DO WE HATE AMERICA?
The Arab Response

**Bringing Middle Eastern Perspectives
to Washington**

Arab Insight, an innovative journal that features authoritative analyses from Middle Eastern experts on critical regional issues, seeks to improve the relationship between the United States and the Arab world by cultivating a better understanding of the complex issues facing the Middle East among Western policy-makers and the public at large.

Articles in *Arab Insight* do not represent any consensus of opinion. While readers may agree or disagree with the ideas set out in these articles, it is our purpose to present a diversity of views rather than identifying with a particular body of beliefs.

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Editors' Note

THE TRAGEDY OF SEPT. 11, 2001, has instigated many questions about the United States' relationship with the Arab world. Perhaps the most popular one, "Why do they hate us?" is an exclamation evoked by the sorrow, outrage and confusion the American public experienced and witnessed that day. The question, however, is also encompassed by an intellectual and political debate, and it is a question with which many Western and Arab policy-makers, opinion-shapers and scholars continue to grapple.

Deconstructing this question, "Why do they hate us?" reveals clearly that the validity of the assumptions governing this inquiry cannot be taken for granted. A respectable amount of prejudice is vested in the belief that Arabs hold an unqualified hatred toward the United States. The word "us" suggests a misleading conflation of American policies, as perceived by the international community, with the American people. In other words, the phrasing of the question implies that this alleged hatred is directed toward the American people, and not toward specific U.S. institutions or policies. Finally, identifying Arabs as "they" evokes the misleading idea that the Arab world is a monolithic homogenous unit that enjoys a single worldview and set of opinions. According to this rationale, Arab liberals and political Islamists, "radical" and "moderate" Islamists, all share the same attitudes and feelings – a false and ignorant view.

Arab authors who responded to the infamous question is this issue of Arab Insight rejected its principal assumptions. Some respondents made a conscious effort to

establish that public perceptions in Arab countries distinguish between elite decision-makers in the United States on the one hand and the American people on the other. While the majority of responses fell short of a categorical denial that some hostility exists toward American people as a result of what Arabs view as harmful American actions in the region, there was always a reminder that the American people are not responsible for such policies. Although other responses were more implicit in drawing the distinction between America as a society and as a world power, the grievances cited were always focused on American policies and not the "American way of life": the Iraq War, Arab-Israeli conflict, and "double-standards" in democracy promotion.

Asking the question "Why do they hate us?" also motivated many post-Sept. 11 American efforts to rectify the image of the United States in the Arab and Muslim World, including public opinion polls and studies. As important as they were, those studies suffered from a number of significant flaws. First, such studies were based on a one-dimensional view of the United States, failing to account for the complex view of America that most Arabs hold. America is perceived by many Arabs as a model of democracy and freedom and, for some people in the Arab world, an international force that must aid democratic change in their countries. On the other hand, many Arabs consider the United States a source of instability and crises in the Middle East. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, efforts to improve America's image in the Arab world were not only conducted in isolation from an understanding of how Arabs perceive the United States but also in isolation from how the entire world views America. Many of the positive and negative images of America held by Arab societies are shared by the rest of the world. To assume that anti-Americanism is a phenomenon specific to Arab or Muslim culture and experiences moves us away from the goal of promoting mutual understanding between the United States and the Arab world.

Thus, the United States and its people are now confronted by two big questions as they strive to manage their relations with the Arab world. The first has to do with anti-Americanism, its essence residing in, "Why do they hate us?" The second question relates to America's image, "How can we rectify our image?" Both are questions that deserve a serious examination.

The articles in this issue of Arab Insight attempt to address the aforementioned questions. Divided into two sections, the first aims to explain how Arabs perceive the United States, as reflected in public opinion, Arab media, Arab cinema, and on Arabic-language weblogs and chat rooms.

The second section analyzes the sources of negative images of the United States in the Arab world, examining the following policies: the Arab-Israeli conflict; the efforts in Iraq; and U.S. financial assistance to Arab countries. The issue concludes on the

discussion of the recently recovered U.S.-Libyan relations, exploring whether the case could be a model for future Arab-American relationships.

The editors of *Arab Insight* hope that this issue can open the door for a broader discussion on the sources of anti-Americanism in the Arab world – a discussion that can yield an opportunity for mutual understanding and respect.

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Confusing Hearts and Minds:
Public Opinion in the Arab World

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SINCE SEPT. 11, 2001, THERE HAS BEEN INCESSANT TALK about the image of the United States in countries around the world, particularly in Arab and Islamic states. Eager to determine the precise nature of this image, a number of studies and polls have been conducted throughout the Arab and Islamic world. Most of this polling has attempted to answer the central question raised following the events of Sept. 11: "Why do they hate us?" Most think tanks studying the issue have struggled to provide an answer, and still do to this day. Yet there seems to be general agreement that the image of the United States in Arab and Islamic countries is not a positive one, perceived on a global level as "not a country seeking good," according to a BBC opinion poll concluded in 2007. It appears as if the image of the United States is in dire need of improvement; however, the amount of revival needed, no doubt, would require an enormous amount of effort.

Notes on methodology

The scarcity of public opinion polls in most Arab countries, in addition to the impossibility of conducting polls in others, limits the ability to carefully determine the U.S. image in Arab public opinion. Yet any of the occasional polls conducted in some Arab countries can be relied upon, despite some potential methodological flaws, to at least draw the basic features of a broader image of Arab opinion as a whole. The details of that picture can then be completed by examining other analyses and writings that

address the image and popularity of the United States on the Arab street.

When analyzing Arab public opinion, consideration must be given to the nature of the cultural and social reality of Arab peoples, particularly with regard to their views on the religious and cultural "other," as represented here by the United States. Arab public opinion is a purposeful mixing of the religious and the political, the absolute and the relative, and the ideal and the actual, and this mixing is one of the most important factors in the distortion of Arab public opinion. Another is relying on opinion leaders, who, in most cases, are not qualified to take on this role. One such example is a reliance on the *fatwa*, or religious ruling, of a preacher or scholar who may not be qualified to express opinions on politics or economics, and who may not be competent in the field of politics in general. In most cases, public opinion follows such opinion leaders for religious considerations more than for political ones.

Given this context, this article seeks to paint a picture of the United States in Arab public opinion by relying on and seeking guidance from two primary assumptions:

1. Despite the differences in public opinion among Arab states, negative perceptions of the United States exist in all Arab nations, to varying degrees.

2. American foreign policy on Arab issues, particularly those in Palestine and Iraq, is the primary factor in forming a negative image of the United States in Arab public opinion. As such, changing that negative image depends upon the degree to which American foreign policy can change to harmonize with the interests of Arab states.

The stereotype of the United States

In its relations with the Arab world, the United States suffers from what can be called a "ready-made stereotype," or, more accurately, a preconceived stereotype. This stereotype is formed through a number of historical accumulations that are a mix of facts, legends and wild claims. Although the United States has not been among the Western countries that have occupied one or more Arab countries, its foreign policy has made it one of the most important, but least favored, countries in the Arab world. Numerous radical forces in the Arab world that oppose the United States and its political-economic-social model have played a pivotal role in driving public opinion toward an extremely negative perception image of that model, without careful explanations of the reasons behind such hatred. Moreover, the suffering of numerous Arab states due to colonialism has led them to distance themselves from major powers that adopt economic theories based on market mechanisms, which raise the value of the individual,

while gravitating more toward powers providing socialist models on the basis that such models form a guaranteed path to development.

Regardless of the subsequent lack of development in these states, no one in the Arab world has reviewed the predominant negative attitudes toward the free-market model. The predominant view, therefore, is to behold any real rapprochement with such powers as treachery to the nation and an invitation to colonialism. In this context, the United States has been burdened with the responsibility for all the setbacks and failures of the Arab world on all levels – political, economic, social and cultural. Thus, the most important perspective governing Arab views of the

"The United States and Western countries have a basic interest in maintaining a state of backwardness and decline in Arab countries ..."

United States, and the West in general, is to view them as conspirators against the Arab world. Such conspiracy theories offer an easy and simple explanation for the state of the Arab world: that the United States and Western countries have a basic interest in maintaining a state of backwardness and decline in Arab countries and will use all means possible – political, economic, and cultural – to maintain this status.

Contradictory perspectives in viewing the United States

In general, it can be stated that the Arab world views the United States from two largely contradictory perspectives. Arab public opinion assumes on some level that the United States is a free and democratic country that acts as a model and wishes to assist in enabling Arab states to reach advanced levels of such democracy. Yet Arab public opinion also views the United States by its foreign polices that have negative implications for the Middle East, and this is the perspective that is fundamentally responsible for its negative image. Helle Dale, director of the Douglas and Sarah Allison Center for Foreign Policy Studies at the conservative Washington-based Heritage Foundation, holds that the downfall of the U.S. image in the Arab world stems from some American policies, as well as from shortcomings in public diplomacy efforts. She stresses that while some policies that have incited feelings of opposition might not be possible to change for national security reasons, the image of the United States can be improved through explanation of the reasons and motives for adopting these policies, as well as by focusing on the positive aspects of American foreign policy. Dale, along with other U.S. experts, believes that the image of the United States will be improved by a long-term public diplomacy effort, especially involving Arab media.[1]

A humble performance in improving the U.S. image

Following the events of Sept.11, and in the context of attempting to answer that central question ("Why do they hate us?"), the United States has in fact begun a comprehensive strategy for improving its image in the Arab region. However, the American image-improvement strategy has been a sweeping failure for reasons too numerous to list. The fundamental problem with the U.S. strategy has been dealing with the Arab world through media as though it were a homogenous unit without clear internal distinctions, as though discourse suitable for Egypt would necessarily also be appropriate for other states like Morocco and Kuwait.

> **"The fundamental problem with the U.S. strategy has been dealing with the Arab world as though it were a homogeneous unit."**

In 2003, a congressionally commissioned report confirmed that the U.S. image was growing worse in the public opinion of Arab and Islamic countries, and that in a number of them, enmity toward the country had reached frightening levels. The report also acknowledged that the U.S. campaign to improve its image was not a sufficient solution to the public opinion problem, particularly with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and American policy in Iraq.[2]

A public opinion poll conducted by Zogby International in a number of Arab states in 2006 showed that U.S. policies, particularly during the first administration of President George W. Bush, were the "primary reason" behind feelings of enmity toward the United States.[3] Undersecretary for public diplomacy and public affairs at the U.S. State Department, Karen Hughes – who is charged with improving America's image internationally, specifically in the Arab world – admitted that improving America's image would require at least an entire generation and continual intensive public diplomacy efforts.[4] Yet the percentage of Arabs who expressed a belief that "the only way

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1   Stephen Johnson and Helle Dale, "How to Reinvigorate U.S. Public Diplomacy," The Heritage Foundation, April 23, 2003, http://www.heritage.org/Research/PublicDiplomacy/bg1645.cfm; Helle C. Dale, "Al-Hurrah Television and Lessons for U.S. Public Diplomacy," Heritage Lecture #909, November 18, 2005, http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/papers/vp01.cfm?outfit=pmt&folder=2053&paper=2536; and David Hoffman and Helle Dale, "Winning the War of Ideas," Internews, June 24, 2005, http://www.internews.org/articles/2005/20050624_washtimes_oped.shtm.

2   Carl Weisser, "$1 billion international image campaign isn't enough to buy U.S. love," *USA Today*, September 14, 2003, http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2003-09-14-prawar-gns_x.htm.

3   Shibli Telhami, "2006 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey," February 8, 2007, http://brookings.edu/views/speeches/telhami20070208.pdf.

4   Jim Lobe, "Ultimate Bush Insider Joins Rice at State Department," IPS News Agency, March 15, 2005, http://www.ipsnews.net/print.asp?idnews=27868.

the United States can improve its image in the Arab world is through accomplishing a peaceful and comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict" reached 67 percent in the Zogby poll. A total of 33 percent of those polled expressed a belief that America's image in the Arab world "can be improved if the American occupation forces are withdrawn from Iraq."[5]

However, the negative image of the United States is not limited to Arab countries. Rather, the United States' negative image has become widespread throughout the world in countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Bolivia, Iran and France, who all often oppose American policies. The opinion poll conducted by the BBC in 2007 revealed that nearly 71 percent of those polled in 25 non-Arab countries believed that the United States is "not undertaking a positive role in the world," and 68 percent expressed a belief that the "American military presence in Iraq results in igniting other sites of conflict."[6]

Gallup, Zogby, Telhami…an incomplete picture

One telling public opinion poll conducted by Gallup in Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, was published in *USA Today* and featured on CNN in March 2002. It showed that 61 percent of those interviewed did not believe that Arabs had any relation to the events of Sept. 11. Participants described

"33 percent [of Arabs] … expressed a belief that America's image in the Arab world 'can be improved if the American occupation forces are withdrawn from Iraq.'"

America as being merciless, hostile, biased, arrogant and easily provoked. A total of 53 percent of those polled held a negative perception of America, while only 22 percent held a positive perception of the country. A total of 58 percent did not like President Bush.[7]

Furthermore, a study conducted by the Pew Research Center showed that the percentage of the population holding a positive view of the United States was in decline, even severely so, in Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Turkey and Indonesia. By 2003, hostile feelings toward the United States had spread to other areas of the Islamic world, and

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5   Shibli Telhami, "2006 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey," February 8, 2007, http://brookings.edu/views/speeches/telhami20070208.pdf.

6   BBC World Service, "Israel and Iran Share Most Negative Ratings in Global Poll," March 2007, http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/mar07/BBC_ViewsCountries_Mar07_pr.pdf.

7   Andrea Stone, "In poll, Islamic world says Arabs not involved in 9/11," *USA Today*, February 27, 2002.

"lovers" of America in Indonesia, for example, had dropped from 61 percent to 15 percent.[8]

In 2004, two public opinion studies were conducted in Jordan, Lebanon, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. These studies showed a clear and progressive increase in feelings of enmity toward the United States and its policies in the Middle East, in particular the war it waged on Iraq and its support for the policies of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. In the study conducted by Shibley Telhami, an expert on the Middle East at the Brookings Institution, public opinion responses to a question about which world political leader respondents did not favor placed Bush second only to Sharon. In Saudi Arabia, 39 percent did not like him, in Morocco, 27 percent, in Lebanon and Jordan, 21 percent, and in the United Arab Emirates, 19 percent. Respondents' hatred toward the United States could also be sensed through their answers about which political leaders they liked the most, as they chose leaders that oppose the United States or adopt policies in opposition to it. President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt came in first place as the most beloved political figure to Arabs, particularly in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (46 percent), followed by the United Arab Emirates (21 percent), Lebanon and Jordan (20 percent), and Morocco (12 percent).[9]

Former French President Jacques Chirac came in second place among political figures most liked among Arabs. The highest percentage of support for him was in Lebanon (23 percent) followed by Morocco (16 percent). In Jordan, former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein came in first, while Osama bin Laden occupied second place in the United Arab Emirates. Secretary General of Hezbollah Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah occupied second place for the most liked political figure in Saudi Arabia after the late Gamal Abdel Nasser. Telhami's study concluded that whether the issue was related to American policy in Iraq or the Arab-Israeli conflict, the majority of Arabs covered by the study stressed that American policy in the Middle East in general was the factor that determined public opinion orientations toward the United States.

The results of the second study, which was conducted by the Arab American Institute and headed by James Zogby, agreed with the results of Telhami's study that the primary factor determining the feelings of Arabs toward the United States was American foreign policies in the Middle East, confirming once again that Arabs do not hate the United States in itself so much as they hate American policies directed at Arab

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8   Andrew Kohut, "Anti-Americanism: Causes and Characteristics," Pew Research Center, December 10, 2003, http://people-press.org/commentary/display.php3?AnalysisID=77.

9   Shibley Telhami, "A Growing Muslim Identity; Increasingly, Arabs define themselves in terms of Islam," *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 2004.

countries. Yet Zogby's study added an extremely important result, confirming that the greatest rise in inimical feelings toward the United States between 2002 and 2003 occurred in Egypt. There, the percentage of those harboring enmity toward the United States rose from 76 percent to 98 percent. In Morocco it rose from 61 to 88 percent and in Jordan from

"The percentage of those who related their hatred for America to the Palestinian issue reached 75 percent, while only 5 percent related their hatred for the United States to the consequences of Sept. 11."

61 to 78 percent. These results beg the question as to why Egyptians hate the United States more than other countries like Saudi Arabia. The answer to that question lies in the difference between the United States as a cultural model and the United States as an international actor.[10]

Arab opinion polls: other details to the picture

The picture painted in polls conducted in Arab states by Arab institutions offers another take on American image in the Middle East. For example, the results of an opinion poll conducted by the Saudi Arabian newspaper *Al-Watan* on a sample of 2,000 individuals from 15 Saudi cities in early 2002 showed that the hatred of those polled was not directed at the West in general, but rather toward the United States in particular. The poll revealed that while 49 percent hated the West more broadly, the percentage of those who hated the United States reached 60 percent. However, this hatred was not based on religion, as demonstrated by the differences from one Islamic society to another and the fact the percentage of hatred for countries in the Far East was as low as 18 percent, despite many East Asian societies sharing the United States' general belief in Christianity and other non-Semitic religions. Instead, these results supported the analysis of many Western intellectuals, writers and political scientists who suggest that American policy bias toward Israel, along with the severe injustice inflicted on the Palestinians as a result of American political, economic, and military support for Israel, are the primary causes of Arab hatred for America. The percentage of those who related their hatred for America to the Palestine issue in this same poll reached 75 percent, while only 5 percent related their hatred for the United States to the consequences of Sept. 11.[11]

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10   Dafna Linzer, "Poll Shows Growing Arab Rancor at U.S.," *Washington Post,* July 23, 2004.
11   "Saudi newspaper poll finds 60 percent of Saudis hate the United States," *AP International*, April 8, 2002.

A comprehensive poll was conducted in 2004 to study Arab views toward the West in five Arab states: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine. The poll was done through a number of research centers in those countries, such as the Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Egypt, the Strategic Studies Center at the Jordanian University in Jordan, the Center for Strategic Studies and Research at Damascus University in Syria, the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center in Palestine, and Statistics Lebanon in Lebanon. This poll showed that only 25 percent of the sample in Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, and Palestine expressed either very positive or fairly positive feelings toward the

"The highest percentage of those who expressed a negative position toward the United States were in Syria, where 75 percent of those polled held an anti-U.S. position."

United States. It was striking that the percentage of those who held a negative view of the United States in Lebanese public opinion was not more than 20 percent. Yet it was natural that, given poor Syrian-American relations, the highest percentage of those who expressed a negative position toward the United States were in Syria, where 75 percent of those polled held an anti-U.S. position.[12]

Once again, the effect of American foreign policy bias toward Israel was affirmed through the high percentage of Palestinian public opinion (75 percent) that expressed

1. **Percentage of respondents who have negative feelings toward the United States according to an opinion poll conducted in Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine, 2004.**[13]
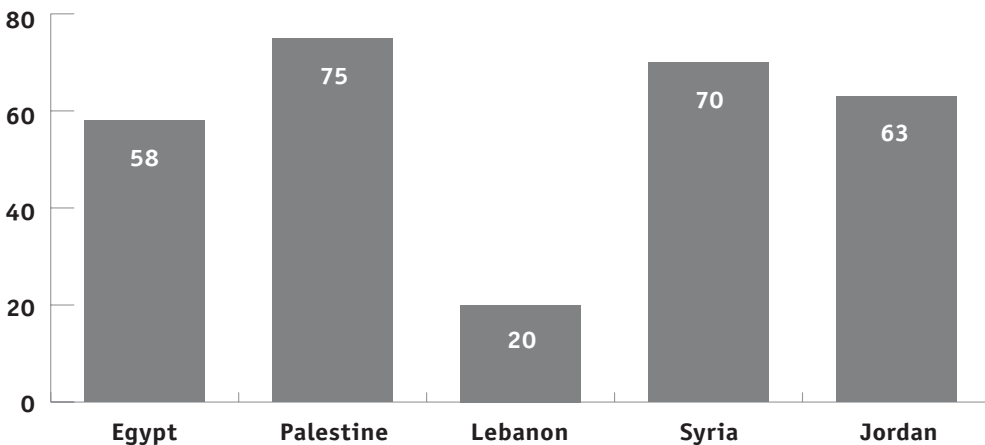
negative feelings toward the United States. This was reflected in the responses to an open question regarding their characterization of the United States. Negative characterizations were most common, including that it is a state that is "racist," "aggressive," "undemocratic," "immoral" and which "supports the enemy [Israel]."

We hate the United States, but…

Up to this point, the examined Arab polls have clearly indicated a negative image of the United States, even though it may differ in detail from those presented by American organizations. Yet Arab polls add another distinction to the negative image of the United States in the Middle East. Some of these polls have gone further in their attempt to ascertain whether the negative image might affect actions or demonstrated behavior.

The poll organized by the group of research centers in the countries previously mentioned (Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine) posed a number of important questions about Arab preferences for certain aims they can meet in the United States – tourism, health care, arts – and other questions about an evaluation of political, economic, and cultural relations and the extent to which they would like those relations improved. The basic assumption was that the negative image Arabs hold of the United States would necessarily reflect in a negative public opinion position on these detailed issues and, consequently, opposition to strengthening relations with the United States. Yet the answers provided to these questions carried numerous surprises.

