toward Saudi Arabia and Iran. The growing new cold war in the region and the new nuclear deal potential in preventing a nuclear Iran have solidified Clinton’s intent to maintain Obama’s view of a hyphenated Arab-Persian Gulf within a regional balance of power.

Still, there are high expectations of the Arab Gulf contribution to the global strategy of combating extremism and terrorism. Clinton argues that “It is long past time for the Saudis, the Qataris, and the Kuwaitis and others to stop their citizens from funding extremist organizations.” By the same token, the significance of the region seems to have shifted more toward other areas of cooperation, namely intelligence and counter terrorism, amidst America’s growing reliance on alternative sources of energy and the Gulf oil prices remain relatively low in world markets.

In contrast, Trump underscores the U.S. military support not only for the security of the Arab Gulf states, but also for their existential survival. “I love the Saudis ... whenever they have problems, we send over the ships;” Trump argues, “Saudi Arabia without us is gone. They’re gone.” Trump’s Gulf foreign policy rejects the notion of ‘free riders’ in terms of the U.S. military presence in the region. He often argued “our allies must contribute toward their financial, political, and human costs, have to do it, of our tremendous security burden. But many of them are simply not doing so.”(35)

Trump’s theory of diplomacy derives from his in-your-face tough negotiating approach as an extension to his self-claimed ‘successful’ good deals. He comes across as a greedy-businessman-turned-politician who wants to restore the wealth of his nation. He has implied a new value theory in international politics, farther than any classical realists, by insisting on some financial return for protecting the national security of countries like Saudi Arabia, Japan, and South Korea. As he put it, “We take tremendous monetary hits on protecting countries. That would include Saudi Arabia, but it would include many other countries, as you know. We have to be reimbursed, substantially reimbursed.”(36)

6. The Islamic World

The perception of Islam and Muslims has been a revealing test of American’s multi-culturalism-based Melting Pot philosophy. In the eyes of the right-wing and extremist groups, Trump has been celebrated as the new prophet Islamophobia and uni-culturalism defending the whiteness of America. He has resorted to identity politics through marginalization and isolation of all Muslims and demonizing Muslim-Americans.

Political scientist Kim Holmes points out that “because of the increasing radicalization of multiculturalism over the past few decades, Trump’s supporters no longer feel they have to restrain themselves. In their minds they are just doing to others what has been done to them.”(37)

In contrast as illustrated in Table 4 below, Clinton has sought to redress the American public discourse back to its political correctness foundation. She reminded Americans that Trump has made a name for himself in this election by “trafficking in prejudice and paranoia. It’s not only shameful, it’s dangerous”(38)

Table 4: Disparity of Clinton’s and Trump’s perceived images of Islam and Muslims [conceptualized by the author]

	Donald Trump	Hillary Clinton
Main Narrative	Total ban on the entry of Muslims to the United States. Islam hates us.	Trump and Cruz encourage terrorism and support ISIL’s position. A failed attempt to incriminate Muslims. Trump sends the wrong message to allied Islamic nations.
Cognitive representations	The threat of radical Islam terrorism. Mosques are strongholds of radicalization. Muslim Americans sympathize with extremist groups.	We should differentiate between Muslims, jihadists, and extremists. We should not be misguided in lumping America’s terrorist enemies and Muslim Americans together; Muslim Americans are on the same front combating extremism.

		What you're hearing from Trump and other Republicans is absolutely, unequivocally wrong
Alleged Evidence	Frequent terrorist attacks in Paris, Brussels, California, and Florida, ISIL's members have infiltrated European borders among refugees. There is no other solution.	Terrorists do not represent Islam. Donald Trump has made a name for himself in this election by trafficking in prejudice and paranoia. What you're hearing from Trump and other Republicans is absolutely, unequivocally wrong. It's inconsistent with our values as a nation—a nation which you are helping to build.
Normative Judgment	The protection of Americans' security is a priority.	America does not accept calls for discrimination and division. I have a lot of faith that the American people will make the right decision. This is a country with a deep reservoir of common sense and national pride. This is your country, too. I'm proud to be your fellow American. And many, many other Americans feel the same way.
Meaning Categories	We/they dichotomy The promise of a strong legal framework as a 'practical' counterterrorism solution. Justification of Islamophobia. Rejection of political correctness since it overshadows the threat of radical Islam.	Emphasis on the risk of general judgments. Ways of preventing bigotry, chauvinism, discrimination, and exclusion. Trump seeks to destroy America's norms and values and ignores the U.S. Constitution. I have a lot of faith that the American people will make the right decision.
Discourse Tone	Alarming, skeptical, demonizing, divisive, isolationist.	Clarifying, corrective, normative, more rational, and less emotional.
Philosophical Reference	A religion-driven war. Muslims' alleged hatred for the West. Clash of civilizations.	Islam is not our enemy. Muslims are a peaceful and tolerant nation; does not have connections with terrorism.

Conclusion: The Crossing Roads between Isolationism and Interventionism

As the 2016 election will go into history books as the most polarizing presidential race, Trump insists on a strong break with foreign policy tradition since he "has very strong feelings on foreign policy" and "very strong feelings on defense and offense."⁽³⁹⁾ A Trump administration will focus on building a strong and feared America with a well-funded and modernized military for deterrence purposes.

A Clinton-foreign policy will seek diplomacy as "the only way to avoid a conflict that could end up exacting a much greater cost." However, her advocacy of diplomacy does

not mean she will follow Obama's record. Instead, she will adopt a 3-D foreign policy: diplomacy, defense and development and keep all the options on the table since there is "need to embrace all the tools of American power."⁽⁴⁰⁾

Accordingly, she will adopt a more muscular brand of foreign policy than Barak Obama and Bill Clinton to assert American influence. She will formulate her plans in the backdrop of constant threats of violence, and most likely will push for a militarization shift of the counterterrorism campaign policy, and redefinition of NATO's mission.

She will follow a multi-faceted strategy of diplomacy, use of power, and close collaboration with Western pacts like NATO to defeat ISIL and undermine Assad's grip on power in Damascus. She plans to strike ISIL's sanctuaries from the air, support local forces taking them out on the ground, and "disrupt their efforts online to reach and radicalize young people in our country."⁽⁴¹⁾

In sum, both candidates will work off the same textbook of political realism; but with different hawkish tendencies. What is not clear now is that Clinton is more comfortable using American military power under the banner of pragmatic progressive leadership. As Robert Kagan, co-founder of the Project for the neo-conservative New American Century points out, "If she pursues a policy which we think she will pursue it's something that might have been called neo-con, but clearly her supporters are not going to call it that; they are going to call it something else."⁽⁴²⁾

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* **Dr. Mohammed Cherkaoui** is professor of Conflict Resolution at George Mason University in Washington D.C. and former member of the United Nations Panel of Experts.

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