

Thursday, July 23, 2009

US policy in the Middle East: The rights-based views

Editor's note: The dust has now settled on a series of speeches and moves by the Obama administration, most remarkably President Barack Obama's Cairo address in the first category, and, in the second, the activation of the Mitchell mission on the Arab-Israeli front, together with the diplomatic opening to the Syrian and Iranian authoritarian leaderships. It is time to assess. Three different views are offered on this page: Noam Chomsky, one of the most distinguished thinkers ever, puts it in structural perspective: there is little new under the sun in US imperial policy. In contrast, Jihad Zein, an opinion former of the Middle East from Islamabad to Washington, is heartened by the quality of a thinking president unlike any of his immediate predecessors. My own view stands somewhat in-between, and regrets the persistent missing link in American policy: a focus on the Mideast citizen's universal rights.