A total of 13 percent of those polled expressed a preference for the United States as a tourist destination, and 17 percent expressed their preference for American arts and literature. Despite the humbleness of these percentages, they must be viewed in light of the current level of economic and social development that does not allow Arabs to take interest in tourism and the arts, not to mention, of course, the barriers of costs and language. The significance of these percentages is that they indicate that negative feelings for the United States do not result in a total boycott of the United States in these two fields. They also indicate that Arab public opinion appears to differentiate between its feelings toward the United States on the one hand, and its position toward interacting with American society on the other.

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12   "A new visit to the Arab street: Poll from insight relations between the Arabs and the West," Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, the Strategic Studies Center at the Jordanian University, the Center for Strategic Studies and Research at Damascus University, the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center, and Statistics Lebanon, February 2005, http://www.jcss.org/UploadPolling/106.doc.
13   All diagrams in this article are showing the results from an opinion poll conducted in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, 2004.

This distinction is made much clearer with regard to Arabs' positions on immigration, studying and receiving health care in the United States and buying American products. The percentage of those who supported studying in the United States, despite the cost barrier, was 22 percent, while those who would prefer immigration to the United States was 21 percent, and those who favored receiving health care in the country totaled 36 percent. This number is made more significant due to the inclusion of France, which enjoys a positive reputation in the Arab world, on the list of countries (the United States, Britain, and France) that respondents were asked to choose between.

In sum, while Arab public opinion expresses – with a clear majority – negative feelings toward the United States, this does not result in a desire to boycott the United States entirely. This is likely fundamentally due to the fact that in specific issues related to an individual Arab's lifestyle, Arab public opinion is characterized by a significant degree of pragmatism. There is a clear realization of the importance of interacting with the United States on economic, social and cultural levels, regardless of any implied or explicit feelings towards the West. Thus, it can be concluded that if the preferences of public opinion in the fields of tourism, education, health care and immigration, among others, do not need to be considered as expressing "love" for the United States, then the negative public opinion toward the United States must also not be taken as an expression of pure hatred toward the United States and its citizens.

2.   Preference for tourism in the United States
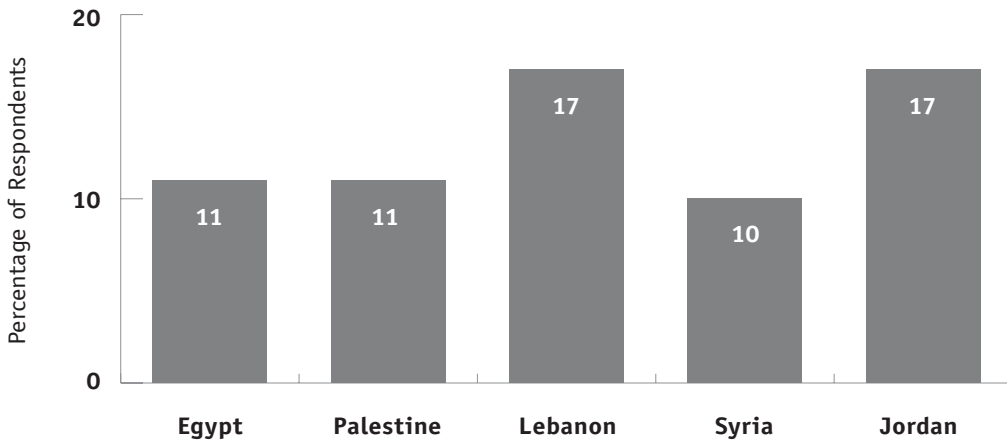
3.   Preference for American arts
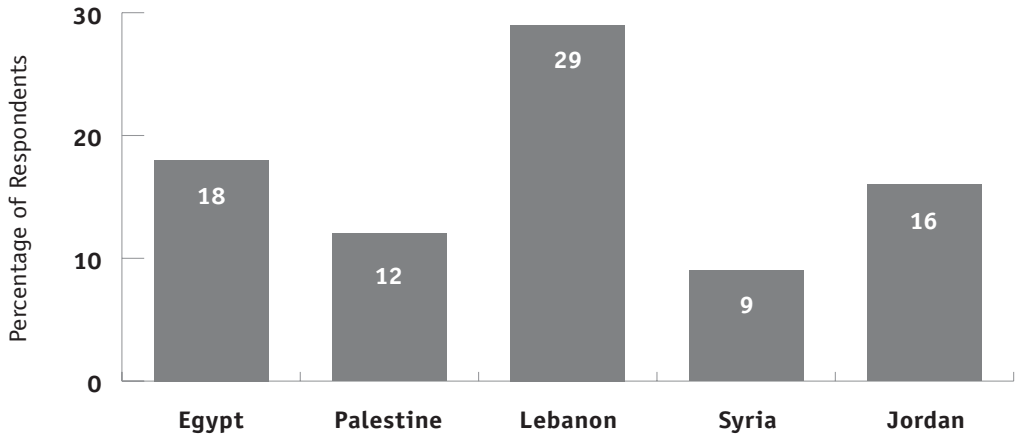
4.   Preference for studying in the United States
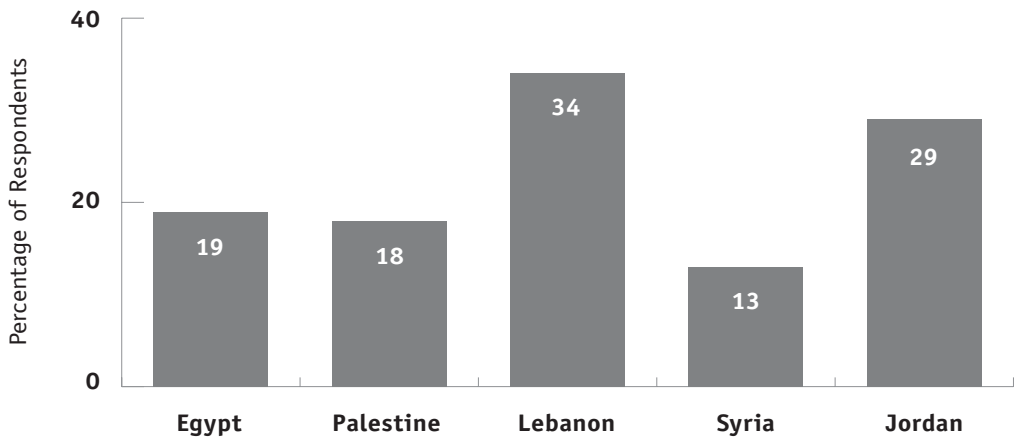
5.   Preference for buying products from the United States

Percentage of Respondents

Egypt	19
Palestine	21
Lebanon	38
Syria	14
Jordan	31
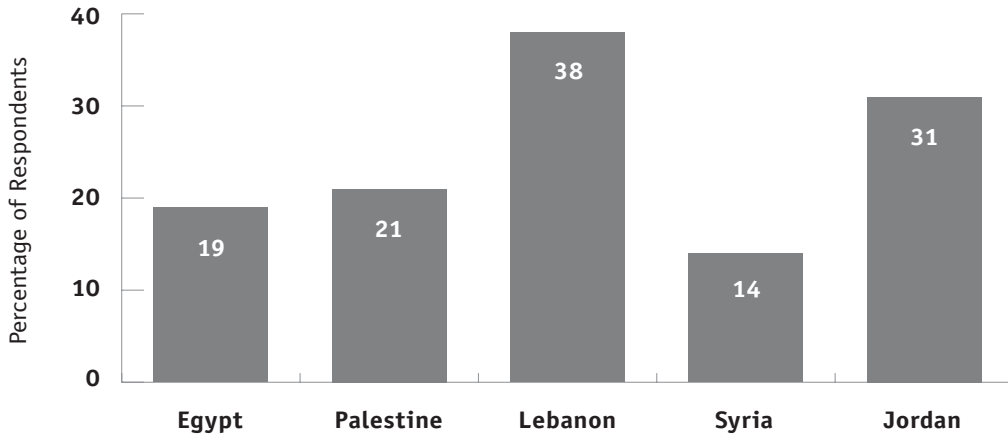
6.   Preference for immigration to the United States

Percentage of Respondents

Egypt	15
Palestine	15
Lebanon	38
Syria	11
Jordan	26

7.   Preference for receiving health care in the United States
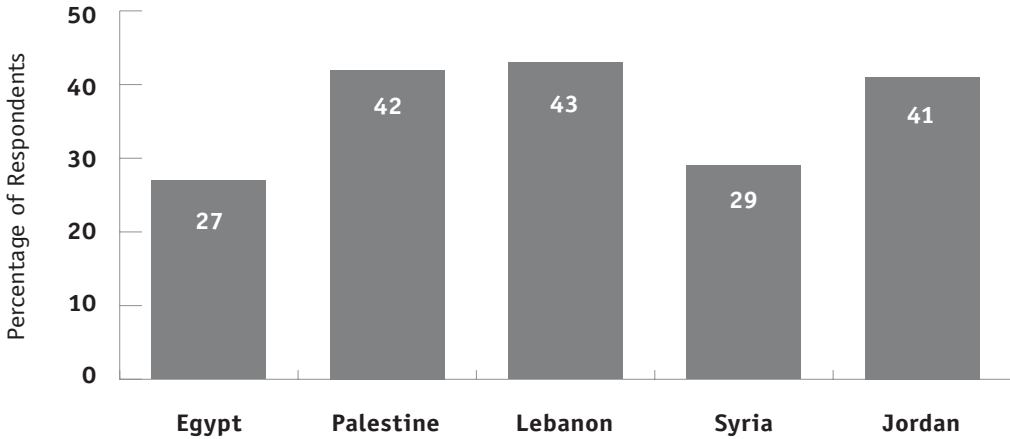
Despite the negative image of the United States in Arab public opinion, evaluation of Arab public opinion toward relations with the United States on political, economic and cultural levels reveals yet another side to the status of the United States in Arab countries. Results from the above polls show that it is mainly U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East that gives the country a bad image among Arabs, rather than its culture, economy or values. Arab public opinion, for the most part, acknowledges the value in political relations with the United States, although there is some difference among various countries. The majority of Jordanians (88 percent), Egyptians (76 percent) and Lebanese (63 percent) consider their country's relations with the United States good, while only a minority in Syria and Palestine hold the same opinion.

It is clear that the two countries that suffer most from U.S. foreign policy (Syria and Palestine) are the ones with the lowest evaluation of relations with the United States. Yet it further seems that a lack of hope for improving relations with the United States due to its bias toward Israel has led the majority of public opinion in Syria and Palestine to not desire improved relations with the United States, even though it is assumed that they are the most in need of strengthened relations with the country. Only 30 percent of Syrians and 38 percent of Palestinians called for improved relations with the

United States. It is striking, however, that the country following these two is Jordan, in which a majority of the sample held that relations with the United States are good, but where only 40 percent saw a necessity for improving those relations. The Lebanese were more pragmatic, whereby the majority (59 percent) called for strengthening relations with the United States. Also interesting is the vast difference between the ceiling in Arab public opinion's evaluation of political relations with the United States (88 percent in Jordan) and the ceiling in calling for strengthening those relations (59 percent in Lebanon). This indicates that Arabs are somewhat indifferent as to what the United States does with regard to their countries.

> **"The highest percentage for evaluating such relations as positive was in Lebanon, where 81 percent of those polled held that cultural relations with the United States were good."**

On the level of economic relations, the same pattern is repeated with regard to evaluating these relations as good. The greatest percentage was in Jordan (86 percent) and the lowest in Syria (17 percent). Yet the desire to strengthen relations raised significantly in comparison to that concerning political relations, as desire to strengthen economic relations with the United States reached its highest in Lebanon (74 percent). Its lowest however, in Syria (32 percent), was nearly the same as their desire to strengthen political relations.

The matter differs to a certain degree with regard to cultural relations, and especially with regard to strengthening those relations. The evaluation of cultural relations is positive for the most part. The highest percentage for evaluating such relations as positive was in Lebanon, where 81 percent of those polled held that cultural relations with the United States were good. Syria remained the lowest, at 26 percent. With regard to strengthening cultural relations, despite the ceiling remaining high as it was with regard to political and economic relations, at 81 percent in Lebanon, it is striking how similar the percentage of approval for improving those relations was in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Palestine, not even passing 50 percent in Egypt.

8. Percentage of those polled who described political relations with the United States as "good"
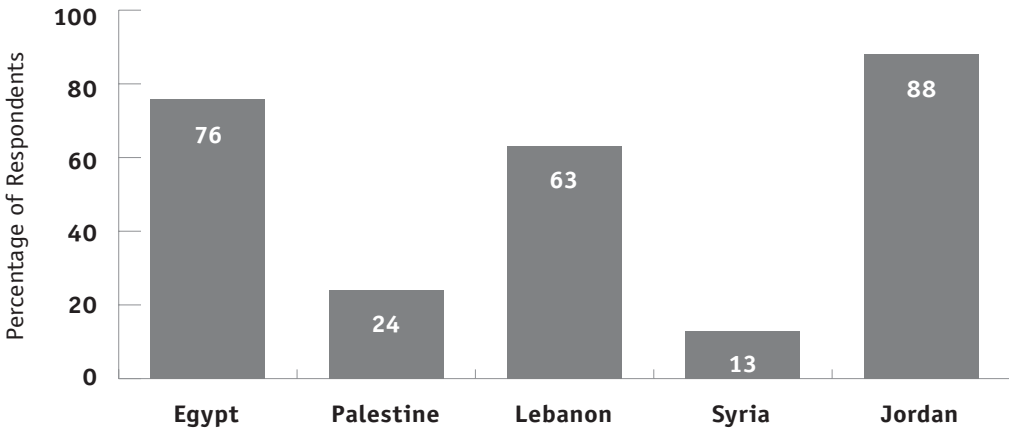
9. Percentage of those polled who desire strengthening political relations with the United States
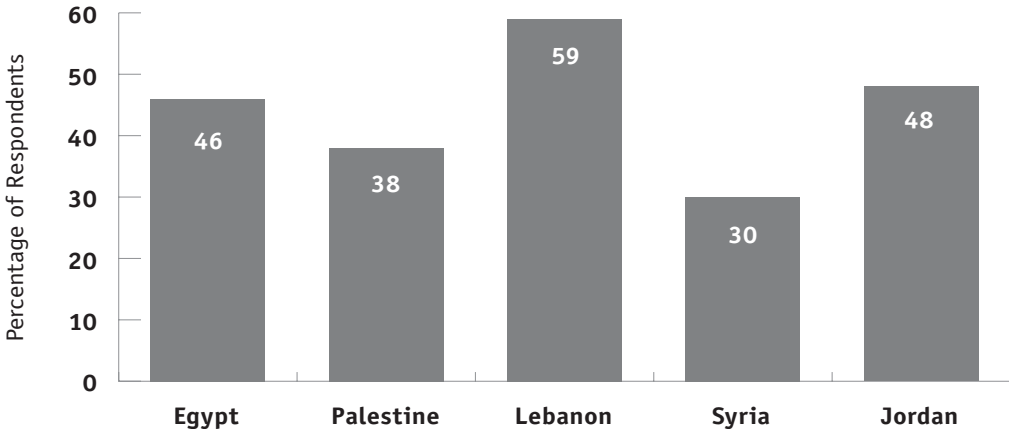
10. Percentage of those polled who describe bilateral economic relations with the United States as "good"
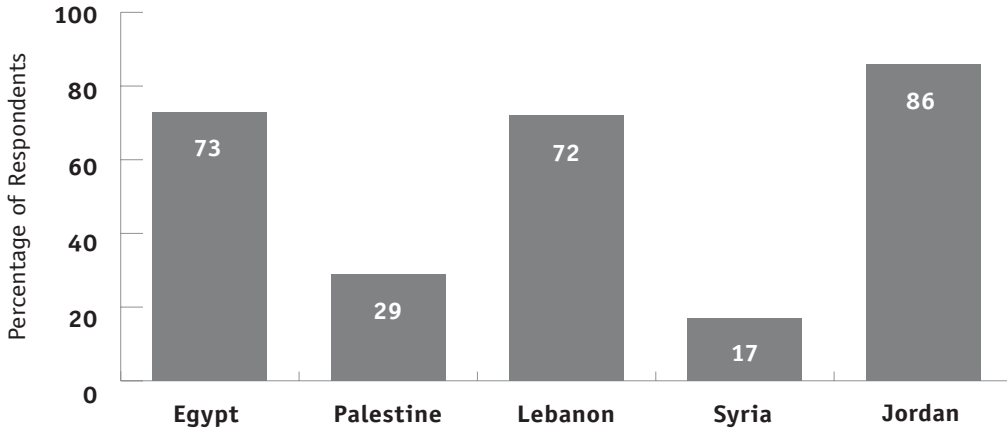
11. Percentage of those polled who desire strengthening economic relations with the United States
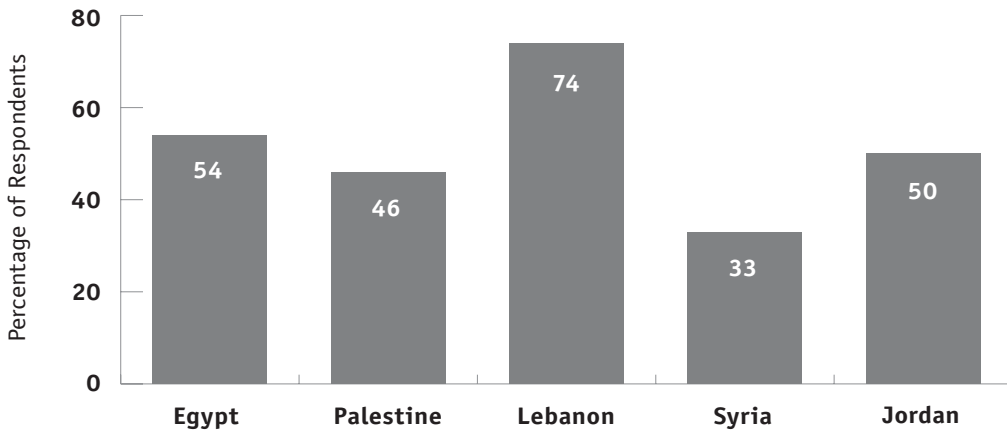
12. Percentage of those polled who describe bilateral cultural relations with the United States as "good"
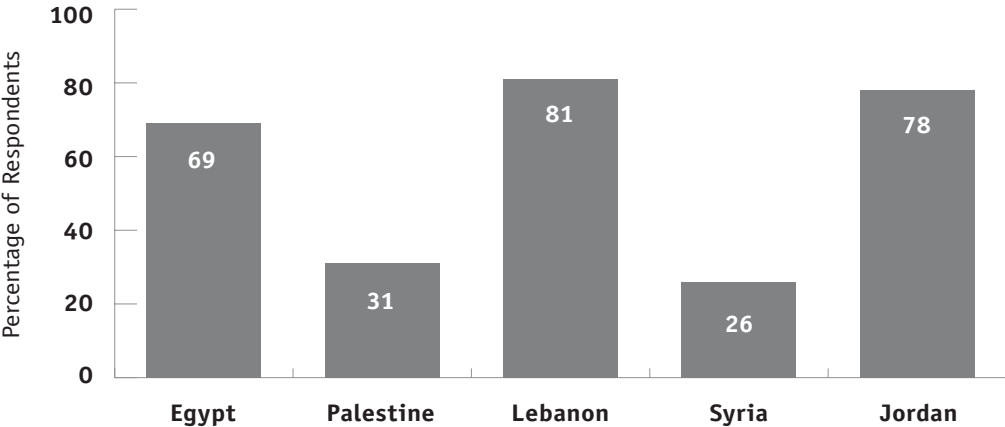
13. Percentage of those polled who desire strengthening bilateral cultural relations with the United States
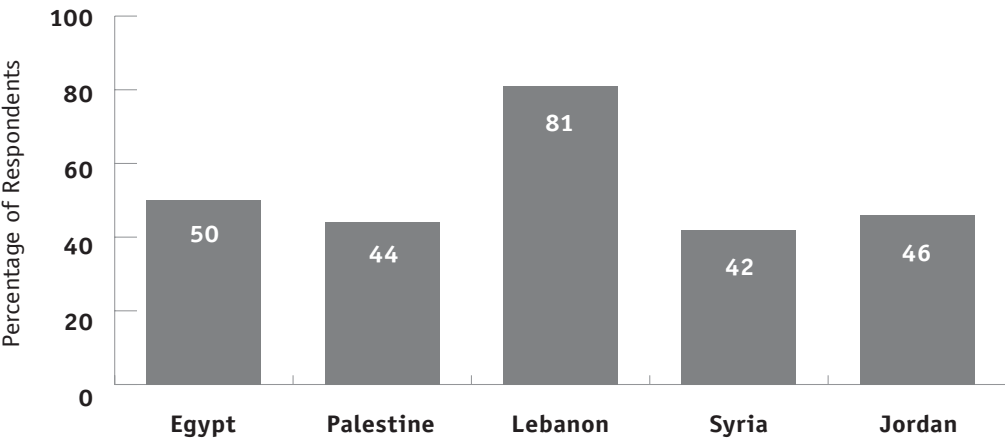
In conclusion, the negative image of the United States in Arab public opinion referred to in both Arab and American studies, despite the relative differences in the public opinion orientations of each country, confirms that there is a serious crisis facing Arab-American relations, and that the primary responsibility for changing this situation rests with the United States.

