

This Is Trump's Foreign Policy, A Conversation With Top Trump Adviser Dr. Walid Phares

JP Carroll conducted this interview for the [Dr. Walid Phares](#).

The Trump adviser sat down with The Daily Caller News Foundation in an exclusive interview to discuss the candidate's world view and foreign policy proposals.



Dr. Walid Phares

Phares was the director of international relations and political science at BAU International University since 2013, and he has been the provost as of 2014; he is on leave now. The Trump foreign policy analyst also served as an adviser to former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney's 2012 presidential campaign.

TheDCNF: First of all, I think readers would like to understand, how often does Mr. Trump rely on you and other foreign policy advisers for information while he is on the campaign trail?

Phares: Two points, first: I have a non-disclosure agreement with the campaign when it comes to specific campaign practices. Second: as an adviser, I answer to campaign leadership including Mr. Trump, and the team engages in a variety of typical research practices: briefing the candidate, providing immediate analysis to breaking news, and writing policy papers.

TheDCNF: How big is the Trump foreign policy team?

Phares: He has announced who his foreign policy and national security advisers are, I am one of them, and many others will join later. There are many people who call the campaign and give advice from time to time despite not being formally affiliated with the campaign. Ultimately, if Mr. Trump is hopefully elected, he will have at his disposal all the advisers and heads of agencies and departments that the U.S. government has.

TheDCNF: What attracted you to the Trump campaign?

Phares: Because of the dual challenges of ISIS and a legitimized Iran that still has nuclear ambitions, Donald Trump can and will shake up the foreign policy establishment. Hillary Clinton is part of the establishment and she has failed by giving poor advice to President Obama and partnered the State Department with radical groups, so there is no reason to promote her to commander-in-chief.

TheDCNF: What are the top foreign policy priorities of the campaign? Does the campaign even have foreign policy priorities given Mr. Trump's admitted embrace of an unpredictable foreign policy?

Phares: Look, this is an America First foreign policy as laid out in his speech in April. We live in an unpredictable world, so yes, priorities do change. The campaign has a well-organized foreign policy in that it adapts to a disorganized world. At the moment, the top two priorities are how to deal with issues of nuclear proliferation and how to completely destroy Islamic jihadist organizations, including and especially ISIS.

On nuclear proliferation, Mr. Trump has made a clear statement about not having any further nuclear proliferation, especially in the hands of people who are problematic. He thinks about it as the greatest threat that

we and the rest of the world will face. I would say that North Korea and Iran, and the nuclear threat would be number one.

He believes as I said that there needs to be a concerted, strategic effort to remove ISIS while also worrying about who and what could come next once they have been destroyed. It's not just ISIS, there is still al-Qaida as well as more covert actors like the Muslim Brotherhood that President Obama legitimized in Egypt before the Egyptians took their country back.

The homeland is facing a real, domestic, jihadi threat. We need to wage the battle of counter-terrorism, but we also need to prevent it through vetting potential jihadists coming into the U.S. and investing in border security.

TheDCNF: On the issue of nuclear weapons, how would Trump feel about Japan and South Korea pursuing the development of nuclear weapons in their own right?

Phares: When we as a campaign are in touch with South Korean leaders and politicians, they complain to us that Obama isn't doing enough and they are concerned about his inaction. South Koreans have told us that their country has become less secure in the past eight years and they want a change, they want a Trump foreign policy.

To be clear though, Mr. Trump is not committed to any particular action. He is simply willing to have frank discussions with Asian partners about many options and has said so publicly. He will not ask Japan or South Korea to invest in building nuclear weapons but he will speak with their leaders about how to create a safer and more stable environment in the East Asia theater. Most importantly, Mr. Trump is an expert negotiator with a successful track record, which is a skill-set severely lacking in President Obama as well as U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

TheDCNF: When it comes to the Iran Deal, will Mr. Trump get rid of it on day one given his disdain for the deal?

