

2012 TOPIC DESCRIPTIONS

Middle East realignment

by Augustus Richard Norton The popular revolts and upheaval of the Arab Spring have radically changed the face of the Middle East. What lies ahead for the Middle East's transition to democracy? What are the prospects for the governments that have held out in this new order? With many longtime U.S. allies ousted, how will the U.S. recalibrate its relations with the new regimes?

Promoting democracy

by Larry Diamond

The U.S. has had a history of advancing and supporting democracy around the world. What place does democracy promotion have in U.S. foreign policy today? With a choice of tools ranging from economic aid to military force, what are the appropriate yet effective methods that the U.S. should use to promote democracy?

Mexico

by George Grayson Mexico's border with Central America, as well as the border it shares with the U.S., has been a pathway for people, goods, crime and contraband in both directions. How can Mexico address these transborder challenges? What is the future of Mexico's relations with its northern and southern neighbors? How will Mexico's foreign relations affect its domestic politics?

Cybersecurity

by Ronald Deibert The securitization of cyberspace has caused a sea change for both governments and the private sector, faced with new threats, new battlegrounds and new opportunities. Faced with challenges such as international cybercrime and authoritarian control of networks, how will the U.S. and its democratic allies approach the cyber frontier? How does this new domain figure in U.S. strategic interests?

Exit from Afghanistan & Iraq

by Michael E. O'Hanlon Ten years after September 11, 2001, the U.S. is winding down its military commitment in Iraq and slowly pulling out of Afghanistan. What exit strategy will help Afghanistan and Iraq build stable democratic nations? How can the U.S. continue to achieve its counterterrorism goals? What is the role of the U.S. in the future of the Middle East?

State of the oceans

by Sara Tjossem The world's oceans are essential to life on earth, and are tremendously sensitive to global climate change. What are the consequences of climate change on oceanic factors like biodiversity, sea levels and extreme weather systems? How can the U.S. and its international partners address the emerging challenges to this shared resource?

Indonesia

by James Castle Having emerged from authoritarianism in the last 15 years, Indonesia has made remarkable strides politically, economically and socially. Yet the new, democratic Indonesia is still a developing country facing considerable challenges. How can Indonesia continue its path of growth, reform and prosperity? What is Indonesia's role in the global community?

Energy geopolitics

by William Sweet The energy markets have been shaken by the instability of Middle East oil and the vulnerability of nuclear power. Moreover, developing countries like China are becoming bigger energy consumers, while energy producers like Russia see the opportunity to widen their influence. In this changed landscape, how will the U.S.'s energy needs affect its relations with other nations?