Improving the image must begin with a strategy based on dialogue and communication, not through directed media. Rather, it should take place through understanding Arab situations and interests and achieving a degree of balance in foreign policy toward issues in the Arab world, at the heart of which are Palestine and Iraq. The United States has grown to face a real crisis of confidence regarding both of these issues, and there is a virtual consensus among various age groups in Arab public opinion that the United States has dealt with the Arab-Israeli conflict in an unsatisfactory manner. An overwhelming majority of Arab public opinion in the five countries studied holds that the occupation of Iraq has no justification whatsoever.

It is necessary to ignore statements urging that these results be disregarded on the basis that Arab public opinion is not influential and does not form a fundamental intervention in the decision-making process in Arab states. Likewise, statements claiming that the efforts exerted to change that image are bound to fail due to a belief that enmity toward the United States does not have political causes but rather stems from historical, cultural, and possibly religious reasons can be proven false. An increased amount of wrathful hatred for American policy cannot, in any case, serve the interests of the United States, or, naturally, those of Arab states. ■

Media Matters:
The Arab Portrayal of the United States

HOSSAM MOHAMED

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IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, the U.S. image in the Arab world has plummeted. Just as the United States sought to consolidate the principles of democracy and political reform in the region – as an embodiment of American values – images of bloodshed and destruction in Iraq and Palestine and torture in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib became prominent. This disparity between ideals and reality has spread a negative image among the public, an image that the Arab media has played a key role in spreading. Despite the importance of the role the media plays in this regard, it has not garnered sufficient attention from think tanks and researchers concerned with the U.S. image in the region. Most reports on the perception of the United States in the Middle East have focused on public opinion polls and surveys. For example, Pew, Gallop, Zogby, and other organizations have all measured public opinion trends since Sept. 11, with the goal of stimulating American public diplomacy in the region.

Given that the media plays a major role in forming Arab public opinion, this article aims to analyze the overall features of the U.S. image in the Arab media. Egyptian newspapers and Arab satellite television will be used as case studies.

The U.S. image in the Arab press: Egyptian newspapers as a case study

The Egyptian press provides a solid case study to analyze the U.S. image in the Arab media. For one, Egypt has one of the largest populations of all Arab countries at about 75 million. Additionally, there is a diversity of ideological orientations within the

Egyptian press, which is distributed between various political currents (government-run, Islamist, liberal and socialist).

Methodological observations

It is important to note several methodological observations in order to provide context for the study's conclusions:

1. The period of time that the Egyptian press was analyzed was from July 2003 to July 2004, during which a number of events related to U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East occurred. The most prominent of these events include: the American occupation of Iraq and its repercussions; the American initiatives for reform in the Middle East and important developments concerning the U.S.-led "war on terror"; the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; and weakening relations with Syria and Iran.

2. Nine Egyptian newspapers were used in this analysis: *al-Ahram*, *al-Akhbar*, and *al-Gumhouriya* (government-run papers); *al-Wafd*, *al-Ahali*, and *al-Arabi* (opposition political party papers); and *al-Usboo'*, *Saut al-Umma*, and *al-Alam al-Yaum* (independent, privately-owned papers). These newspapers were chosen as a sample that is largely representative of the different ideological trends prevalent in Egyptian journalism. They also bring together daily and weekly papers, representing the largest-circulation papers in Egypt. *Al-Masri al-Yaum*, which is now one of the papers with the greatest influence and credibility, was not chosen because of the study's period as it had only recently emerged and not yet acquired its current circulation.

3. The results of the study are based on content analysis, which is the most widely-used methodical tool in studying images and public opinion through an objective, organized and quantitative description of the content. The journalistic pieces (reports, editorials, columns, op-eds, etc.) and approaches (negative, positive, neutral, and balanced) are the quantitative units of analysis. The image of the United States was separated based on four classifications: "negative," which means the article criticized U.S. policy or used phrases carrying negative meanings or connotations; "positive," which means the article praised U.S. policy or used phrases carrying positive meanings and connotations; "neutral," which means the article did not have negative nor positive connotations; and "balanced," which means that the content was balanced between positive and negative.

Quantitative indicators

2,647 journalistic pieces – which all addressed the United States in some way – were used for this study. Table 1 shows the different types of articles that were used (report, article, column, op-ed, other), with daily news excluded. The table's data shows the intense interest in the United States on the part of the educated elite, as there was an average of 7.2 journalistic pieces about the country per day over the study period. Articles were the most common (1,112 or 42 percent) followed by columns (919 or 34.7 percent). Table 2 shows the number of pieces about the United States that each newspaper published, with *al-Ahram* publishing the most articles about the United States, followed by *al-Akhbar* and *al-Wafd*.

Table 1. Total number of pieces published in the press for the sample time period

Type	Number of Pieces	Percentage (%)
News Report	318	12
Editorial	1,112	42
Column	919	34.7
Op-Ed	235	8.9
Other	63	2.4
Total	**2,647**	**100**

Table 2. Number of pieces that each newspaper published about the United States

Type	Political Affiliations	Number of Pieces	Percentage (%)
Al-Ahram	Government	861	32.52
Al-Akhbar	Government	504	19.04
Al-Wafd	Liberal Political Party	430	16.24
Al-Gumhouriya	Government	290	10.9
Al-Alam al-Yuam	Independent	174	5.55
Al-Usboo'	Independent	141	5.32
Al-Ahali	Leftist	123	4.46
Al-Arabi	Arab Nationalist	74	2.79
Saut al-Umma	Independent	50	1.88
Total		**2,647**	**100**

Table 3 shows the percentage of pieces in each newspaper that had a positive, negative, balanced or neutral "slant." Concerning the spread of a negative image of the United States in the Egyptian press, "negative," coverage comprised 73.7 percent of the total, compared to 3.4 percent classified as "positive," 9.1 percent as "balanced," and 13.8 percent as "neutral." These results could be based on the following factors:

1. The overwhelming interest in American foreign policy (Iraq, the Arab-Israeli conflict) compared to other fields, in the face of a declining interest in other issues (American society, domestic politics, the U.S. economy, etc.).

2. The dominance of nationalist, Islamist, and leftist ideologies among a large number of Egyptian writers and journalists, while there was a relative decline in the number of liberal writers. In addition, despite liberal writers having some degree of understanding of the principles and values behind some American policies, the results of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East did not constitute a defense of American values and goals.

3. Each newspaper has a different ideological orientation, and so the "objective eye" in writing about U.S. policy is subjected to different standards from one newspaper to the next. The margin of freedom granted in covering the United States in the nationalist papers, which are state-owned, is less than that given in independent and party newspapers. As is shown in Table 3, *al-Usboo'* (independent) most often adopted a negative stance toward the United States (92.9 percent), closely followed by *al-Arabi* (Nasserists opposition party) with 90.5 percent, followed by **al-Ahali** (leftist opposition party) with 85.4 percent. These newspapers were all above the average rate of negative coverage, which was 73.7 percent.

American foreign policy issues were the most important source in forming the U.S. image in the Egyptian press, with foreign policy being the subject of about 86.5 percent of the sample, compared to only 6.3 percent for domestic American politics, 4.8 percent for Egyptian-American relations, 1 percent for the American economy, and 0.9 percent for culture and society.

In the field of foreign policy, Iraq was covered the most followed by the Arab-Israeli conflict, the issue of reform, the American "war on terror," and American relations with the international community (Europe, Africa, the Arab world, and Iran, in addition to bilateral U.S.-Egypt relations). In general, American foreign policy was the top

concern for all the newspapers surveyed, and, as previously mentioned, a negative slant dominated.

"American foreign policy issues were the most important source in forming the U.S. image in the Egyptian press ... being the subject of about 86.5 percent [of all news coverage]."

The interest in American domestic politics focused on three topics, in descending order of importance: the run-up to the 2004 presidential elections, human rights in the United States and the neo-conservatives. The interest in domestic politics varied from paper to paper, taking second place behind foreign policy in *al-Ahram, al-Akhbar, al-Gomhouria*, and *al-Wafd*, but third place in *al-Ahali, al-Arabi* and *Saut al-Umma*. Table 3 shows the distribution of the Egyptian press' interest in U.S. domestic politics and their slant.

Overall trends in the Arab media regarding the U.S. image

The following are all general trends in how Arab newspapers portray the United States.

The United States is above the law and seeking hegemony over the Arabs. The general trend in most pieces is based on the belief that the principal American goal is "he-

Table 3. Attitude of Egyptian newspapers toward the United States

Attitude	Neutral		Balanced		Negative		Positive		Total
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	
Paper									
Al-Ahram	23.7	204	11.1	96	60.3	519	4.9	42	861
Al-Akhbar	10.7	54	6.7	34	80.6	406	2	10	504
Al-Gumhouriya	9	26	11	32	74.8	217	5.2	15	290
Al-Wafd	6.3	27	8.6	37	82.8	356	2.3	10	430
Al-Ahali	8.9	11	4.9	6	85.4	105	0.8	1	123
Al-Arabi	9.5	7	-	-	90.5	67	-	-	74
Al-Usboo'	2.1	3	5	7	92.9	131	-	-	141
Saut al-Umma	14	7	2	1	84	42	-	-	50
Al-Alam al-Yaum	15.5	27	15.5	27	62.1	108	6.9	12	174
Total	**13.8**	**366**	**9.1**	**240**	**73.7**	**1,951**	**3.4**	**90**	**2,647**

"Many have described the United States as an invading, hostile state that has lost its credibility."

gemony" over the Arab world – to achieve the dream of "forming an American empire of unrivaled supremacy"[1] as a superpower. However, instead of playing the role of the just ruler, it has been portrayed as a "state above the law," who "with its behavior plants the seeds of hatred and evil in the world."[2] As portrayed, the United States has "made itself ruler, infringed on justice, crushed all the legal frameworks, violated principles and values, and torn away freedom and peace,"[3] and broken "all the international laws and legal norms."[4]

The United States is a hostile, invading state. Most writers firmly reject all American justifications for the war on Iraq, sharply criticize what occurs in American prisons in Iraq, and many have described the United States as an invading, hostile state that has lost its credibility. The war in Iraq has been described as "an oppressive war of aggression not based on any legitimacy."[5] The following statements are quotes from the sample newspapers that reflect this image:

- "The invasion of Iraq, which was founded on lies, deceit, and the fabrication of justifications which frightened the military Goliath of the superpower which reneged on its duty in spreading justice and supporting international legitimacy."[6]

- "The Statue of Liberty is no longer the symbol of America, but rather that which the world recognizes of American freedom is the image of the Iraqi prisoner." [7]

- "Bush and his soldiers' treatment of the Iraqis is no different than Saddam's treatment of them."[8]

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1   "Bush repeats Hitler's fatal flaw," *al-Wafd*, April 23, 2004.
2   "America has lost trust," *al-Akhbar*, April 22, 2004.
3   "The American Satan," *al-Usboo'*, July 14, 2004.
4   "Two years since the September attacks," *al-Ahram*, September 10, 2003.
5   "A year of oppression and aggression," *al-Usboo'*, March 22, 2004.
6   Galal Duweidre, *al-Akhbar*, March 12, 2004.
7   Nabil Magalee, *al-Ahali*, May 19, 2004.
8   Saeed Sanbal, *al-Akhbar*, May 2, 2004.

- "Saddam undertaking atrocities against the Iraqis is not equivalent to the Americans doing so, since America boasts night and day of its respect for human rights and rejection of torture."[9]

The United States is biased toward Israel. This is the traditional image of the United States in the Egyptian press. According to some pieces, "It is America who offers Israel arms and ammunition … who gives it billions of dollars and protects its possessing all the weapons of mass destruction."[10] The newspapers often bring up issues surrounding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, with one newspaper reporting that "the mistakes and the ongoing deceit by America provides Israel enough cover and time to seize the rest of the Palestinian Territories and wipe out the Palestinian people."[11]

The United States has lost credibility in defending democracy. Most writers and journalists have raised doubts about the goals of the American reform initiatives, stating, for example: "America in this attempt has lost credibility with the region's peoples as a result of the blatant double standards with which it treats this issue [reform], and it doesn't hide its support for and cooperation with superficially democratic regimes when it serves its interests,"[12] and "the American administration was able during a short period to distort the shining principles upon which the first immigrants to the New World built the U.S. reputation and fame out of respect for the law, human rights, and freedoms."[13]

The U.S. image as portrayed by Arab satellite channels

A case study of the Egyptian press can help draw the general features of the U.S. image in the Arab press, especially considering its relative spread and the size of its target audience (75 million people), but it is neither sufficient at portraying all the details of that image, nor does it reflect how widespread that image is within the region. Thus, the image of the United States on the Arab satellite channels must also be examined, since satellite channels are the most far-reaching and have the greatest impact on Arab public opinion. In addition, the high level of illiteracy among the Arab population in the Middle East makes visual media highly influential, as it can infiltrate an important sector of the public untouched by the written media.

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9   Ibrahim Saadu, *al-Akhbar*, May 15, 2004.
10   "The American ambassador's lies" *al-Wafd*, May 25, 2004.
11   "America and Israel behind the walls," *al-Gomhouria*, August 7, 2005.
12   "Legitimate fears of reform and the American model," *al-Gomhouria*, March 8, 2004.
13   Mahmoud Bakri, *al-Usboo'*, March 5, 2004.

"Al-Jazeera, in particular, relied on Iraq as its principal source in feeding the negative image of the United States."

Among the satellite channels, al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya stand out as the two main sources of information for a number of reasons, the most important being their concern with international issues in general and the United States in particular. Furthermore, they are the most-watched channels in the Arab world, according to a Zogby poll carried out in cooperation with the University of Maryland in October 2004, which sampled more than 1,500 people in five Middle Eastern countries – Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Lebanon.[14] In another survey published in the *Washington Post* on Oct. 15, 2004, measuring more than 120 international television stations received in the Middle East, al-Jazeera came in first, followed by al-Arabiya far behind it (al-Jazeera: 51.7 percent, al-Arabiya: 8.4 percent, Abu Dhabi Television: 7.6 percent, CNN, Atlanta: 6.4 percent, Middle East Broadcasting Centre, London (MBC): 5.3 percent, and finally, Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation: 4.6 percent).[15]

Quantitative indicators

An analysis of the news and discussion programs on al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya reveals that the image the two channels paint of the United States is not very different from those in the Egyptian press, particularly regarding the main issues at the center of attention for these programs (Iraq, the Arab-Israeli conflict, democratic reform). However, al-Jazeera's portrayal of the United States remains more negative than that on al-Arabiya.[16] Al-Jazeera, in particular, relied on Iraq as its principal source in feeding the negative image of the United States, especially by broadcasting live footage of

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14   http://www.aljazeera.net/news/archive/archive?ArchiveID=29998.

15   "The Source for News," *Washington Post*, October 18, 2004; information for this article came from the Zogby/ University of Maryland poll noted above.

16   One of the media reports on distinguishing between al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya said that al-Arabiya actually works to improve the U.S. image in the Arab world as part of a media conglomerate including MBC 1, 2, 3, and 4, the *Ash-Sharq al-Awsat* newspaper, and the MBC FM radio station. The report suggests that the American administration, represented by the State Department, has succeeded in employing al-Arabiya and the rest of the conglomerate to improve its image among the Arab public, particularly in the Gulf. The report pointed out that al-Arabiya played a key role in supporting the American presence in Iraq by covering the Iraq elections, while running ads encouraging Iraqis to participate, and also allowing Iraqi political parties to advertise. Al-Arabiya also succeeded in marginalizing the impact of the Sunni boycott of the elections. It was also at the forefront in reporting on acts of violence in Iraq, but with an American perspective, by minimizing the news on civilian casualties caused by American attacks, and exaggerating the success of the American army's operations against the resistance, in an attempt to deal the resistance a moral defeat. As evidence, this report looked at al-Arabiya's coverage of a number of important events, primarily the Abu Ghraib tragedy. The report can be read at: http://www.albawabaforums.com/read.php3?f=11&i=7560&t=7560.

the American bombing of Iraq, with its news and discussion programs focusing on America's failure in the country.

This analysis will examine the features of the U.S. image on al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya through an approach different than that used for the Egyptian press case study, both in order to discover various additional aspects of the U.S. image in the Arab world, and in a way appropriate to the nature of the satellite channels. It will also measure the degree of reliance on conspiracy theories when dealing with U.S. foreign policy, and the West in general, toward the Arab and Islamic world. The conspiracy logic can be seen in a number of typical statements, such as:

- "The Arab world is targeted by the U.S. and the West."

- "Arab leaders and states are being lured into an American trap."

- "There is a party benefiting from what is happening to the Arab countries [meaning the U.S. and the West] and it is responsible for what's happening."

- "The U.S. is carefully penetrating the Arab world."

- "The announced American slogans and goals cannot be trusted, for there's a hidden agenda behind them."

Tables 4 and 5 show the diffusion of conspiracy theories, in a sample taken from al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya from June-December 2004.

Table 4. Diffusion of Conspiracy Theories, al-Jazeera, June-December 2004

Program	Number of Episodes in the Sample	There is not a conspiracy		There is a conspiracy	
		Percentage (%)	Number of episodes	Percentage (%)	Number of episodes
Al-Jazeera's Pulpit	28	7.1	2	92.9	26
The Opposite Direction	30	16.7	5	83.3	25
More Than One View	30	20	6	80	24
Without Borders	30	60	18	40	12
From Washington	21	95.2	20	4.8	1

Table 5. Diffusion of Conspiracy Theories, al-Arabiya, June-December 2004

Program	Number of Episodes in the Sample	There is not a conspiracy		There is a conspiracy	
		Percentage (%)	Number of episodes	Percentage (%)	Number of episodes
Under the Monitor	28	60.7	17	39.3	11
In Plain Arabic	31	64.5	20	35.5	11
In the Spotlight	25	68	17	32	8
Point of Order	26	80.8	21	19.2	5
Across the Ocean	28	89.3	25	10.7	3

It is clear from the above data that al-Jazeera was more inclined to promote the idea of an American – and Western – conspiracy against the Arab world than was al-Arabiya. The program "Al-Jazeera's Pulpit" was at the top, with 26 of 28 episodes promoting the idea of American and Western conspiracy against the Arab and Islamic world.

The general features of the U.S. image

In promoting the idea of a conspiracy against the Arab world, the U.S. image on al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya was characterized by the following general features (which do not differ greatly on the aforementioned image in the Egyptian press):

The United States is an occupying power, without credibility, seeking hegemony over the Arab world, and conspiring with Israel and Iraqi elements to destroy Iraq and plunder its wealth.

The following text is from a transcript of an al-Jazeera program (as stated by an al-Jazeera moderator):

"Has power been handed over to the Iraqis, or transferred from Bremer to the American Ambassador Negroponte, in other words from the Pentagon to the State Department? Isn't it another lie like the lies about weapons of mass destruction? … Doesn't America admit to the existence of over 200 American advisors spread across the Iraqi ministries, exactly as was the situation during the British occupation of Iraq almost a century ago? Isn't this a new mandate? Did the Americans come thousands of miles to hand over power to the Iraqis on a silver platter? Is sovereignty transferred by a decision by Bremer or by the historical way, resistance? Was one of them wrong when he compared it to the Vichy government appointed by Hitler after occupying France, which was later

brought down by the French Resistance? Are the new Iraqi intellectuals not embarrassed of themselves to be thanking Bush and Blair while millions around the world demonstrate against a visit by Bush to their country? Does America still consider itself

"Was there a hidden global strategic agenda which the administration was working to achieve, not only in Iraq but rather across the region?"

an occupying force in Iraq? Isn't it going to ask for thousands of new soldiers? Is their any sovereignty under occupation? Didn't the Imam of the Abu Hanifa mosque describe the new Iraqi officials as a bunch of foreign agents? Didn't the American newspapers say that the new Iraqi prime minister was a CIA agent and undertook sabotage missions inside Iraq that killed many children and civilians? How is he different from Saddam Hussein, whose hands are soaked in the blood of Iraqis?" [17]

In another episode, it was stated that:

"The former French Minister Jean Pierre said just before retiring that what is happening is not the liberation [of] Kuwait, but rather the destruction of Iraq, adding that the West has destroyed the dream of Arab renaissance, beginning with Mohammed Ali Pasha, then Gamal Abdel Nasser, and finishing with Saddam."[18]

In another program:

"There are different views as to what happened in Iraq, was what happened actually out of the Americans' desire to free the Iraqi people from the former regime or bring Iraq democracy, or was there a hidden global strategic agenda which the administration was working to achieve, not only in Iraq but rather across the region?"[19]

The American reform initiatives are not actually aiming for genuine reform in the Arab world. Many programs have questioned the intentions of U.S. reform initiatives, claim-

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17   *The Opposite Direction*, episode "Transfer of Power to the Iraqis," al-Jazeera, June 29, 2004.
18   *The Opposite Direction*, episode "Saddam Hussein's Trial," al-Jazeera, July 6, 2004.
19   *More than One View*, episode "Iraq on the Doorstep of Liberation or Mandate?" al-Jazeera, June 4, 2004.

ing that they seek to serve the true American goals and interests: the destruction and dismemberment of the region, and providing cover for its policies toward Iraq and the Palestine issue. It was said in one al-Jazeera program:

"The wing which won is the American administration's hawks, and those who won will continue in the project to change the Arab world, not for the sake of democracy or for the sake of Arab interests, but rather to dismember the region, and this region will live through tough years in Sudan, Syria, and Lebanon, and there will be no talk of democracy, but rather the Arab regimes will be blackmailed in the name of democracy to offer essential, important concessions, I mean Bush actually has a plan to change the world, as he said to Bob Woodward. However, the truth of the plan is as far as it could be from what the gentleman [another guest] was talking about, changing the world means something similar to a Crusade in the region, the large-scale dismemberment of the Arab countries, and the imposition of a certain culture upon it, we are facing the largest process of dismemberment in the Arab region."[20]

The following has also been stated in al-Jazeera programs:

"America … wants coverage for its hostile stance toward the Arabs, represented in the Iraqi and Palestinian issues, and the reform project is an admirable goal sought for the wrong reasons."[21]

"The reform America demands in what it calls the Greater Middle East project, which doesn't aim at the first place at moving the Arab people from their poor situation to democracy as much as it seeks to put the Arab peoples at the mercy of the American administration one way or another."[22]

"The U.S. project is one of American hegemony over the entire region – controlling everything that happens, monitoring everything that takes places within it, and so it's a project completing its hegemony. There is military hegemony, which must be followed by cultural hegemony and political hegemony.