Phares: No, he's not going to get rid of an agreement that has the institutional signature of the United States. He is a man of institutions. But he's going to look back on it the institutional way. He's said, so far that he doesn't like this deal and that it was poorly negotiated. Once elected, he's going to renegotiate it after talking through it with his advisers. One of the clear possibilities is he will send it back to Congress. The reaction of the Iranian leadership will be the next phase. So he is not going to implement it as is, he is going to revise it after negotiating one on one with Iran or with a series of allies.

TheDCNF: What can Israel expect of a Trump presidency?

Phares: Mr. Trump has made it clear to both the Republican Jewish Coalition (RJC), and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), that he will be a strong ally of Israel, as he has always been.

TheDCNF: For many people there is great unease with Mr. Trump's proposal of temporarily banning all Muslims from entering the U.S. Is such a ban in your opinion actually realistic and enforceable? Do you really think it will be effective in terrorism prevention?

Phares: This issue of the so-called "Muslim ban"

TheDCNF: Excuse me Dr. Phares, that's what he himself called for, "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on."

Phares: Well, let's understand what he meant and where he is on this issue. What he meant was, after the repetitive attacks on Europe and the U.S., it is clear that the Obama

administration, the Hillary campaign and unfortunately, many of our European partners, do not have the answer or correct methodology for vetting people coming in from abroad.

Mr. Trump has looked at what specialists and very renowned researchers have been raising in congressional testimony at hearings. The issue is, if you don't have a measure for detecting who is who, and who is a jihadist and who is not, then we will keep having more bloodshed.

Mr. Trump's reaction with this policy was genuine and symbolic for provoking that debate on a need for a foreign policy and counter-terrorism strategy shift. He is telling the American public that he is going to change that policy. So, he suggested that our current political leaders implement a shutdown. However, the important part of the proposal is, "until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on." It is clear they have yet to figure it out, and that's what resonated with voters who want change.

TheDCNF: But why does this policy single out people based on their religious beliefs?

Phares: Look, Donald Trump is an inclusive businessman who has never looked at one community and said, "I'm going to demonize this community." That's why the charges of being a racist or an Islamophobe do not apply. He's simply looking at the problem from a national security perspective. But lately, he has been adapting his position. The more he is informed of the subject, the more he is adapting. And he said, we are ready to discuss those issues which need to be discussed. Once he will start getting intelligence briefings, he will know more about what the problem is and how to handle it so that when he is elected, he will know how to use the vast resources of the federal government. Indeed over the past weeks Mr Trump made

several statements announcing that he will be focusing on the radical Islamic terrorists and where they come from. Hence the shut down will narrow to Jihadists and radical Islamists as ways to identify them would be made available

TheDCNF: On the issue of intelligence briefings, once he gets the official nomination, many questions have been raised about Mr. Trump's temperament. Are you confident that he will not divulge any information from those briefings at a campaign rally or an interview?

Dr. Phares: With regard to Mr. Trump receiving national security briefings and talking about them, this is impossible. He has reached a point where he has already received a huge amount of information from his own experts which he knows is sensitive despite not coming from U.S. intelligence.

Mr. Trump is extremely careful and he has always been responsible with what we have told him. He controls information perfectly, which is how he was able to build a company with a global footprint. In the time that I have advised him on sensitive geopolitical matters, I have never heard Mr. Trump mention things in public that he should not. From my own experience, Mr. Trump will act as a statesman.

TheDCNF: Just to clarify, when you have talked to sources in an unofficial basis and you have passed on that information to Mr. Trump, and you have informed him that the information is credible while being unofficial nevertheless, he has understood this and subsequently when discussing foreign policy in public, he has not divulged this?

Dr. Phares: He has acted impeccably as a statesman, as someone who understands nuance. He asks many informed questions. He wants to understand the issues in detail and

recognizes that he is dealing with sensitive matters.