

BY A RAZOR THIN MARGIN, DIVERSE INTELLIGENCE SQUARED US AUDIENCE DECIDES THAT AMERICA SHOULD STEP BACK FROM ITS SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL

NEW YORK – February 10, 2010 - Intelligence Squared US (IQ2US), the Oxford-style debate series, an initiative of The Rosenkranz Foundation, hosted a spirited debate on Tuesday night on the American/Israeli relationship. The sold-out audience at NYU's Skirball Center was fully engaged in the debate, which included passionate arguments on both sides of the evening's motion, "The US should step back from its special relationship with Israel."

As the debate began, 33% of the crowd voted in favor of the motion, 42% were against it and an additional 25% were undecided. After the four person debate and a round of thoughtful questions from the audience, the final vote ended with one of the closest results in Intelligence Squared US's history. The team arguing in favor of the motion won the night with 49% of the audience voting for them. 47% were against the motion and only 4% remained undecided.

The evening's winning team argued for the motion and included New York Times columnist **Roger Cohen** and Columbia University Arab Studies professor **Rashid Khalidi**.

Arguing against the motion was former senior level diplomat **Stuart Eizenstat** and former Israeli Ambassador to the United States **Itamar Rabinovich**.

Among the debate's highlights:

"America's perceived complicity in Israeli violence carries a heavy price. Jihadi terrorism aimed at the United States is not primarily motivated perhaps by the Palestinian issue, but it is a major factor. It is a potent terrorist recruitment tool." – **Roger Cohen**

"When you say, "Why don't we have peace with the Palestinians?" If there were a Martin Luther King, if there were a Mahatma Gandhi leading the Palestinian movement, they would have had statehood long, long, long ago. It is because there is no reliable Palestinian partner... That's why we don't have peace, not because Israel doesn't want peace." – **Stuart Eizenstat**

"The idea of staying the course does not make us look constant, it makes us look dumb. ...we were asked rhetorically by one of my opponents, if the United States moved away from the special relationship what will happen with some of our allies? They would applaud. They see the United States as systematically weakening itself by this perverse special relationship." – **Rashid Khalidi**

"...If [Syria] wants the Golan back, they know that their road to the Golan leads to Washington, not through Tehran. So, actually the closeness to Israel, the perception in the Arab world that the United States has that sway with Israel is one of the most important assets that the United States has..." – **Itamar Rabinovich**

John Donovan, correspondent for ABC News *Nightline*, is moderator of Intelligence Squared US debates. Dana Wolfe is the executive producer.

To view transcripts and videos, download audio or video clips or learn more about Intelligence Squared US please visit: <http://www.intelligencesquaredus.org>.

Launched in September 2006, the goal of Intelligence Squared US, an initiative of the Rosenkranz Foundation, is to raise the level of public discourse and promote a realization that, on contentious issues, those who challenge the conventional wisdom have intellectually respectable and often persuasive viewpoints. We encourage citizens to “Think Twice” about their opinions and participate in the conversation, and we provide a forum for balanced discussion that transcends emotion and ideology. Through an annual series of 10 live Oxford-style debates, IQ2US brings together experts and audience around public policy and cultural issues. In fact, the live audience participates in each debate by voting on the propositions at the top and bottom of the debate evening. IQ2US debates air on the Bloomberg Television network and are heard on more than 200 NPR stations nationwide.

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