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20 *The Opposite Direction*, episode "Consequences of Bush Winning a Second Term," al-Jazeera, December 12, 2004.
21 *Without Borders*, episode "Reform Curricula in the Arab Countries."
22 *Al-Jazeera's Pulpit*, episode "Results of the G-8 Summit," al-Jazeera, June 14, 2004.

Cultural and political hegemony are included in this project, particularly taking into consideration the ideas and principles which Bush came with."

Regarding American policy toward the Palestinian issue, the satellite channels restated the traditional stance, particularly on the American bias toward Israel.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that a negative image of the United States is continually being spread in the Arab media. The study also points out several common denominators that exist in the Arab media's portrayal of the United States.

1. The negative image is based on the Arab media's focus on American policy toward the Arab world, particularly the three central issues: Iraq, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and reform.

2. Overall, the United States is portrayed in the Arab media as: a country that has lost its credibility; an invading, occupying power, acting outside of international laws and legitimacy; a country whose policy contradicts its values and principles on justice, human rights, and freedom; and biased toward Israel.

3. The factors affecting the focus on the negative aspects of American policies can be traced to the nature of the dominant political and intellectual orientations in Arab media, which can often be associated with nationalists and Islamists agendas.

4. Despite the spread of the negative image, it cannot be said that the image of the United States is completely lacking a positive side; however, it is rarely shown because of the Arab media's heavy focus on politics in general, particularly foreign policy, while the interest in U.S. domestic politics and culture has declined.

The results of this study provide further evidence of the failure of American public diplomacy. This article – rather than simply addressing the causes of U.S. public diplomacy failure – revealed an important aspect of the media's role in shaping the negative perception of the United States in the Arab world, which is based on the perceived contradiction between American values on the one hand, and American policies on the other, as well as the overall incongruity between noble goals and principles – such as

spreading democracy – versus the selective application of it.

The mirror only shows real images, and improving the image of the United States in the Arab media by creating parallel media, is only a further failure. Improving the U.S. image in the Arab world requires improving U.S. policies before all else. ■

From Alexandria to New York
Uncle Sam in Egyptian Cinema

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KHALID EL–SARGANY

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Association; Egypt*

THIS YEAR MARKS A CULTURAL MILESTONE in the Middle East – the 100th
anniversary of the birth of Egyptian and Arab cinema. Despite this long history, how-
ever, there are relatively few films addressing the Arab relationship with the United
States, with the sole exception of Egypt. Throughout the past century, Egyptian films
have dealt almost exclusively with this topic, while films produced in the rest of the
Arab world have generally stayed away from commenting on the United States or its
policies. This is due to the relative paucity of films produced outside of Egypt and the
fact that most of the noteworthy non-Egyptian Arab films are constricted to their direc-
tors' introspective visions. In Egypt, most of the films about the United States are by a
single director, Youssef Chahine. In his films, Chahine does not take a decisive stance
toward the United States or its policies or culture, but rather has a more open-minded
perspective.

The formation of the U.S. image in Arab cinema[1]
Political factors have played a major role in forming the U.S. image as presented by

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1   The following movies were sources for this article: *An American from Tanta (Amriki min Tanta); The Bird (Al-
Asfour); Alexandria Why? (Ikandariya ley?); Amrika Shika Bika; Land of Dreams (Ard al-Ahlam); The Other
(Al-Aakhir); Malesh, Ihna Benetbahdel; The Night Baghdad Fell (Laylat Suqoot Baghdad)*; and *Alexandria-New
York (Iskandariya-New York)*. In addition, Mahmoud Qasim, Encyclopedia of Motion Pictures in *Egypt and the
Arab World* (Cairo: General Egyptian Organization for Books, 2007), was also used.

Arab cinema, and each political era has presented a particular view of the United States. The political environment typically interacts with the filmmakers' personal views to produce the dominant images of the United States in Egyptian cinema during each era. The filmmakers' stances toward the United States have also been subject to numerous political-psychological factors, primarily the developments of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in which the United States has played a major role since the 1950s.

On top of this, of course, are the directors' personal political affiliations – typically another major factor in forming the predominant image of the Unites States on the silver screen. Most of the directors of this cinematic trend were leftists, making films during the Cold War that reflected their negative view of the United States. Culture – mainly Egyptian and Arab values – also played a role in how a director portrayed the United States, and at a certain stage, the negative image of the United States in Arab cinema became part of the prevailing view in anti-modernist Egyptian cinema. This cinematic trend prevailed in the 1950s, and the United States was often portrayed as a symbol of modernity, with negative connotations.

In the beginning

One of the first Egyptian films to portray the United States was *An American from Tanta*, produced by Studio Misr, directed by Ahmad Kamil Mursy, and starring Hussein Riyad, Suleiman Naguib, Shukri Sarhan and Zuzu Madi, with the script written by Mohammed Ali Nasef. It was released on Dec. 13, 1954, during a period of friendly Egyptian-American bilateral relations, and before the Egyptian state had taken a firm stance against the West. Thus, as political tension between the United States and Egypt was mainly absent during this time, non-political factors played the leading role. The film negatively portrayed the 'American dream,' telling the story of an emigrant who returns to Egypt penniless. Mahrous, the main character, exploits his stay in the United States to delude relatives in Egypt into believing that he is a millionaire. But while staying with them, he avoids spending a single cent, relying on their expectation that he will raise them from poverty to wealth. The film ends with the "American millionaire" taking a job as a waiter in a restaurant, after having claimed that he owned an upscale restaurant in Chicago.

In *An American from Tanta*, the American dream is portrayed as a delusion. The solution, whether for those still in Egypt or those who made it to the United States, is not in the outside world, but rather, in Egypt. For Mahrous and those around him, the more permanent solution is to marry and work in Egypt, not migrate abroad. The film represents a defense of Egyptian cultural values, absent any political rhetoric. It does not criticize the American lifestyle, but rather focuses its criticism on specific Ameri-

cans. The movie also lambastes Egyptians who rely on Americans to solve their financial problems, such as when Mahrous, the American, accusingly says to his Egyptian relative, "You were also trying to rip me off, greedily thinking that I would loan you 30,000 pounds and set you up with a job paying 300 pounds a month." Mursy reveals how local Egyptians, at times, tried to take financial advantage of returning natives, displaying his distaste for the dubious tactic.

Youssef Chahine and the quantum leap

The quantum leap in the Egyptian cinema's view of America came at the hand of Youssef Chahine in his film *The Bird*, which was released on Aug. 26, 1974. Though it had been produced in 1972, it was held up at the time by government censors, since the film discussed the sensitive issue of the causes behind Egypt's defeat in the Six-Day War in 1967. For the first time in an Egyptian film an American character was portrayed, played by Ali Gohar (Gohar would later become a specialist in portraying foreigners in movies). In the dialogue, the American gives his explanation for the war's outcome, one which differs little from the official American view. The film's protagonist, the Egyptian journalist Yousef (played by Salah Qabil), argues with him heatedly, irate with the United States for the events surrounding the war.

Apart from the contrasting views which the film aired on the causes behind the defeat in 1967, which were only in a single scene, the very fact that American rhetoric appeared in a film was a landmark, especially considering it came during a groundswell of Arab anger against the United States. The left-leaning Chahine allowed political rhetoric in his film's script – even though it was about sensitive political issues – allowing for a profound dialogue with significant political connotations. The heavy political themes may have come from the well-known writer Lutfi El-Khouli, the editor in chief of the left-wing *Al-Talia* magazine, whose political leanings show through, particularly in the aforementioned scene. The movie, even though it came at a peak of anti-U.S. sentiment in the Arab world, did not harshly attack the United States or seek to evoke an emotional hostility toward it so much as it aired the American viewpoint, discussed it and thoughtfully refuted its perspective.

"The solution, whether for those still in Egypt or those who made it to the United States, is not in the outside world, but rather, in Egypt."

Alexandria ... Why? – another Chahine film – also addresses the United States, albeit from a different perspective. This film, which was first shown on Aug. 23, 1979,

was written by Chahine in collaboration with Mohsen Zayed. This was the first part of the famous director's biographic series of films, which are a deeply introspective look at the relationship between the self (Youssef Chahine) and the other (the West – first and foremost the United States). *Alexandria … Why?* is set in 1942 Alexandria, when the city was a cosmopolitan gem inhabited by a mix of various nationalities comfortably coexisting. The film tells the story of the teenage boy Yehia (the character of Youssef Chahine himself) and flashes back to his childhood. Yehia becomes fascinated with America, and has an overwhelming love of the actress Esther Williams and the dancer and movie star Gene Kelly.

> **"Yehia becomes fascinated with America, and has an overwhelming love of the actress Esther Williams and the dancer and movie star Gene Kelly."**

In the film, Yehia goes to the movie theater, which the director portrays as America's art, and talks with his school friends nonstop about Hollywood, Williams, Kelly and his dream of studying the art of filmmaking in America. The young Yehia is smitten with America, not as a dream, but as a place to study filmmaking before returning home again to put his skills to use. Much of the film focuses on the ambition of Yehia, his family and a few of those around him to put together enough money for him to travel to America to study. He succeeds, and the last scene of the movie shows him boarding a boat on the journey to America. The four-part series consists of *Alexandria … Why?*, *An Egyptian Story, Alexandria Again and Forever*, and finally *Alexandria … New York*, which tells the story of Chahine's time in the United States.

Alexandria … New York is one of a number of Arab films released in response to Sept. 11, 2001. However, this film stands out among the rest due to Chahine's adoration of America's culture and people, though not its politics. Philosophically addressing the post-Sept. 11 era, examining the self and culture, it tells the story of the aspiring film director, Yehia, traveling to New York to take part in a film festival, where he discovers that during his studies there, he had fathered a child by an American named Ginger he knew 40 years prior. Through the relationship with his newly discovered son, he comes to the fundamental conclusion that mutual understanding between the Arab world and the West, represented by the United States, is impossible due to unavoidable factors like Zionist propaganda, Westerners' condescension toward anyone from the developing world, and the predominating assumption of Western superiority over the backward, barbarian Arab world. Furthermore, Chahine suggests that there is no opening for the West to correct itself and objectively study the culture and philosophy of the East (particularly the Arab and Islamic world). In other words, the movie

ascertains the veracity of Ernest Renan – the famous philosopher and writer – who noted the dichotomy between the East and the West.

The film attempts to show how Yehia, who outperforms his American peers in the classroom while studying acting, is faced with hostility from his classmates, who actively try to make him fail. As in his other films, Chahine does not treat Americans as a monolithic entity spreading evil, but rather treats them as simply human, showing both good and bad people, a mix of flat and complex personalities.

In *Alexandria … New York*, he illustrates the relationship between the Arab world and the West in numerous, complex dimensions, and emphasizes that the situation was not brought about simply by political factors embodied in the Arab-Israeli conflict, but for cultural reasons as well. An attempt at reconciliation between Yehia and his newly discovered son fails due to his son's refusal to understand the other side, clinging to his prefabricated paradigms to understand Yehia's religion (Islam) as a result of historical factors. Chahine, in this examination of his relationship with America, takes the events of Sept. 11 and the American military operations in Iraq as a starting point. Those events seem to have played a role in his coming to view mutual understanding between the two sides as impossible.

Before *Alexandria … New York*, Chahine directed *The Other* in 2000, another important film on the subject of relations between Arabs and the West. The protagonist is Adam, an Egyptian with an American mother, who is in love with a poor Egyptian girl, Hanan. Hanan's brother is involved in a fundamentalist organization. The American mother tries to persuade her son to travel with her to live in America, arguing that Egyptians are backward and that he has no future in Egypt. Naturally,

"… he comes to the fundamental conclusion that mutual understanding between the Arab world and the West … is impossible due to the unavoidable factors like Zionist propaganda."

the movie points out that there are Westerners living in Egypt, with the West trying to protect them while confronting the fundamentalists. The film ends tragically, with both Adam and Hanan dying in a terrorist attack. In other words, the film speculates that Adam died because he didn't travel to America, a confirmation of the American perspective on Egypt's future.

America's dark side

When addressing the image of the United States in Arab and Egyptian cinema, it's important to examine the films which do not show the United States, or even any

American character, but that still discuss the American dream. Or, as it turns out, the American illusion and its collapse. Two films in particular tackle the subject this way: *Land of Dreams* and *Amrika Shika Bika*. The former was produced by Dawoud Abdel Sayyid and released on March 15, 2000. The central character is Nirgis, a woman seeking to join her son in America primarily in order to convince him to sponsor the rest of his brothers for U.S. visas.

The day before leaving for America, Nirgis loses her passport and also happens to meet Raouf, a nightclub comedian. They begin looking for her passport together, and Nirgis decides that she would rather live out her life, rather than sacrifice herself for her sons' "counterfeit dream." She avoids returning home in order to dodge the pressure to travel from her sons, and thus, does not emigrate. The movie did not criticize America, but at the same time the implicit message is clear – happiness can be achieved without traveling to America, the presumed land of dreams.

Directed by Khairy Bishara, written by Medhat El-Adl and Khairy Bishara, and released on Aug. 2, 1983, *Amrika Shika Bika* tells the story of black market visa middleman Gaber Fawaz. Through the Romanian Embassy, he arranges U.S. visas for a group of Egyptians, whom he abandons at the border between Romania and Hungary. The Egyptians seeking to travel to America are portrayed as desperate and overwhelmed by failure and frustration when they face hardships on the border. They are unable to find any solution to their predicament other than to return to Egypt and begin life anew, after realizing that they had been conned. Although the film does not directly show America, it is indirectly portrayed through the sad, broken characters trying to emigrate there.

In both films, the United States is portrayed in a negative light. Both directors belong to the neo-realist school and have leftist affiliations, which go a long way in explaining their negative stances toward the United States and the issues they chose to highlight. In the end, they both offer the viewer the message that the American dream is a mirage, and that dreams are best realized within one's own country. Indirectly, the two directors sharply criticize the idea of migration to the United States, and the belief that migration is the perfect solution to the problems Egyptians suffer. Notably, the two movies did not focus only on youth, with the Egyptians in the two movies covering a wide range of ages – the directors did not rely on the naïve belief that only youth want to live the American dream, but rather said that the dream cuts across classes and demographic groups.

"The implicit message is clear – happiness can be achieved without traveling to America, the presumed land of dreams."

At Uncle Sam's

While the two previous directors chose to address the American dream without ever showing the United States or a single American character within the movie, several other Egyptian movies were mostly or entirely filmed within U.S. cities. One prominent example is

> **"In the end, they both offer the viewer the message that the American dream is a mirage, and that dreams are best realized within one's own country."**

Hello, America, starring Adel Imam and directed by Nader Galal, released on Jan. 8, 2000. *Hello, America* is the third and final comedy starring Adel Imam and Sherene as "Bakhit and Adila."

The movie's location in America was not chosen to stimulate discussion on American values or the relationship between the East and the West, as was the case with Chahine filming *Alexandria ... New York* in New York City. Rather, the primary goal was to save the veteran star Adel Imam from the competition of the rising wave of those known as "the new comics." By locating the film in an exciting venue new to the Egyptian audience, Imam hoped to set his film apart from the other comedies. Since a number of movies had already been set in Eastern Europe and Turkey, Imam chose the United States, despite the high costs of filming there. The second objective was to save the "Bakhit and Adila" series itself, in the wake of the second installment failing to come close to the box office success of the first one. For a change of scenery, America was chosen, and the main characters were all American – though of Egyptian origin. The filmmakers also sought to criticize American values as a means to achieve political goals, taking a popular stance in a society having no great love for the United States.

Of any of the movies discussed above, *Hello, America* is the most disparaging toward America, which is portrayed as a merciless jungle drowning in materialism. Bakhit is sponsored for a U.S. visa by his cousin Nofil, and travels with Adila (whom he hopes to marry) in search of riches. He quickly runs into trouble and, in order to achieve residency, is compelled to marry an obese American woman. Later, after being injured by a presidential candidate's daughter in an automobile accident, Bakhit wins a huge lawsuit, but discovers that his lawyers have claimed the lion's share of the compensation. The films ends with Bakhit and Adila driving through the streets of America in an Egyptian-style wedding, with Bakhit laughing and throwing money into the air to a society "fighting over these green scraps of paper."

In contrast to Chahine's films, *Hello, America* exploits popular negative stereotypes about the United States for the sake of humor. Although a number of other films, which will be discussed briefly, also criticize the United States, they do so by explicitly

differentiating between the American people and U.S. policies, and between the average citizen and the politicians responsible for warping the U.S. image in the Arab world through U.S. policy in the region.

Another Egyptian movie filmed in the United States is *Lost in America*, directed by Rafi Girgis, who wrote the script together with Taymour Sirri. Released on March 20, 2002, *Lost in America* is about the misunderstandings ensuing after two young Egyptian men, Sherif and Adil, travel to America, the former to meet his cousin for the first time and marry her, and the latter in search of work. Adil is detained in the airport for carrying a suspicious package of sardines, and after getting out of customs, meets Sherif's cousin, and assumes Sherif's identity. In contrast to most Arab filmmakers, Girgis portrays the United States in a very similar fashion to how it is portrayed in American films; this is mostly because the director himself lives in America.

Uncle Sam comes over

The final category to be examined is of movies that came in the post-Sept. 11 international environment. Influenced by the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, these movies portrayed the United States as a force invading the Arab world. There are two main films within this category: *The Night Baghdad Fell* and *Malesh, Ihna Benetbahdel*. The former was written and directed by Mohammed Amin, stars Ahmad Eid, and was released on Dec. 28, 2005. Shakir, a school headmaster, is deeply disturbed by the images of American troops in Baghdad and becomes convinced that Egypt is the next target after Iraq. Looking to develop a deterrent weapon, he recruits a brilliant former student and devotes all his personal resources to his basement weapons program. Learning of the plot, the CIA tries unsuccessfully to buy him out.

During the film, both the headmaster and his former student have repeated nightmares of U.S. Marines storming the house, capturing the family, and applying the torture methods used in Abu Ghraib. The film shows America as omnipotent and so deeply in control of Arab societies that an Egyptian billionaire whom Shakir approaches to request funding refuses to be involved, fearing that the United States will drive him out of business in retaliation. Furthermore, the movie depicts the United States as committed to keeping the Arab countries backward and underdeveloped, though the comic nature of the film prevents it from seriously exploring these ideas in depth.

The second film of this nature is *Malesh, Ihna Benetbahdel*, directed by Sherif Mandour and written by Yousef Maati. First shown on Aug. 3, 2005, the movie stars Ahmad Adam in the role of his popular TV character, El-Qarmouti. In the movie version, El-Qarmouti's son goes to Iraq on a business trip and is caught there when the U.S.-led military operations start. El-Qarmouti himself goes there to look for his son, and runs

into deposed Iraqi president Saddam Hussein hiding in a bunker, meets George W. Bush (played by American actor Andy Knight), and, of course, visits Abu Ghraib. The filmmakers use overdone comedy that resonates with the anti-U.S. audience, through crude, populist, political language, but nonetheless, it did not realize the hoped-for box office success.

Based on the movies discussed in this article, it can be argued that several factors have contributed to painting the Arab cinema's image of the United States. Many portrayed the American dream as mirage, with no real success stories for those who pursue it. Many can be seen as a defense of Egyptian culture, rather than an offense on American culture. Overall, it was more political, psychological and cultural factors – rather than artistic – that have shaped the predominant image of the United States as seen in Arab cinema. However, Arab cinema – ironically – which brought Hollywood to the Arab world, has contributed to the portrayal of America in a negative light. ■

Y do U H8 us ☹?
Arab Online Forums Examined

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THE OCCUPATION OF IRAQ has contributed greatly to the spread of Western weblogs (more commonly referred to as "blogs") on the Internet. It was shortly thereafter that the blogging phenomenon made its debut in the Arab world. With the worldwide debate over the Iraq war emerging as early as 2002, many Western, particularly American, blog-

> **"Many of the early Arab blogs garnered considerable popularity, and in some cases, managed to attract millions of readers inside and outside the Arab world."**

gers began participating in the discussion about an impending war. This discussion grew with fervor as the 2003 decision to go to war was announced, expanding into the realm of political blogging, both in the United States and the Arab world.

Many of the early Arab blogs garnered considerable popularity, and in some cases, managed to attract millions of readers inside and outside the Arab world. In fact, some Arab blogs were translated into English. In 2003, the publisher Atlantic Books, in co-operation with the British newspaper *Guardian*, published a book titled *The Baghdad Blog*, which consisted of a compilation of entries from the blog "Where is Raed?"[1] The blog, owned by the Iraqi Salam Pax, became a daily attraction for international media

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1   "Where is Raed?" Blog, Salam Pax, September 2002-June 2003, http://dear_raed.blogspot.com.

> **"Only 15 of 354 chat rooms listed in a directory of online Arab chat rooms identify themselves as political chat rooms."**

and is often cited by famous Arab writers.

Currently, there are no precise figures or statistics for the number of Arab blogs on the Internet. However, some reports estimate the number to be nearly 40,000. Out of the estimated 37 million blogs that populate the World Wide Web, Arab blogs make up slightly less than 0.11 percent.[2]

Arab blogs: global forums for domestic agendas

There is little doubt that political events and developments have played an important role in creating and spreading the phenomenon of Arab weblogs. Yet careful examinations of the actual entries on such blogs show that the majority of them are concerned with non-political agendas, whether literary, cultural, artistic, athletic or technological. Perhaps this can be attributed to the personal character of weblogs, whereby postings tend to reflect a blogger's own ideas on a range of political and non-political issues, not to mention their own personal concerns, as in the case of "The Bahai Faith in Egypt" weblog, which addresses the concerns of persons of Bahai Faith in Egypt.[3] Although some bloggers focus exclusively on political issues, they remain a minority compared to non-political bloggers. As a matter of fact, most political blogs in the Arabic speaking world take on domestic rather than international political issues, such as political reform and liberalization, corruption, and human rights abuses inside their own countries.

The same holds true for Arabic-language chat rooms. Only 15 of 354 chat rooms listed in a directory of online Arab chat rooms[4] identify themselves as political chat rooms, and none of them define themselves as exclusively political.

Finding room for America?

In a world of apolitical blogs and chat rooms mainly concerned with domestic, if not personal, issues, interest in U.S. affairs, whether domestic or international, is limited. The space devoted to discussions of the United States on blogs and chat rooms, however,

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2   "Arabic Blogs: An Embodiment of Freedom of Expression," The Initiative for an Open Arab Internet, http://www.openarab.net/en/reports/net2006/blogger.shtml.

3   http://bahai-egypt.blogspot.com. The Bahai Faith is a monotheistic religion originally founded in 1844 in Iran that views the world's major religions as a part of single entity under one God that will unify into one global society in the future. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahai of the United States, http://www.bahai.us/about-bahai.

4   Directory of Arab Chat Rooms, http://www.arab2.com/a/arab-chat-sites.html.

varies from one country to another. For instance, Iraqi bloggers are usually more concerned with the affairs of the United States than Egyptian or Moroccan bloggers. Thus, an imperative question arises: Why, despite such heavy U.S. involvement in the Arab world, is interest in the United States on Arabic-language blogs so limited?

Three main factors contribute to the answer. First, Arabic-language blogging is a phenomenon that developed only in the past three years, with the majority of existing Arab blogs created in the year 2006 or later. Blogging in the Arab world is still too recent to allow for the development of specialized blogs. The general subject of entries on any given Arabic-language weblog varies almost on a daily basis, with little focus on any specific issues, let alone in-depth discussions about U.S. policies or politics.

Second, most Arab bloggers are in their 20s, an age group that remains mainly concerned with their own immediate daily domestic issues.

Third, and most importantly, the scarcity of discussions about the United States in Arabic-language weblogs can be attributed to the context in which Arab blogs were conceived. There is no doubt that the war in Iraq has played a major role in spreading the phenomenon of blogging in the Arab world. However, the discussions it sparked on Arab weblogs has had less to do with the United States itself and more with issues of political reform in the Arab world. The war in Iraq, specifically the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, coupled with the growing prominence of democracy promotion in U.S. policies and rhetoric, as well as the political openings made by many Arab regimes in response to the changing international environment, initiated a serious debate in Arab societies about political reform – one that took precedence over international issues, including those directly related to the United States.

In essence, bloggers tend to focus on domestic political issues rather than international issues, including American policies, because the former gives them the opportunity to increase their readership, and hence exposure, in the realm of Arabic-language blogging. In fact, such exposure gave many bloggers, who tackle issues of corruption and human rights abuses, great prominence in the realm of political activism. This was the case with Wael Abbas, the author of the blog "Egyptian Awareness,"[5] and Alaa and Manal, the authors of the blog titled "Alaa and Manal."[6] Many bloggers received great public exposure and sparked political debates when they were arrested by authorities on account of the "daring" nature of their blog entries. In other words, many bloggers have turned from virtual political activists into field political activists, organizing a variety of political activities, including protests and demonstrations.

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5   http://misrdigital.blogspirit.com.
6   http://www.manalaa.net/.

America on Arab blogs and chat rooms: general observations

As a pretext to discussing how the United States is typically portrayed in debates on Arab blogs, it is important to note that one cannot speak of a single image of the United States in the world of Arab blogging. For instance, the U.S. image on "Islamist" blogs and on liberal ones differs significantly; additionally, the U.S.-centric issues they each raise are quite different. Moreover, discussions about the United States on Iraqi blogs are, for obvious reasons, distinct from those found on Egyptian blogs. Therefore, drawing a comprehensive picture of the United States through a close examination of Arab blogs is a highly complex process that must take into consideration all of these various differences. This article will only offer a preview of the general features of America's image in Arab weblogs – one that does not necessarily apply to all Arab blogs and chat rooms.

1. Alaa and Manal: an example of liberal Egyptian blogs

"Alaa and Manal" is one of the best-known Egyptian blogs. It is considered one of the most daring, both in terms of topics discussed and the language used. When examining the blog, one cannot help but notice that almost none of the posts discuss the United States in any in-depth or exclusive manner. There are two notable exceptions, however, one of which is a post with the subject "Do you know what happened in New York on June 11, 2000?" The post, dated Oct. 5, 2005, discusses the issue of sexual harassment in the United States with the aim of proving that this phenomenon exists all over the world, not just in Arab countries, and is not specific to any society. The other exception was an entry titled "The price of resistance and of giving in to the status quo or to surrender" dated Aug. 10, 2006, which discussed resistance to foreign domination by the United States and Israel. All other discussions about the United States came in the context of responses by visitors to the blog owner's own entries, which were not mainly concerned with the United States. In fact, most of the statements posted by visitors about the United States were not political in nature, and pertained to anecdotes about American culture or the American democratic system of government. They also did not contain many value judgments, and when they did, they were usually positive.

An in-depth examination of two particular instances in which the United States was discussed on the "Alaa and Manal" blog provides additional insight.

A. American hegemony: between reality and resistance

One provocative entry on this Egyptian blog claimed its topic to be "the price of resistance and of giving in to the status quo or to surrender." Although this recent

entry was clearly posted in reference to the war between Israel and Hezbollah in the summer of 2006, it managed to spark a volatile debate regarding a significant controversy in Egyptian and Arab societies. Moreover, the author's entry instigated a discussion about the idea of resistance in general, whether against Israeli occupation or U.S. hegemony. There are generally two sides to this debate in Arab society, one of

"Arab bloggers are divided between those who call for all plausible forms of resistance regardless of the human and material cost, while the other embraces a realist viewpoint that demands more calculated and pragmatic behavior."

which calls for all plausible forms of resistance regardless of the human and material cost, while the other embraces a realist viewpoint that demands more calculated and pragmatic behavior.

The initial entry was more sympathetic to the former type of opinions. As illustrated below, the entry suggests, however, that there may be a strong link between the refusal to give up resistance and the deterioration of internal political, social and economic conditions. The discussion that followed exemplified how most of the critics of "Hezbollah's adventurism" adopt an unequivocal rejection of all forms of resistance. The critics embraced a realist view that there is no use in antagonizing the United States, the remaining world superpower, or Israel – as long as it enjoys the unconditional support of the United States. However, the author of the blog countered that this view calls on Arabs to accept the American project in the region, including a hegemonic Israel, on grounds that the price of resisting this project is too high to bear, and that the most Arabs can do is aspire to improve the terms of the American project either by negotiation or by begging.

Furthermore, the author questioned whether Egypt has gained much since it ceased to resist American hegemony 28 years ago, when it signed peace accords with Israel, entering the Western-led capitalist bloc. The majority of visitors' responses to this entry fell into two categories.

First, the pragmatists tried to propose a third alternative to "total capitulation" on the one hand, and "reckless resistance" on the other. Respondents in this group refused to accept that corruption and other domestic problems are the direct result of "surrendering to American hegemony" and calling-off resistance. With "careful planning and continuous hard work," respondents pointed out that Germany and Japan were able to attain prosperity "without entering into a direct confrontation with the Americans… and without waging terrorist operations against American troops and without blaming all their problems on America."[7] As for Israel, they said, "If Israel has been really plan-

ning to dominate the region for the past 50 years … using all possible methods, then why do we need to remain in this reactive mode, responding to their every provocation in the exact manner they desire, as if we are an integral part of their plan?"[8] We live in a very complex international system, they said, governed by the laws of globalization and interests, which does not permit us to use force. To achieve our goals we must, therefore, work on exploiting suitable international environments. They added, there is no dignity for oppressed people suffering from poverty, ignorance, disease and unemployment, and, thus, development is the only path toward progress. They also rebuffed allegations that there is an international conspiracy against Arabs and Islam. Even after suffering two atomic bombs, far worse than any "conspiracy," Japan was able to achieve miracles on the development and economic front. Respondents holding this view also agreed that the international community allowed Israel to attack Hezbollah, not because they were executing a "conspiracy" against Muslims and Arabs, but rather because "as Muslims, we are mistakenly perceived as advocates of terrorism due to the foolish acts that some of us have committed."[9]

The second group of opinions focused on different points, including their belief that Israel, by its very nature, is an expansionist state. "Israel is a state that resembles fire: it cannot live without engulfing someone."[10] Most of them saw little value in the Camp David Accords, other than neutralizing the largest Arab power in the region, Egypt, in order for Israel and the United States to complete their plans in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Iran and the Gulf states.

Advocates of this opinion also explained that Arabs could not benefit from comparisons made to the German or Japanese experiences for a number of reasons, including:

- Germany and Japan were powerful states before their defeat in World War II.
- Following their defeat they were incorporated into an imperialist project, and therefore their prosperity would not have been possible absent imperialist auspices.
- The two countries achieved their recovery under a bipolar world characterized by competition between two superpowers, which gave them a margin of freedom not enjoyed today by Arabs living under the mercy of a sole superpower.

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7   http://www.manalaa.net/the_price_of_no_resistance.
8   Ibid.
9   Ibid.
10   Ibid.

- Achievements in Germany and Japan are first and foremost credited to their own peoples, who had the will and the capabilities to innovate, utilize techno-logical advancements and uphold a sufficient degree of democratic practice to fight corruption.
- The imperialist forces are keen on curbing any progress achieved by Arabs, and, thus, the current conditions cannot improve without radical steps against the hegemony of imperialist forces.

The main steps toward Arab progress and development may be domestic in nature and therefore unrelated to Israel, but given the demands of imperialist forces, normal-ization of relations with Israel and natural gas and oil sales to the latter, resistance to American and Israeli hegemony is inevitable, according to this second group. Moreover, this group argues, it is highly plausible that Israel will attack any other country that manages to make substantial leaps toward development, as has occurred with many countries at different points in history, like El Salvador, Iran, and Nasser's Egypt.

This group of respondents said that, even if fighting off imperialism and American hegemony in the Egyptian case must involve "democratic reforms, fighting imperialism in the Lebanese and Palestinian contexts must include warfare with Israel."[11]

Lastly, resistance, according to the second group's responses, was part of America's birth. Natives practiced their right to resist the European settlers in defense of their lands and dignity. Although pragmatism and strategic calculations at the time may have deemed that such resistance was hopeless given the military superiority of the settlers, the natives were determined to defend their dignity and land regardless of the chances of victory.

B. *Sexual freedom in the United States*

To give a very different example, the issue of sexual freedom in the United States was the subject of discussion on the "Alaa and Manal" blog on two separate occasions. On the first occasion, Manal, the co-author of the blog, posted an entry on Oct. 5, 2005, discussing a sexual harassment incident she encountered while on a plane dur-ing her recent travels. Although the subject of her entry did not directly address sexual freedom in the United States, the responses posted by visitors raised the issue. One respondent said that the phenomenon of sexual harassment is spreading in the Arab world faster than in the United States, attributing this trend to the sexual freedom that

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11   Ibid.

exists within the United States and the ability of individuals to meet their sexual needs in early stages in life, which, as his explanation clarified, gives persons an opportunity to focus on more important matters later in life, like education, sports and reading.

In another comment, one respondent argued that the phenomenon of sexual harassment exists in all countries and cultures in the world, but Egyptians and Arabs practice it in an erroneous way. He said, "Sexual harassment exists in all parts of the world. The problem is that in Egypt we do not know how to harass properly. For example, in America you find people using cameras with telescopes to spy on neighbors and film them nude. They also use hidden cameras to film nude women in bathrooms with the aim of posting those images online."[12] Although the respondent did not praise the American cultural model explicitly, he expressed support for the idea of cultural consistency. More specifically, he said that the Arab world must abandon its "swing both ways" approach, and uphold either the American cultural model, where "all people are naked," or the Iranian model of covering and veiling all women.

On a different occasion, Alaa, the co-author of the blog, posted an entry titled "Do you know what happened in New York on June 11, 2000?" In an attempt to rebuff claims that sexual harassment does not exist in the United States on grounds that American society does not suffer from "sexual repression," the author pointed to an incident in which more than 20 women in New York City were sexually assaulted on June 11. He also tried to stress that American authorities and media dealt with the issue in a manner similar to that normally displayed by their counterparts in Egypt. Alaa said,

"There seems to have been a diversity of views about the idea of sexual freedom and the extent to which it should be tolerated or rejected in the Arab context."

"Just like in our country, the police turned a blind eye. Meanwhile, the media tried to downplay the incidents as mere youthful delinquencies, while others went as far as to blame it on the women."[13]

In contrast with earlier responses that looked positively upon sexual freedom in the United States, one respondent said that the phenomenon of sexual assault exists widely in America, attributing it to female moral decay and excessive sexual liberty. He went on to say that most remedies proposed by American studies to deal with the social and moral flaws in American society greatly resemble the teachings of the Islamic

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12   http://www.manalaa.net/a7a_department/airplane_wanker.
13   Ibid.

faith.

Clearly the debate about sexual freedom in the United States did not generate a monolithic opinion from the visitors of the weblog. In fact, there seems to have been a diversity of views about the idea of sexual freedom and the extent to which it should be tolerated or rejected in the Arab context.

"Some Iraqi bloggers are still arguing whether Saddam's regime terrorized Iraqis."

2. "U.S. Mistakes in Iraq": an example of Iraqi nationalist blogs

This next blog's owner and author, who calls himself "Abu Khalil," devotes his space to identifying and explaining his views on "American mistakes" in Iraq. The author's use of the English language is perhaps an indication that his target audience is American readers. The first entry in his blog tries to explain the effortless fall of Baghdad. The author argues that Saddam's political regime was based on terrorizing Iraqis, which over time increased hatred toward his regime, not just from the general public but also from Baath Party members. When Iraqis inside the military and the Baath Party realized that the American military campaign was serious, the Iraqi military resistance ceased, because blocking off the Americans meant a return to the repression of Saddam's regime. Put simply, the author indicates, Iraqis saw an opportunity in the American military campaign to get rid of the regime.[14]

In the entries that follow, Abu Khalil lists what he views as the most important errors that the United States made in Iraq:

1. Dismantling the army and the Baath Party militias led to a deep institutional vacuum in Iraq and, by implication, a state of insecurity, hooliganism, and looting. The absence of institutions to protect the Iraqi citizens forced many communities to provide for their own self-protection. The author implied that American troops are to blame for the security chaos that surfaced following the fall of Baghdad.

2. The failure of occupation forces to secure and protect Iraqi institutions and ministries, with the exception of the ministry of oil, proved to have hazardous results. The Iraqi museum was looted in front of American eyes, ignoring the many warnings expressed by American academics of the dangerous repercus-

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14   http://usmistakes.blogspot.com/.

sions of such looting. The author adds that it would have taken only one American tank to protect the museum.

3. Immediately following the fall of Baghdad, American troops began acting as a regular occupation force, and not as a liberating power, shooting indiscriminately, killing women and children, and destroying and looting people's homes.

4. American forces did very little to activate the Iraqi services sector, including electric, telephone and water services.

5. Dismantling the police was a huge mistake in a country like Iraq, where a police force can hardly be built from scratch. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that Saddam released all prisoners before the invasion – about 64,000 prisoners, none of which were political prisoners. As a result, Baghdad became full of criminals and gangs, and when a police force was re-established, it only focused on protecting personal and class-based interests.

6. Laying-off the army was also problematic. With the exception of the early phases of the war, the Iraqi army did not engage the United States in any serious confrontation, which many speculate was because they did not approve of the former regime. Therefore, laying-off the army encouraged many former officers to utilize their military experience, not to mention their knowledge of secret weapons caches, to engage in resistance activities.

7. The failure of occupation forces to control Iraq's borders gave way to a surge in illicit activities, including the smuggling of drugs, weapons and stolen goods.

8. The occupation forces and America's leadership in general failed to understand the culture of the Iraqi people, and made posible efforts to amend the problem. There were no effective plans to deal with the Iraqi people during the early occupation stages. Instead, the United States relied on poor advice from disloyal parties that were trying to serve their own narrow interests. In fact, many such "advisers" lived outside of Iraq for many years.

9. The United States employed tactics similar to those of Saddam, varying from failure to respect traffic laws and closure of main roads and bridges for extended periods, arbitrary arrests, indiscriminate violent reactions to attacks,

giving out privileges and contracts to close associates, and army recruitment based on loyalty criteria. Many Iraqis began questioning whether anything had actually changed in the country after the fall of Saddam.

10. Instead of setting a plan for the creation of a democratic system in Iraq, the United States relied on the Interim Governing Council. This council included individuals accused of spying and/or being former warlords. The council was presented as representative of the Iraqi people, even though most of its members were identified in a sectarian manner: Sunni Arab, Turkoman, Kurd, Islamists, Secularist, Christian, etc.
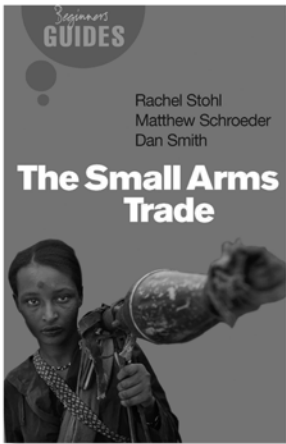
Arab blogs have begun to provide freer and safer means to express political opinions away from any governmental sensors.

Conclusion

Through merely two examples of Arab blogs, it is possible to catch a glimpse into the heart of Arab intention and belief. In a society quickly and quietly catching up to the rest of the world online, all indications point to a wide variety of opinions on the United States, its citizens, its culture and its involvement in the Middle East. Whether it's positive views of U.S. culture from Egyptians or an incredibly apt critique of the U.S. occupation from an Iraqi, Arab blogs have begun to give voice to individuals in a region not typically respected by the West as individualistic. As such, they can serve as an important tool to provide insight into Arab thought for any American with a computer and an open mind. ■

"It's Israel, Stupid!"
A Source of Anti-Americanism

MAJED KYALY

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THE RECURRING AMERICAN QUESTION of "Why do they hate us?" evokes feelings of betrayal and disappointment among Arabs. The query implies that those who pose it are simply victims and that "they" – Arabs – are in fact the accused party. One cannot help but wonder why the question was not posed differently; for example, "Why should they love us?" or "How could they love us?" Examining the question from this perspective opens the door for dialogue (and a search for an answer) based on a sense of responsibility, equality and mutual respect, rather than assuming that, by default, everyone would love the United States. Either way, both of these questions imply that there is considerable hostility toward the United States in prevailing Arab public opinion.

Arabs and American policy: interpretation paints the image
The so-called "hatred" is predominantly based on the prevailing Arab interpretation and perception of U.S. policy in the Middle East that, throughout various historical junctures, has shaped the image of the United States in the minds of Arabs. The most important of these policies pertain to the following:

1. In opposition to Arab interests and rights, the United States has been the primary "incubator" of the state of Israel, ensuring Israel's qualitative advantage over the rest of the region militarily, technologically, scientifically and econom-

ically. As will be demonstrated below, it continues to support Israel's occupation of Arab lands and its aggressive and arguably discriminatory policies.

2. The United States has stood in favor of the survival of dictatorial regimes in the Arab region through its longtime alliances and cooperation with these regimes. Meanwhile, Washington has also shown great hostility toward nationalist governments, particularly that of the late Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser, who enjoyed immense popularity throughout the Arab world.

3. The United States does not conceal its quest for unilateral dominance in the region by virtue of its geostrategic advantage, its desire to control a large part of the world's oil resources, and its deliberate reluctance to support the process of economic and social development in Arab countries, as it did with Southeast Asian countries.

Additionally, many people in the Arab world hold the United States responsible for the growth of extremist fundamentalist groups, who pursue violence to impose their own agendas. The United States is also seen as responsible for the growing influence of radical Islam in the Arab world, which was empowered as part of its Communism-containment policy during the Cold War, particularly during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Others accuse Washington of empowering the former regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, which resulted in the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war and the subsequent invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Furthermore, the post-1991 containment of Iraq, the 2003 U.S.-led overthrow of Saddam's regime, and the occupation of Iraq are all seen as projects designed to serve the interests of Israel.

> **"Others accuse Washington of empowering the former regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, which resulted in the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war and the subsequent invasion of Kuwait in 1990."**

Moreover, the spreading hostility toward the United States and its policies in the Arab world has nothing to do with a so-called "clash of civilizations." Nor is it linked to any sort of envy of the "free and prosperous" Western lifestyle, as claimed by many Western observers and neo-conservative figures inside the Bush administration. It should be emphasized that the unique American-Israeli relationship occupies a special position in the formulation of the U.S. image in the Arab world. In fact, America's image in the Arab mindset is almost synonymous with that of Israel, which many Arabs perceive as an aggressive, colonial, racist, arrogant

state that floutes international laws and standards, not to mention UN resolutions, using its brutal force to impose its interests and will on others.

This reality was confirmed by the failure of U.S. initiatives to improve its image in the Arab world through adopting policies that could potentially hold some popular resonance, such as "spreading democracy" and reforming political systems in the Arab region. Such initiatives did not gain any legitimacy in the Arab world, nor did they receive any positive responses from governments or societies in the region. In fact, such initiatives were viewed with great suspicion and skepticism, as they were seen as an American scheme aimed at carving out an exit from Iraq and distracting attention from Washington's support of Israel. This failure can be attributed to the cultural-political Arab perspective, one that views conflict in the region (and against it) as part-and-parcel of a broader existential conflict over identity, nationality and the unity of the Arab nation.

In this context, conflict over land (including Palestine) occupies a sacred place in the Arab popular consciousness. This particular issue supersedes all other matters, including issues of democracy and political reform. In other words, the Arab public opinion does not seem capable or willing to place any bets over American, and more generally Western, slogans and claims. The homeland comes first, and all the rest, including forms of governance, state-society relations and the nature of authority, are secondary concerns. In fact, the latter three would probably fall behind a host of other important issues pertaining to Arab cultural, social, political and economic development.

Obviously this perspective differs from that found in Western cultures, which have moved beyond state nationalism. As such, conflicts in the Western realm no longer revolve around basic existence, but rather around the form of existence. Put differently, conflict is not over land, but instead pertains to interests and to the status of individuals within the state, to democracy and human rights, and to the level of freedom and prosperity. The inability to grasp this difference presents a major problem in American (and more generally Western) rhetoric when dealing with issues in the Arab world.

Accordingly, most objective analysts, Arabs and non-Arabs alike, affirm that the Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the most important sources of political, economic and social instability in the Arab region and one of the leading sources of anti-Americanism in Arab societies. In this context comes the observation of Raghda Dirgham, a well-known U.S.-based Arab journalist:

> "For as long as dispute has existed between most Arabs and U.S. policies toward the region, it has been because of the U.S. adoption of Israel at the expense of Arab rights and interests, and also because of the prevailing impres-

sion that the United States allied itself with Arab governments at the expense of their peoples, and that it thought only of Israel and oil when it designed its policies toward the region."[1]

In the same vein, Sherle Schwenninger, director of the Global Middle Class Program at the New America Foundation, said, "The very essence of U.S. policies over the last three decades has been antithetical to Arab democracy and self-determination." According to Schwenninger, successive American presidents have adopted a three-pronged strategy in the Middle East: "First, the subsidization of the defense of Israel and the promotion of some kind of peace process between Israel and its neighbors … second, the encouragement of pro-American governments in Egypt and Jordan … and third, the nurturing of a close alliance with the ruling families of the oil-producing Persian Gulf." He adds, "To most people in the region, [the war in Iraq] has reinforced their perhaps stereotypical view that the United States is more interested in oil – and maintaining its dominant military position – than it is in the welfare of the Iraqi people."[2]

Similar views were expressed by former presidents, former officials and commentators like Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Thomas Friedman. Realizing that such policies endanger U.S. security and weaken its position on the world stage, they have criticized the Bush administration for failing to respect the Arab world's feelings and culture, providing unconditional support to Israel, and ignoring Palestinian suffering.[3]

At any rate, U.S. rhetoric on democracy and political reform is perceived in the Arab world as an uncreative American scheme to evade its responsibilities vis-à-vis many regional problems to which it has contributed, including Israeli injustices against the Palestinians.

Confusions about the Arab view of the United States?

Despite the significance of the above realities, the image of the United States among the Arab lower and middle classes is problematic. Mainstream Arab political consciousness does not distinguish between the United States and the American administration.

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1   Raghda Dirgham, "Iraq caused for Arabs an overlap between fatalism and an anticipation of an unknown tomorrow," (Arabic) *Al-Hayat*, December 27, 2002.

2   Quoted in Abdellah Raqidi, "The greater Middle East project: the new Calvinist-Lutheran spirit," (Arabic) *Alkhabar*, May 14-20, 2005.

3   See for example, Bill Clinton in "What is needed from America is to lead the world and not to control it," (Arabic translation) *Al-Bayan*, September 17, 2002.

It also does not differentiate between the American people and the policies pursued by its government. Moreover, the prevailing Arab view does not examine the United States in a comprehensive way. This view portrays America not as a world leader in the realm of economic and technological advancements, but rather as a mere military empire seeking political tyranny.

This lack of nuance in the perceptions about the United States is due to the absence of an informed political culture and a weak ability to communicate with and learn about the outside world. This is in addition to the political biases that exist in the Arab region as a result of the policies pursued by successive American administrations in opposition to Arab interests and rights, particularly concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Arab political mindset looks beyond the question of love and hate toward the United States. Instead, Arabs tend to focus on trying to understand why successive American administrations have backed the policies of Israel against the Arab world even though they believe that U.S. interests are closer to those of the latter. Why, they ask, does the United States continue to support Israel when it presents a political, economic, security and, most importantly, moral burden on the American people? Most answers revolve around the influence of what many refer to as the "Zionist Lobby" in the Untied States while others emphasize the imperialistic nature of the United States that uses Israel to keep the region in endless conflict, tension and disunity, which, reasoning follows, guarantees U.S. hegemony over the Middle East.

The "unlimited" American support to Israel: a primary reason for anti-Americanism

As previously mentioned, there are many factors that have contributed to the growth of hostility toward U.S. policies in the Arab world. It is likely that the U.S. position on the Arab-Israeli conflict would be ranked first on a list of Arab grievances against the United States given the important status the Palestinian issue holds in the Arab world. It is an issue that speaks to nationalist goals as well as Islamic and religious feelings. Moreover, it is seen as part of a historical process of liberation from foreign occupation and outside colonialism given its links to imperialism and exploitation.

Many Arabs find no distinction between U.S. policies and Israeli policies: they are one of the same. This perception can be demonstrated through the following cases:

1. *The American position on the Israeli occupation of Arab lands*

Although the United States supported UN Security Council Resolution 242, which deems inadmissible the occupation of territories of others by force, it still considered Israeli aggression against Arab countries and its occupation of parts of Arab lands simply acts of self-defense. It also adopted Israel's interpretation of resolution 242 (with-

drawing from territories is not the same as withdrawal from *the* territories). At any rate, the United States began dealing with the occupied Palestinian territories (the West Bank and Gaza Strip) as disputed land between Palestinians and Israelis. In other words, the United States equated the occupier and the occupied, implying that each side has an equal right to this land.

Furthermore, the United States did not take any measures to stop Israel's behavior or put any sort of pressure on it to withdraw from the Arab lands that it has occupied for four decades. In fact, it encouraged Israel to hold onto the territories, since they can be used as a bargaining chip in defining the future of the Middle East. Therefore, the United States did not respect international law and UN Security Council resolutions and has been operating on a double standard in the international arena. On one hand, Washington took a strong stance against Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait in 1990 and used Security Council resolutions as a pretext to use force to evict him from Kuwait and put him under siege. The same cannot be said about the U.S. stance on the Israeli occupation.

John Waterbusy, president of American University in Beirut, says the United States is seen "as applying two standards of equity and two standards of measuring violence, each in favor of Israel. That resulting frustration and anger leads to expressions of sympathy for those who resort to violence against the United States." He adds, "Those who so vehemently deny any linkage between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the broader crisis must pull their heads out of the sand."[4]

2. *The position of the United States in the peace process*

The United States has not exerted sufficient pressure on the two parties, particularly the Israeli side. Admittedly, in the early 1990s – following the Gulf War and the collapse of the Soviet Union – the George H.W. Bush administration did take some action, including pressuring Israel to freeze its illegal expansion of settlements on occupied Palestinian territories. The American role after this era, however, was disappointing. Despite the efforts that the Clinton administration invested in Palestinian-Israeli negotiations and the multilateral talks over regional cooperation, the Clinton team was never able to get rid of its biases toward Israel at the expense of Palestinian rights. For example, the Clinton administration was silent over Israel's refusal to move forward on the peace process under the Likud government headed by Benjamin Netanyahu (1996-1999). In fact, the White House did little to stop the settlement activities that increased

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4   John Waterbury, "Why do they hate us?" *Annahar*, February 2, 2003.

considerably under the Labor government of Ehud Barak (1999-2001). Washington then forced the Palestinians into final settlement negotiations in July 2000, even though the conditions were not conducive for such negotiations. In addition, the United States held the Palestinian Authority responsible for the failure of those talks.

As for the George W. Bush administration, it declared from the beginning its unwillingness to resume any Palestinian-Israeli peace process and boycotted the Palestinian leadership on grounds that it was not compatible with peace. Meanwhile, the administration turned a blind eye to Israel's violence against Palestinians. Most importantly, after the events of Sept. 11, 2001, the White House accepted Israel's assertions that Palestinian resistance against occupation and acts of terrorism conducted by groups like al-Qaida are one and same. Not only did the United States refuse to recognize the Palestinians as victims, it considered the Palestinian people responsible for all of the violence, including the Israeli violence against them. All of this was justified under the rubric of Israel's right to self-defense, and with then-Israeli Prime Minister Arial Sharon being described by Bush as "a man of peace," Israel was seen as a helpless victim, despite its occupation of Palestinian lands. The Bush administration did nothing to stop Israel's occupation of Palestinian-ruled territories in March 2002 and the destruction of its infrastructure. When Bush tried to change his policy on the Palestinian issue in a speech he gave on June 24, 2002, setting forth a vision for a two-state solution in three years, his plan was padded with conditions that made achieving the overall goal difficult if not impossible.[5]

In an unprecedented move, Bush's speech conditioned the right of Palestinians to self-determination upon their adoption of a democratic system. This incident reflects vividly the attempts of the Bush administration to significantly alter the shape of this conflict from a political conflict against Israeli occupation to an internal Palestinian security and reform problem. More specifically, Bush set the following conditions for his administration's commitment to the Palestinians: (1) choosing new Palestinian leadership; (2) creating political and economic institutions based on democratic governance, free market and counterterrorism, with elections held before the end of the year; and (3) fighting "terror" by destroying its infrastructure and reforming the Palestinian security apparatus with outside supervision.

Thus Palestinian rights became hostage to the American and Israeli conditions for "reform" and preventing violence. The two conditions would supposedly generate a Palestinian leadership trusted by Israelis.

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5   "President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership," (transcript) White House, June 24, 2002, http://www. whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020624-3.html.

> **"The United States has used its veto power in the Security Council 80 times, half of which were used to block resolutions concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict."**

When the Bush administration announced its "roadmap" in 2003, Israel immediately expressed its reservations over this plan in order to free itself from any obligations. There was no response from the Bush administration, and when the Sharon government declared its disengagement plan from Gaza, the White House gave its blessing to this unilateral Israeli move. Israeli analyst Nahum Bernea sums it up best: "On June 24, 2002, Bush drew a roadmap in his speech … and on April 14, 2004, he buried it."[6]

The situation become so grave that Zbigniew Brzezinski, former national security advisor to President Carter, wrote:

> "The current [regional] crisis poses a grave threat to the United States' interests … There is a nearly unanimous global consensus that United States policy has become one-sided and morally hypocritical … The United States' response therefore, has to be guided by a strategic awareness of all the interests involved, and not by the claims of any single party."[7]

3. *American policy in the UN Security Council*

U.S. policy inside international bodies, especially in the UN Security Council, continues to favor Israel's position. The United States has used its veto power in the Security Council 80 times, half of which were used to block resolutions concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict.[8] Most of the resolutions that concern the Arab-Israeli conflict that passed with U.S. consent were general and nonbinding. Israel has refused to implement even the binding resolutions that passed under Article 7 of the UN Charter, including resolution 242.

4. *American aid to Israel*

American aid to Israel is not limited to providing a cover for its political positions and refusing to take a strong stance against its violations in international bodies, but includes its efforts to ensure Israel's qualitative advantage over other countries in the region, technologically, scientifically, militarily and economically.

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6   *Yediot Ahronot*, April 15, 2004.
7   Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Moral Duty, National Interest," *New York Times*, March 8, 2003.
8   Majid Kaiali, "The United States, Israel and the Veto," *Al-Bayan*, January 7, 2006.

U.S. official financial aid to Israel is estimated to be $2.4 billion per year, or $400 per capita. U.S. aid to Israel, however, includes other dimensions. For instance, Bush recently announced that he had promised Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert $600 million per year in additional military aid, increasing military assistance to Israel to approximately $3 billion per year by 2009. Israel is not considered a poor or developing country, as it enjoys a GNP of $150 billion and an average per capita income of $20,000.

Between 1948 and 2007, U.S. assistance to Israel amounted to $98 billion, of which 60 percent was military assistance and 40 percent economic assistance. As for the gross indirect aid to Israel during the same period, it amounted to nearly $50 billion. U.S. aid to Israel accounts for 25 percent of the U.S. foreign aid budget.

> **"Between 1948 and 2007, U.S. assistance to Israel amounted to $98 billion, of which 60 percent was military assistace and 40 percent economic assistace."**

For example, Egypt receives $2 billion per year, only $600 million of which falls under the category of economic aid, with the rest being military assistance (military assistance is less valuable than economic aid). Egypt, with a population of 70 million, receives far less per capita U.S. assistance (about $9 per capita every year).[9]

According to Richard Curtis, a former U.S. foreign service officer and executive editor of the *Washington Report for Middle East Affairs*, U.S. assistance to Israel, a country with a population of 5.8 million, exceeds the total assistance provided to all sub-Saharan African countries and the total assistance to all Latin American countries.[10] This is, of course, in addition to the non-tangible political, economic and administrative cost of U.S. support to Israel. Furthermore, this is all in addition to the American bias toward Israel, as reflected by Washington's silence over Israel's policies – regional monopoly on nuclear arms, its aggressive actions against neighboring countries, particularly Lebanon, and its discriminatory policies inside the occupied territories – compared to the strong reactions of U.S. administrations against any action that targets Israel.

Conclusion

In the context of an issue that is close to the heart of many Arabs – the Arab-Israeli conflict – the United States has done nothing that would make Arabs view the country

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9   Naseer Aruri, "The Real Cost of the U.S.-Israel Relationship to the American People," (Arabic) *Al-Hayat*, December 19, 2002.

10   Richard Curtis, "The Cost of Israel to U.S. Taxpayers: True Lies About U.S. Aid to Israel," *Washington Report for Middle East Affairs*, http://www.wrmea.com/html/us_aid_to_israel.htm.

in a positive manner; U.S. actions on this highly emotional and sensitive issue have not constituted a reason why Arabs should love the United States.

It is understandable that the United States cannot completely abandon its commitment to supporting Israel. However, what is needed is an objective stance that limits Israeli aggression in the region, ends the illegal occupation of Arab territories, and gives the Palestinian people their right to self-determination and to establishing a sustainable independent state.

There is no doubt that all parties have an interest in achieving peace, security and stability, ending decades of conflict and suffering in the Middle East, and improving the image of the United States. However, improving the image of the United States in the Arab world can only happen through a corrective change in its policies toward the Middle East, particularly concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict. ■

Forecasting Iraq's Future
From Invasion to Partition

SAIF SALAH NASRAWI
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THE NEW SECURITY PLAN that American and Iraqi troops began implementing on Feb.14 could provide the last chance to overcome the persistent denial by Washington and Iraqi allies that there is a civil war unfolding in Iraq. Four years after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime in April 2003, it has become obvious that everything the Bush administration preached concerning the foundation of a democratic, peaceful Iraq was only a deceptive delusion put forward by neo-conservatives and Iraqis with narrow, selfish interests.

Political, economic, cultural and security indicators in Iraq reveal a national climate in sharp contrast to what U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice once referred to as "creative chaos." The Iraqi state is being torn apart on sectarian, ethnic and regional lines; it is suffering from an inability to effectively control the various parts of the country, excluding the Kurdish region. The identity-based violence and killing (approximately 58,000 are dead at present time, according to most conservative estimates) suggest that the factors fueling civil war in Iraq may not soon fade away.

The security and humanitarian situation is complicated by forced displacement and the redistribution of Iraq's population into homogenous sectarian areas. According to Washington, D.C., think tank the Brookings Institution, displacement of more than 250,000 people inside Iraq took place during 2006 alone,[1] with several times as many

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1   "Sectarian violence drives internal displacement in Iraq," Brookings Institution, October 18, 2006, http://www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/idp/Iraq2006_PressRelease.pdf.

abroad. The regional and international contexts are crucial dimensions in determining Iraq's future. For instance, neighboring countries are competing over the war-torn country, using it as a battleground to settle regional scores, and the Sunni-Shiite conflict continues to escalate. Coupled with the intricacies of American domestic politics – in which voters are showing an increasing inclination to favor withdrawal from Iraq, most recently illustrated by the November 2006 midterm elections that ousted the Republican majority in Congress – the situation becomes even more complicated.

There continues to be widespread concern throughout the Middle East about the fate of Iraq and America's role in its future. According to the 2006 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey conducted by the Brookings Institution, 49 percent of people in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are greatly concerned that as a consequence of the war, Iraq will be divided; 42 percent expressed more concern, however, over the idea that the conflict would spread instability throughout the region or that the United States would continue to dominate Iraq after the transfer of power. In addition, more than 80 percent of citizens polled said that the war in Iraq had brought less peace to the Middle East. Currently, questions remain as to whether the new security plan will be capable of finally bringing peace to Iraq and surrounding countries, and how the Iraqi civil war will end.

In light of the enforcement of the new security plan and the assumption that a civil war is already underway in Iraq, this article aims to produce a number of future scenarios for the war and the Iraqi state. The article proposes two main scenarios: the first takes on the assumption that the new security plan succeeds, ending the civil war and maintaining Iraqi unity; and the second supposes the plan fails with an all-out civil war igniting in its wake, leading to a possible division of Iraq. Stemming from the second scenario there are three sub-scenarios that will be discussed concerning how the civil war might conclude: the dominance of a specific faction, a joint compromise and the division of Iraq.

Scenario I: the security plan succeeds in ending the civil war in Iraq

The new strategy in Iraq, announced by President George W. Bush in January 2007, aims to achieve a number of strategic goals: to control the process of sectarian killing and forced migration; to train the Iraqi security forces to become adept national forces, rather than sectarian, that can control the regions by November 2007[2]; and to

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2   "President's address to the nation," Whitehouse Library, January 10 2007, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-7.html.

foster an atmosphere of trust and security to immobilize Shiite and Sunni extremists while encouraging mainstream Iraqis to formulate a non-sectarian understanding for a peaceful coexistence. In order to achieve these goals, the plan incorporates security, political, economic and regional dimensions.

Defying opinion polls that indicate the majority of Americans demand the gradual withdrawal of American troops from Iraq, Bush decided to send 21,500 additional American soldiers during the spring of 2007 to reinforce the U.S. presence in Iraq, particularly in the Baghdad and Anbar provinces, and to achieve and maintain security as part of his new plan. American troops have also begun targeting armed Shiite groups, especially Moqtada al-Sadr's Mehdi Army, which is blamed for killing and displacing thousands of Sunnis in Baghdad.[3] Corresponding with Bush's admonition to Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki that Washington's patience has its limits, American troops sent a strong warning message to the other main members of the ruling Shiite United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) when, on Feb. 23, they arrested Ammar Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim – the son of Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) leader Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim – as he returned from Iran.

A few weeks ago, American troops issued an order to arrest Jamal Jaafar Mohammed, the representative in Parliament from al-Maliki's Da'wa Party, on charges of involvement in the killing and torture of scores of Sunnis in Baghdad and Baqouba. In coordination with the crackdown on Shiite militias, American troops intensified their efforts to search for arms and ammunition stores, some of which allegedly came from Iran. On the Sunni side, American occupation troops began implementing their plan to win over some Sunni tribal leaders in the Anbar and Diyala provinces in an attempt to tighten the noose on al-Qaida cells in western and eastern Iraq, striking its supply lines and resources and targeting its members.

On the political level, American officials succeeded in pressuring the Iraqi Cabinet to approve a draft oil law that had been a major issue of contention among the Iraqi factions. Particularly concerned were the Sunni forces, who had viewed the lack of such a law as an attempt by the Kurds and Shiites to control the oil resources in the regions in which they are concentrated. The new oil law grants the central government control over the equal distribution of oil returns between the Iraqi provinces, based on population.[4] Continuing in its policy of reassuring the Sunni minority, the American administration began applying pressure to amend the "debaathification" law issued

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3   "Iraq shuts borders, clamps down in Baghdad" *Ash-Sharq al-Awsat*, February 15, 2007,
    http://www.asharqalawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=1&id=8006.
4   Draft text of new oil law, http://www.kitabat.com/i25677.htm.

under civil administrator Paul Bremer in May 2003, which had banned approximately 30,000 members of the Baath Party (those in the fifth rank and above) from assuming positions in the new state.[5] Furthermore, the Iraqi government began reintegrating thousands of dismissed officers from the former army into the current armed forces.

In February, in an attempt to jumpstart the Iraqi economy, the Council of Representatives approved a budget for 2007, appropriating over $10 billion for reconstruction efforts and job creation in an attempt to overcome the rampant unemployment that has affected approximately 52 percent of the Iraqi labor market for the past four years. Applying the economic aspect of the plan, the American administration decided to increase its diplomatic and commercial reconstruction missions, particularly in socially and economically marginalized areas like Sadr City, which is inhabited by about 2 million Shiites and is one of the most important Sadrist strongholds.

"It can be said that the new security plan is based on one key assumption: sustained American military presence in and around the capital will pave the way for the emergence of moderate Iraqi movements able to press for a peaceful settlement."

In short, it can be said that the new security plan is based on one key assumption: sustained American military presence in and around the capital will pave the way for the emergence of moderate Iraqi movements able to press for a peaceful settlement. This assumption, which rests on the "Clear, Hold, and Build" policy, depends on learning from previous American mistakes, especially the sieges of Falluja in April and November 2004. While American troops succeeded in cleansing the city of armed groups for a brief period, the fighters quickly returned to their old strongholds after the troops withdrew. Instead, the new theory relies on an intensified American troop presence in the streets of Baghdad for long periods of time to create a safe climate for the local population. This includes generating mutual trust and allowing for the recruitment of locals for strategic ends on one hand while forming a new political-economic climate encouraging non-sectarian political alternatives on the other.

In tandem with the intensified military presence in the streets of Baghdad, the plan works to weaken the ruling sectarian political makeup by cracking down on forces such as the Mehdi Army, including dismantling its bases, reducing its security influence and creating cross-sectarian alliances between the forces present in the Iraqi arena. In the latter instance, the secular Shiite politician Iyad Allawi attempted to form an alternate

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5   "REFILE: Iraqi plan to rehire Saddam supporters draws fire," Reuters AlertNet, March 27, 2007, http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/COL744743.htm.

ruling coalition out of Sunni and Shiite parties and several Kurds to put pressure on the ruling alliance between the UIA and the Kurdish Alliance.[6] In addition, the plan is based on the assumption that a positive response to some Sunni Arab demands will help weaken their inclination toward achieving representation through armed groups, pushing Sunnis to stop supplying these factions with financial resources, manpower, intelligence, logistical information and safe havens, thus in effect, depriving them of political and moral legitimacy.

Although it might be too early to pass final judgment on the new Iraq security plan, early indicators on the security, political, economic and regional levels hardly appear promising. Despite the slight decline in the level of violence and a modest reduction in the number of civilians killed (1,992 civilian deaths in January 2007 decreased to 1,646 in February of the same year), according to news report on March 1, 2007, by Agence France Press, the number remains high. Scrutinizing the causes and means of deaths reveals an increase in bombings and the use of car bombs against civilians, especially by armed Sunni groups, compared to a notable decrease in the killings by Shiite militias such as the Mehdi Army or SCIRI's Badr Organization.[7] Press accounts from Iraq suggest that the Mehdi Army has maintained a high level of self-restraint, avoiding armed confrontations with American troops despite the U.S. campaign targeting its leaders, cadres and weapons caches in Baghdad and the cities of the south. It should be noted, however, that the fact that the Mehdi Army is choosing to refrain from retaliating against the American crackdown does not necessarily reflect the new security plan's success. It could be attributed, for instance, to their experience in April 2004 when a clash with American forces in Karbala and Najaf left the group suffering from heavy casualties. This time around, the Mehdi Army's leadership may have preferred to preserve as much of its materiel and personnel as possible in anticipation of wider clashes with competing Shiite organizations or armed Sunni groups in the future.

Scenario II: continuation of the civil war

Civil war theorists around the world, especially in post-colonial countries, have practically arrived at a consensus that civil wars usually have one of two results: the first is when one faction succeeds in wiping out, or greatly weakening, all other parties. This was evident in the Chinese and Cuban civil wars, and to a lesser degree, the civil war in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal (with a Taliban victory) and the civil war in Somalia (with an Islamic Courts victory). The warring parties, however,

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6   For example, see *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, March 5, 2007.
7   Ibid.

may choose the second possible route and eventually conclude that a decisive victory cannot be attained, whether through direct fighting for a long period of time or through tough foreign pressure. As a result, they may agree to participate within the state without taking it over, as happened in the wars in the Balkans and Sudan. As was stated previously, the American strategy in Iraq thus far has not been able to reinforce the strength of a single Iraqi faction at the expense of others in order to compel respect for the law on all parts of the country through the use of military force. This is not only because of the lack of a strong, nationalist, non-sectarian faction, but also because of the impossibility of creating such a faction in the current circumstances of sectarian polarization.

It seems that the American administration has chosen the second alternative: after introducing legal and constitutional amendments to the political process and curbing some of the armed Shiite factions, the United States has been attempting to persuade the warring parties to sit down at the negotiating table in order to reach a peaceful solution. However, the principal problem with this strategy is embodied in the American administration's continued support for the al-Maliki government despite the strong criticism directed against it. The majority of Sunni political forces currently hold the al-Maliki government responsible for the spread of administrative corruption, the deterioration of the security situation and the rampant sectarian violence. Adnan al-Dulaimi, head of the Iraqi Accord Front, the largest Sunni Arab parliamentary bloc, for example, was quick to downplay the importance of the security plan and affirm that it began by attacking Sunni areas rather than any other areas."[8]

The same reaction occurred at the regional level when Arab foreign ministers met in Cairo in March 2007, issuing a strongly-worded statement holding the Iraqi government responsible for the worsening security situation. They also demanded the expansion of the political process to include the participation of Sunni Arabs, amending the "debaathification" law, as well as the controversial constitutional articles.[9] Ironically, a number of Shiite voices have also criticized what they describe as "the hidden intentions" behind the security plan and its focus on restricting the armed Shiite players.

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8   "U.S., Iraqi forces expand security operations in Baghdad; car bombs kill 7," *The International Herald Tribune*, February 15, 2007, http://www.iht.com/article/ap/2007/02/15/news/Iraq.php?page=1.

9   AFP, March 4, 2007.

Therefore, some of the Shiite leaders began to have doubts about the security plan, claiming that its goal was to "display the ability of the takfiris (radical Islamists) and Baathists to steer the security situation in Iraq and portray the government and the security apparatuses as unable to defend the citizens" or to attempt a military coup against the al-Maliki government by reintegrating the Baathist officers, enabling them to control the Iraqi army.[10] The same reservations were expressed by Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari, the leader in the Kurdistan Alliance, when he asserted that there are "Arab, regional, and international powers seeking to turn back the clock," – an implicit reference to the Arab foreign ministers' demands.[11]

The delicate military balance of power further complicates any possibility of achieving security and ending the civil war in Iraq. After three years of civil war, there is no indication that the warring parties will recognize a military balance of power or make pragmatic estimates for their chances of victory or defeat. This conclusion is supported by the seeming determination of all political forces not to budge or offer any real concessions and the conviction that their military abilities are superior to one another, as well as by the continuation of the cycle of violence. An International Crisis Group (ICG) study from 2006 observed qualitative changes in the rhetoric of Sunni groups in Iraq, exemplifying their awareness as their ambitions expanded from simply fighting American influence to believing that they could actually defeat both the American project in Iraq and the Shiite government, bringing back Sunni hegemony over the country.[12] The same concept applies to the Shiite militias, which, although less trained, have numerical superiority and close ties to the state's military and security institutions. These connections guarantee them arms and financial resources, and continue to promote their armed clashes in an effort to obtain total control over power and land. Thus, the restraint shown by Shiite militias in refraining from violent, fierce retaliation against the Sunni groups' attacks may not last long, especially if the suicide bombings against Shiite civilians continue. Moreover, one can expect violence to erupt from Shiite militias if one of the group's shrines or place of pilgrimage is targeted or if casualty rates rise from bombings and mortar attacks.

Another key factor that will delay the end of the Iraqi civil war in the short term is the increasing fragmentation of the armed groups. The fragmentation along sectarian, ideological and regional lines will make it hard to bring the groups together at the ne-

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10   See for example http://www.nahrain.com, which is close to the Da'wa Party, or http://www.marsadiraq.com, which is close to SCIRI.

11   United Press International, March 5, 2007.

12   "In Their Own Words: Reading the Iraqi Insurgency," International Crisis Group, February 15, 2006, http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=3953.

gotiating table. Examining the map of the militias and armed groups operating in Iraq shows their rapid growth and broad geographical spread. On the Sunni side, five effective groups are active: al-Qaida in Iraq, Ansar al-Sunna, the Islamic Army in Iraq, the 1920 Revolution Brigades and the Victorious Sect Army. These Sunni insurgent groups are characterized by their outstanding flexibility in terms of mobility, communications and ties with powerful tribal networks, providing them with sources of funding, protection and information, in addition to places for training and the manufacturing of explosives. Most neutral reports suggest that these groups are increasingly adopting rhetoric that combines Wahhabi Salafist interpretations of Islam and a nationalist, Iraqi, Arab resistance of the American occupation, as well as the Iraqi Shiite influence with regional ties with Iran. However, the most important feature distinguishing these groups is that they do not have a clearly defined political platform leading their political movement, setting the ceiling of their demands and consequently allowing them to enter negotiations, whether with American occupation forces or the Iraqi government. The absence of a political platform for these groups may be useful in the initial stages of their development, since it affords them a high degree of unity behind absolute goals, such as defeating the American occupation or bringing back Sunni influence. However, the development of the political process, beginning with the execution of the security plan, could force these groups to develop a political rhetoric with specific demands, which would certainly lead to deepened divisions among themselves and possibly internal rifts. This could especially be the case between the wing of al-Qaida waging an existential war against the United States and the Iraqi groups seeking to achieve purely local goals.

> **"[In Anbar], more than 160 people were killed in a single day during clashes between al-Qaida and members of the influential Albu 'Isa and Albu Mar'i tribes."**

Signs of such rifts have already surfaced, especially in the Anbar province – the traditional stronghold of al-Qaida. There, more than 160 people were killed in a single day during clashes between al-Qaida and members of the influential Albu 'Isa and Albu Mar'i tribes.[13] At first, this seemed to be a positive development because it was a step toward removing the most extreme elements from the arena, thereby facilitating the entry of more moderate members into the negotiating game, but its immediate and short-term effects will be to increase disintegration within the armed groups and to

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13   *Al-Hayat*, March 2, 2007.

generate difficulty in creating a strong, united alternative group able to speak for Iraq's Sunni Arabs. The situation will become more complicated should there be security and political setbacks because of heightened domestic pressure on the Bush administration to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq or because of the internal conflict being stoked by the key regional players on the Sunni side, especially Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria, as part of regional score settling.

Similar mechanisms operate on the Shiite side, where a power struggle is heating up between the Sadrists' Mehdi Army and the Badr Organization, SCIRI's military wing. With American and Iraqi troops persistently targeting the Mehdi Army's strongholds and popular discontent growing among the Shiites due to armed Sunni groups' attacks, the Mehdi Army at some point will have to seize the initiative and retaliate before its popular base is corroded away and its influence is diminished. Numerous other factors could trigger the escalation of an intra-Shiite conflict, some of which are related to the sharp divisions within the Sadrist movement – a highly fluid social movement lacking a coherent ideological doctrine or a strong organizational structure. Nothing unites its cadres except for their socially marginalized backgrounds, a set of general sayings about resisting the occupation, and hostility towards the traditional Shiite institution and the Shiite politicians who came back from exile.

Even if Moqtada al-Sadr does try to peacefully manage the campaign aimed at checking his power, there are serious doubts concerning his ability to politically deflect the attack. The young al-Sadr lacks sufficient financial resources to enable him to control his followers for long periods of time. This is due to both the limited financial support he receives from Iran and his lack of control over the tithing networks, whose proceeds traditionally go to the main Shiite religious authority scholars – some of whom are close to SCIRI. Al-Sadr himself could even opt for military escalation to improve his negotiating position.

The situation is similar on the regional and international levels. The prospect of Sunni-Shiite conflict in the region is clearly on the rise, adopting various diplomatic, political, military and cultural forms in hot zones across the Gulf and the eastern Arab world, particularly in Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories, in addition to the tension caused by the Iranian nuclear program. This political "conflict" has extended to Iraq, and is being played out by Saudi Arabia, with its financial and religious relations with Sunni political forces within Iraq, and by Iran, which preserves its tight political, religious and economic relationship with various Shiite forces inside Iraq. There is also the Turkish and Iranian fear of a Kurdish state emerging in northern Iraq, which could inspire the Kurds in those two countries to revolt. The two nations have begun to amass their forces on the northern borders of Iraq in a show of force, announcing their

readiness to intervene militarily should a Kurdish state be declared. Further increasing Ankara's fears is the insistence of the two major Kurdish parties that the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, which includes a large Turkmen community, be incorporated into Kurdistan and the parties' aim of holding a referendum before the end of 2007 on the future of the city.

The Syrian government also plays a key role in the Iraqi crisis through its relationship with the armed Sunni groups, particularly the Baathist ones, by looking the other way as hundreds of foreign suicide bombers infiltrate Iraq across its borders. It does not appear that the Syrian and Iranian entanglement in the Iraqi dilemma will be solved soon, considering the complications of Damascus and Tehran's relations with the American administration. Ignoring the conclusions of the Baker-Hamilton report, which recommended holding direct negotiations with Iran and Syria, the Bush administration decided to escalate its political campaign against the two countries, as is evident by the American policy toward the Iranian nuclear program crisis: sending two aircraft carriers to Gulf waters; building a network of anti-missile batteries in the major Gulf cities, attempting to form an alliance with so-called moderate Sunni states (Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Pakistan); doggedly supporting the special international tribunal on the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, in which the Syrian government is suspected of involvement; and the U.S. opposition to opening any diplomatic channels between Damascus and Tel Aviv.

However, the most problematic issue is the growth of anti-war sentiment in the United States and the emergence of genuine disagreements between the Democratic and Republican parties over how to deal with the Iraq war. With a rising number of American soldiers dying as the security plan is applied, American policymakers, especially as the 2008 presidential elections approach, may be forced to hasten the departure of a large segment of the American forces from Iraq and to make do with a few military bases outside the main cities.

Therefore, due to the lack of Iraqi non-sectarian political alternatives and the difficulty of forming them in the future because of the heightened sectarian polarization on the one hand, and the migration of large numbers of the middle class – those traditionally able to build a non-sectarian state – on the other hand, it appears that the civil war in Iraq will continue indefinitely. This assumption is supported by the absence of a non-sectarian army or any security institutions able to take the initiative and militarily enforce the law. The option of imposing an international mandate on Iraq, relying on a specific reading of Article 32 of Security Council Resolution 1546, appears unlikely as well in the foreseeable future due to the absence of an international desire to become militarily entangled in the Iraqi quagmire.

Post-civil war scenarios in Iraq

Based on all of the above, it seems that the civil war in Iraq will not end soon. Iraqi combatants face three sub-scenarios to end the civil war, even if years of drawn-out fighting occur: one faction imposing its authority and influence over the entirety of Iraq; the warring Iraqi groups reaching a joint compromise formula; or, the division of Iraq into three statelets: Kurdish in the north, Sunni in the center, and Shiite in the south.

"As a result, eager to realize material gains by controlling oil-exporting pipelines and ports, trade routes, and new territory, new militias will emerge and the in-fighting among the current militias, or against other militias, will increase"

Sub-scenario A: specific factions are able to impose their authority over all Iraq

With the sharpening of the armed conflicts between Iraqi forces and the continuing breakup of the state's military and civilian apparatuses, the central government's ability to perform its bureaucratic duties, enforce the law, and prevent crime will gradually disappear. As a result, eager to realize material gains by controlling oil-exporting pipelines and ports, trade routes, and new territory, new militias will emerge and the in-fighting among the current militias, or against other militias, will increase.[14] The conflict will also have a cultural dimension related to the imposition of a certain ideological model, such as "the Islamic State of Iraq," or the recruitment of new followers in every camp. Aspiring for a greater hegemony, each of the sectarian militias will first try to dominate its own sect to attain internal unity, which would improve its negotiating position and accord it the right to speak for the sect at large. Looking at the history of the vast majority of civil wars, in combination with the experience particular to Iraq, regional countries, especially Iran and Turkey, might directly intervene militarily at different stages of the conflict to support one side against another, which in turn will raise the conflict to a higher level.

The decisive question in this scenario is: will a regional party, such as Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, or Syria, or maybe even the United States succeed in pushing one faction to dominate the political scene? This option seems unlikely given the current balance of power, Iran's apparent disinclination to pick a single Shiite faction to support, and Saudi Arabia's unwillingness to support any Sunni faction to seize power. Should the regional states look to Syria's intervention in the Lebanese civil war as a precedent, this would increase the possibility of this scenario occurring. Damascus repeatedly shifted

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14   For example, note the appearance of the Jund al-Samaa (Soldiers of Heaven) militia among Iraqi Shiites.

its alliances with Lebanese factions, switching between the PLO, the Christian militias and Hezbollah or Amal. The logic of these alliances rested on the desire of the Syrian leadership to prevent the emergence of a strong Lebanese party which could represent a long-term threat to its interests.

This strategy is likely to be repeated in Iraq by Iran, Syria and Turkey, which would all be negatively affected by the presence of a single faction claiming to speak for any other sect. In addition, examining how U.S. interests overlap with those of Iraq's neighbors and the U.S. desire to ensure its control over the oil wells in southern and northern Iraq, it does not seem probable that Washington will support one faction taking power in Iraq, especially since this scenario, as with the presence of American bases in Iraq, would require an enormous price of blood, which the United States cannot justify under the scrutiny of international and domestic public opinion.

Sub-scenario B: the warring Iraqi forces formulate a joint compromise

The scenario of the warring factions resorting to the formulation of a consensual power-sharing formula can only be realized after long years of bloody fighting, when the combatants recognize the military balance of power and thus arrive at the conviction that winning the battle militarily is impossible. For example, the 1989 Taif Accord between the Lebanese factions as well as the 1995 Dayton Accords ending the Yugoslav civil war both followed this pattern. However, two conditions are necessary for power-sharing agreements to succeed in Iraq.

The first condition has to do with the transformation of the civil war inside Iraq into a conflict between a limited number of combatants who are largely in control of their respective demographic groups. The importance of this condition lies in that it provides sufficient guarantees to the rest of the forces to relinquish their arms and enter into genuine participation in running the state without fearing the collapse of this agreement due to other sides not upholding it. Presently, Iraq does not look ready for an agreement of this kind given the dispersion of political and military centers of power within each sect, particularly the Shiites and the Sunnis. Nonetheless, the evolution of the civil war and its continuation for a long period of time could push the regional and international powers in the future, affected by the astronomical number of victims and millions of refugees fleeing to neighboring countries, to support a very limited number of factions that can dominate their particular sect, either through repression or voluntary assimilation.

> "The evolution of the civil war and its continuation could push the regional and international powers ... to support a very limited number of factions ..."

The second condition, meanwhile, has to do with the presence of regional and international troops able to impose compromises on all the parties by using a combination of stick-and-carrot policies. Along the same lines, Iraq's neighboring countries, currently fighting, could head towards undertaking this role in the future if the material and human costs of the civil war in Iraq were to rise and comprise a strategic threat to its interests.

Sub-scenario C: dividing Iraq into three statelets

Iraq's division into three statelets is the most unlikely scenario, for internal, regional and international reasons. It is true that, aided by the bitter Kurdish experience in dealing with the Iraqi central government since the 1930s, the Kurdish leadership has managed to crystallize Kurdish public opinion in favor of splitting off from Iraq. The period of relative independence that the Kurds have enjoyed since 1991 has also helped. Through the media, education and a common market they have succeeded in consolidating an integrated Kurdish national identity based on unifying the Kurdish dialects, building a local bureaucracy with Kurdish employees, and breaking psychologically, politically, and culturally with the central state in Baghdad. However, a careful reading into the regional balance of powers would make the Kurdish leadership think twice before moving forcefully toward founding an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. Iraqi Kurdistan, with its population of 5 million and relatively underdeveloped infrastructure, is unable to repel a Turkish or Iranian military assault, which both countries have regularly threatened should the Kurds declare independence. The landlocked geography of Iraqi Kurdistan also puts it at the mercy of neighboring states for exporting oil or natural gas, the most important economic resources of the Kurdish region.

 As for the Shiites, none of their leading powers have expressed a desire to establish a rump state for the Shiites of Iraq. Supporting this point of view is the fact that the question of a federal system is still a point of deep contention in Shiite circles, and only SCIRI and the Iraqi National Congress headed by Iyad Allawi have strongly defended it. The Da'wa Party has been supportive to a lesser degree, while key parties such as the Fadila Party and the Sadrist movement, in addition to top religious authorities, have rejected the idea. Working against such a possibility, even should the civil war escalate further, is the Shiite majority's fear of the new Shiite state falling under the hegemony of Iran – though they do share sectarian beliefs, Iraqi Shiites' pride in their cultural Arab identity would present an obstacle. As for the Sunnis, none of their leading factions have shown any inclination toward dividing Iraq for a number of reasons – the Sunnis have historically led a united Iraq since the modern Iraqi state was founded in 1921,

and moreover because their region is poor in natural resources and landlocked, which handicaps its potential for economic development through exporting oil or trade.

The most important factor making the division of Iraq unlikely, however, is the lack of regional desire. As history shows, the division of countries is only completed with regional and international approval, even after the collapse of communism and the rise of identity politics since the 1990s. Do any of Iraq's neighbors or the United States have an interest in dividing Iraq? An examination of the neighboring countries suggests that a division of the Iraqi state is not forthcoming.

Iran, with its diverse demographics, in which there are about 2 million Arabs out of a total population of 70 million, would be unable to absorb 15 million Shiite Arabs, provide them with comprehensive military protection, or offer them the economic aid necessary to withstand nutritional, medical and developmental crises. Integrating the Iraqi Shiites into the Iranian entity or imposing an Iranian mandate upon them would first require the complete redefinition of the concept of the Iranian nation. Twenty-eight years after the Islamic Revolution, the Iranian political elite is showing a deep-rooted inclination toward a nationalist definition of the Iranian nation based on the ethnicity, language and culture rather than on sectarian or religious identity.

As for Turkey, despite the recent statements by its Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul that mention abolishing the article of the 1926 Treaty of Lausanne that incorporated the northern province of Mosul into the Iraqi state, Turkish acceptance of the idea of dividing Iraq appears unlikely for more than one reason. The Turkish elite, across its civilian and military, secular and Islamist divisions, is unanimous in rejecting the foundation of a national homeland for the Kurds in northern Iraq because it would provide inspiration for Turkey's 15 million Kurds. This in turn would threaten a split of the Turkish state, which has been in an armed conflict against the Kurdish Labor Party (PKK) since 1983. Moreover, Turkey – one of the most crucial Sunni states in the Middle East – fears the emergence of an oil-rich Shiite state in southern Iraq allied to Iran, which could upset the balance of power in the region in Iran's favor.

Despite the remoteness of the chance of Syria's small population of Kurds – approximately 1 million – moving toward the formation of a Kurdish state, the fear of Iraq's division haunts the Syrian government. The formation of an Iraqi Kurdish state would arouse the Syrian leadership's well-founded fears of close ties between any possible Kurdish government and Israel, since the two sides have had relations since the 1960s. The creation of a Sunni state in central Iraq of an Islamist nature would also comprise a serious threat to the ruling Alawi regime in Syria, as this Islamist entity might cultivate ideological and organizational ties with the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, the sworn enemy of the Baathist regime in Damascus.

Saudi, Kuwaiti, and Jordanian fears of the division of Iraq are founded primarily on the idea of a Shiite state in the south extending Iranian influence. The foundation of such a state would offer the socially and politically marginalized Shiites in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia a greater opportunity to demand political and economic reforms, integrating them more into the ruling social makeup. The option of dividing Iraq hardly appears welcome in Jordan, too; this could be a precedent for regional partitions and divisions redrawing the map of the eastern half of the Arab world and the revival of the plan to make Jordan the substitute homeland for the Palestinians. Furthermore, the division of Iraq would threaten to abolish Jordan's strategic advantage in dealing with Israel, while eliminating the economic benefit of having Iraq as its main trading partner, since Jordan abuts the resource-poor Sunni Arab region.

Only if the numbers of those being killed and displaced skyrocket, the option of dividing Iraq may be considered by regional players. However, due to all of the aforementioned factors, division would surely serve as the very last option for all factions involved, only occurring in a future where all choices are completely demolished and all that remains for groups to do is yield. ■

Money Can't Buy Love
USAID Assistance to Egypt

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATIONAL STRATEGIC INTERESTS and the disbursement of foreign aid has always been closely linked, especially when the aid in question comes from super powers. It is often argued that development assistance, in reality, is the promotion of the economic or political interests of the donor country rather than the economic conditions of the receiving country. This concept – which is referred to as "statecraft" – is a seemingly benevolent tool that advances the donor country's foreign policy objectives and national interests.

National interest, however, is a very illusive concept. It professes to impact policy through the perception and decisions of policy-makers as well as through different constituencies and involved institutions. Therefore, national interest assumes a degree of continuity and abstractness, but it is also subject to change, reflecting the process, philosophy and policies of current politics.

The impact of strategic objectives on foreign aid policy is often more evident in the case of great powers. Since its inception in the 1940s, American aid bequeathed worldwide has been identified and justified in terms of political and strategic objectives. In addition, it can be argued that the evolution of American foreign aid behavior and objectives has been the outcome of a reaction to its global context, which induces changes in the fundamental vision of the role and status of the United States.

When Congress passed the Foreign Assistance Act in 1961, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) became the first U.S. foreign assistance

"From the late 1970s to the late 1980s, Israel and Egypt received 47 percent of total U.S. economic aid, while during the 1990s, the focus shifted back to Eastern Europe with the fall of the Soviet Union."

organization whose primary emphasis, at least in theory, was on long-range economic and social development efforts. USAID's bureaucracy has since attempted to maintain the image of efficiency and development, while operating from a set of concerns different from those of the State Department.[1] However, despite the potential for divergent perspectives between the two departments, the practice of giving aid, including both the amount of resource allocations and the target beneficiaries, was determined by two sets of factors. The first was the varying strategic interests, dependent on the different phases of aid giving; and the second was the evolution of overall development theory and practice combined with the bureaucracy's own learning process: the bureaucracy was beginning to perceive the interests of the supposedly "domestic" constituencies involved in development, who, in actuality, were heavily involved in foreign policy-making in their own country.

The regional priorities of U.S. economic and military assistance have been frequently cited as evidence for the high strategic component of U.S. foreign aid. American aid first targeted Western Europe after World War II through the Marshall Plan. After Europe recovered, South Asia and Southeast Asia became "priority areas" as the Vietnam War ensued in the 1960s. Soon thereafter, from the late 1970s to the late 1980s, Israel and Egypt received 47 percent of total U.S. economic aid, while during the 1990s, the focus shifted back to Eastern Europe with the fall of the Soviet Union.[2] Over time, U.S. national interest has shifted in response to global movements and events. Subsequently, there have been many changes in aid policy over the past two decades, especially toward key allies.

A bargain in flux

In a subtle argument on national interest, international relations theorist Robert Keohane argued for the existence of a "grand bargain" in U.S. foreign assistance. He interpreted economic assistance to be a kind of "generalized reciprocity" where

1   Vernon W. Ruttan, United States Development Assistance Policy: The Domestic Politics of Foreign Economic Aid (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 12.

2   Robert F. Zimmerman, Dollars, Diplomacy, and Dependency, Dilemmas of U.S. Economic Aid (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1993), 4.

3   Ruttan, op. cit., 6.

unbalanced exchanges could be regarded as balanced with the exchange of tangible benefits for intangible, or deferred but unspecified, benefits.[3] A major point that makes Keohane's definition enduring is the flexibility available in defining reciprocity, especially when the recipient's end of the bargain is unspecified.[4]

In addition, the ambiguity of "intangible benefits" adds to the complexity of the "national interest" concept underlying the constantly fluctuating state of USAID policies that have existed since the end of the Cold War, as well as after Sept. 11, 2001 – most notably toward the Arab world. Whereas national interest during the Cold War years was defined clearly by the commitment to contain communism,[5] the "new" bargain introduced by the Clinton administration reflected a retreat of the strategic agenda as the major incentive for aid decisions, and an increased importance of economic interests. The result was a shift toward private finance in the form of foreign direct investment (FDI) – investments made to acquire lasting interest in enterprises operating outside of the economy of the investor and/or country. This shift toward FDI was set to replace costly public assistance in a "smart" bargain that reflected the mindset of the decade.

In the context of this shift toward FDI, the USAID Strategic Plan for the coming decade was introduced.[6] The plan adopted sustainable development as the organizing principle for the new post-Cold War era. The manner in which this goal was to be achieved was "the implementation of open, market-oriented economic policies and institutions; in the right settings, however, American resources, including its ideas and values, can be powerful catalysts enabling sustainable development."[7]

While the new policy of aid reduction or rationalization transformed the relationship from "aid to trade," it did not, however, signal a complete rupture with former policies. Strategic importance continued to be a critical factor for determining where the United States sent aid. The USAID strategic plan held that, "USAID also works in countries that have made major commitments to cooperating with the United States in achieving complementary goals, particularly the establishment and maintenance of regional peace. In such countries, USAID's programs typically enhance Egypt's capacity to continue to collaborate with the United States on goals of mutual interest."[8]

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4   Ibid.
5   Peter J. Schraeder, et al., "Clarifying the Foreign Aid Puzzle, A Comparison of American, Japanese, French, and Swedish Aid Flows," *World Politics*, 50 (January 1998), 294.
6   USAID Strategic Plan 1997, Revised 2000, U.S. Agency for International Development, http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/200/200mar.pdf.
7   Ibid., 1.
8   Ibid., 65.

When the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks occurred, just one year after the revised USAID Strategic Plan was put into place, American foreign and economic assistance policies returned to an agenda focused on security. New, subtle changes in policy and philosophy gradually appeared, most evidently in changes and revisions to country-specific programs, including the amount of allocations. This was especially prevalent in areas ranked high on the foreign policy agenda. However, the new post-Sept. 11 "bargain" lacked precision and consistency, especially in its relation to the Arab world. Aiming at confronting both "tyrants and terrorists" while adhering to the long held philosophy of development, USAID missions to that region were – and quite frankly still are – trying to reconcile the irreconcilable.

The dilemma of the current bargain stems from trying to maintain "business as usual" policies by channeling aid to governments of key allies in order to foster development, stability and regional collaboration on the one hand, while on the other hand, simultaneously introducing new, unsettling forms of aid to advocacy groups promoting democratization. The immediate concern for this policy is the compatibility of these differing objectives. This new formula fails to deal with the stability versus reform trade-off and risks alienating new reformers in the region. Moreover, inconsistencies between short- and long-term political interests cannot be dismissed. The urgency of achieving short-term political objectives, such as access to intelligence and communication facilities, military bases, passage of U.S. aircraft and naval vessels, or support for the United States on a disputed issue or on a battlefield could lead to concessions or agreements that actually contradict its long-term political objectives.

A final inconsistency, which has always been inherent to the politics of aid and was also tolerated prior to Sept. 11, is the difference between public opinion in the recipient countries and the positions of incumbent regimes. Prior to Sept. 11, the policies of aid either tolerated or ignored this inconsistency, especially with the primacy of ensuring government collaboration in regional matters. It could be argued that the interplay of these inconsistencies, in correlation with the negative impact of American foreign policies in the region, might explain the low favorability ratings of the United States in countries that have benefited the most from its economic assistance. This incongruity, depicted in the State Department's public diplomacy document published in October 2003, is likely persisting to date.[9] For example, the document noted that only 25 percent of the public in Jordan were supportive of U.S. policies in 2002; by 2003, the

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9   "Changing Minds Winning Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab & Muslim world," The Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, October 1, 2003, http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/24882.pdf.

number had dropped sharply to a mere 1 percent.

Moreover, criticism from many Arab countries has become increasingly common as USAID policies waver according to American interests. Of late, for instance, the Egyptian media has

led a national outcry against the United States as the U.S. Congress recently debated cutting $200 million of Egypt's military financing if it does not comply with certain American demands. According to a June 2007 House of Representatives appropriations summary, the cut will take place unless the "Secretary of State certifies that Egypt is taking steps to address human rights concerns by reforming its judiciary and training its police as well as addressing concerns about the smuggling of weapons from Egypt to Gaza."[10]

Naturally, withholding money for stipulated compliance has caused only further animosity to surface from Egyptians – something not helped by the fact that the majority of Egypt's citizens already harbor an intense disliking for America. In an article published June 18, 2007, in the Pan-Arab newspaper *al-Hayat*, the proposed $200 million cut in USAID funding to Egypt was described as "blackmail." Moreover, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit "replied to the American action by saying that his country would not accept relinquishing sovereign rights or violating the Egyptian people's right to free independent decision."[11]

Despite the fact that Egypt is the second largest recipient of funding from USAID, the majority of the Egyptian people continue to express strong anti-American sentiment. In 2002, for example, favorability of the United States did not exceed 6 percent in Egypt.[12] Moreover, this number decreased by 2006 according to a survey conducted by the University of Maryland and Zogby International. According to the survey, only 5 percent of Egyptians claimed to hold a "very favorable" attitude toward the United States while 53 percent presented their outlook as "very unfavorable."[13] This figure is striking when compared to Egypt's attitude toward Japan, a country that Egyptians viewed with great gratitude for its contribution of an opera house, inaugurated in

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10   "Summary: 2008 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations," The House of Representatives, June 22, 2007, http://appropriations.house.gov/pdf/StateFOHP.pdf.

11   Mohamed Salah, "US Blackmail of Egypt over Aid," Dar al-Hayat, June 18, 2007, http://english.daralhayat.com/opinion/OPED/06-2007/Article-20070618-3e7d9d10-c0a8-10ed-01b1-6996dd3dccb2/story.html.

12   Zimmerman, op. cit., 81.

13   Shibley Telhami, "Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development University of Maryland/Zogby International 2006 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey," http://brookings.edu/views/speeches/telhami20070208.pdf.

1988.[14] In order to understand this, the evolution of U.S. economic assistance to Egypt and how aid policy changes have been interpreted by the largest Arab recipient of American foreign assistance must be closely examined. Instead of friendship, which one may expect when billions of USAID dollars are continually bequeathed, the U.S.-Egyptian relationship has become nothing less than antagonistic.

The case of Egypt

U.S. economic assistance to Egypt has been a standard example of strategic interests influencing foreign aid behavior. The bilateral assistance relationship with Egypt is one of the most complex aid relationships in which the United States is involved. In the words of economics scholar and author Robert Zimmerman, "no other donor-recipient relationship matches the level of funding, the complexity and variety of project activities, and the cash transfer, and Commodity Import Program modes and conditions"[15] of the relationship between the United States and Egypt. Egypt has received annual economic support funds (ESF) – flexible grants bestowed by USAID to sustain and develop economies – totaling more than those given to all of Asia and the Near East combined, excluding Israel.[16] Moreover, Egypt has one of the largest USAID field missions in the world. (It should also be noted that every four to six years, USAID strategic plans are subject to revision, which allows for better understanding of the most recent changes in foreign aid priorities and trends.)

USAID economic aid to Egypt fits into three main categories: economic support funds (ESF), development assistance and Food for Peace. Here, the analysis will focus primarily on ESF, as it is the category "most directly aimed at advancing U.S. political and security objectives."[17] Furthermore, ESF's importance is evidenced by its level of funding within U.S. bilateral economic assistance, where it constitutes more than half of all such assistance while providing most of the economic aid to Egypt, excluding military assistance.[18]

Despite the intensity and continuity of aid flowing into Egypt since the Camp David Accords – the 1978 signed reconciliation between Israel and Egypt under the supervision of President Jimmy Carter – U.S. economic assistance to Egypt is hardly visible to the public. Negative or undermining ratings of USAID can be examined on several different levels. For one, it is sometimes assumed that "most of the aid goes

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14   Zimmerman, op. cit., 81.
15   Ibid., 102, quote from Essam Refaat, editor in chief, Al-Ahran Al Iktisadi.
16   Ibid.
17   Ibid., 2.
18   Ibid.

right back to America" in the form of salaries for experts and various academic studies or costly U.S. goods "that must be shipped on U.S. vessels."[19] In addition, some believe that imports come with very high overhead fees for contractors and consultants whose dependents, luxury accommodations and

"Despite the intensity and continuity of aid flowing into Egypt ... U.S. economic assistance ... is hardly visible to the public."

insurance are supported by USAID money, which is supposedly benefiting Egypt.[20] Consequently, a theory persists which contends that at times, American food aid is purely utilized to create a food dependency in countries such as Egypt, hindering self-sufficient food and agricultural policies that organizations such as USAID allegedly stand for. Lastly, it should be noted that there has been scant public appreciation of USAID aid and management, and favorability of the United States has been in sharp decline throughout Egypt during the past decades. This naturally raises an ironic question: why does the second largest recipient of American aid express such strong anti-American sentiment?

Historical overview[21]

The answer to this question is complex, but a large part of it lies outside the realm of the USAID-Egyptian relationship, originating from overall American foreign policy. However, if the question is broken down even further, anti-American sentiment in Egypt can be explained to some extent by examining where and when USAID disburses its resources to other American allies and pivotal states in the Middle East region.

It is evident that U.S. assistance to Egypt has hinged on America's strategic and political objectives in the Cold War and the Arab-Israeli conflict in recent decades.[22] This conventional wisdom is reinforced by the scarcity, and at times absence, of aid before the Camp David Accords, compared to relatively abundant post-accords aid, frequently in the form of grants. Moreover, USAID policies were designed and have changed in a fashion that fails to find and bolster a solid constituency among the public, especially when phases of assistance are aimed at supporting infrastructure and macroeconomic stability. Thus, the American-Egyptian aid relationship in Egypt has acquired the reputation of only catering to American interests.

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19   Ibid., 102, quote from Essam Refaat, editor in chief, *Al-Ahram Al Iktisadi*.
20   Ibid., 103.
21   This historical survey of U.S. economic assistance to Egypt during the Nasser era is, for the most part, drawn from Ruttan, op. cit., 294-97.
22   Ibid., 294.

The pre-Camp David phase

U.S. economic assistance to Egypt initially began in 1951 with the signing of a technical cooperation agreement between the United States and the Egyptian monarchy. After the 1952 revolution (a coup d'etat on July 23, 1952, that ousted what the revolutionaries believed to be a pro-British, lavish Egyptian regime), the stronger Egyptian government was perceived to counter the possibility of a communist expansion in the region, and closer U.S. collaboration with the new regime was intended to make amends for the American role in the creation of Israel. In 1953, the United States signed a new agreement with the revolutionary regime, aimed at community development and rural rehabilitation in two provinces. However, by the mid-1950s, obstacles to U.S.-Egypt relations arose on different issues, most importantly the financing of the Aswan High Dam, located on the first cataract of the Nile River in southwest Egypt.[23]

By that time, the United States had backed away from their share of the project's financing due to close Egypt-Soviet Union ties, "namely the exchange of cotton for military supplies, and the purchase of military equipment from Czechoslovakia."[24] The events that followed signaled Egypt's alignment with the Eastern camp, including the nationalization of the Suez Canal, the subsequent British-French-Israeli invasion of the Sinai and Egypt's support of nationalist movements in the region. Thus, the remaining years of then Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's rule witnessed the de facto alignment with the Soviet Union; between 1957 and 1971, for example, Egypt signed six highly attractive aid loans with the USSR.[25]

The ebb and tide of American-Egyptian relations continued to be reflected in temporary cuts and resumptions of food aid to Egypt during the 1950s and 1960s. In 1966, however, U.S. food surplus declined due to disastrous harvests in South Asia that increased demands on food aid reserves. Therefore, Nasser's anti-American rhetoric, coupled with the increased worldwide demands, led to cuts in food aid. Furthermore, adding insult to injury, "Lyndon Johnson was in no hurry to resume aid to Egypt"[26] after the 1967 war with Israel. As American-Egyptian antagonism escalated, American technical advisors in Egypt were withdrawn and economic aid was suspended. In 1975, however, after the Geneva peace conference and diplomatic engagements, the United States resumed their economic aid to Egypt after an eight-year lapse.[27]

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23   "Military: Egypt 1956 War," GlobalSecurity.org, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/egypt2.htm.
24   Ruttan, op. cit., 295.
25   Ibid.
26   Ibid., 296.
27   "Egypt-United States Relations," Congressional Research Service, April 2, 2003, http://www.fas.org/asmp/resources/govern/crs-ib93087.pdf.

Post-Camp David phase

The United States and Egypt launched their cooperative development program in 1975. The October War (fought during October of 1973 between Israel and a coalition of Arab states, most notably Egypt and Syria) and the subsequent peace

"Of the $2 billion annual economic assistance Egypt receives from approximately 35 donors, USAID contributes almost 40 percent."

agreement between Egypt and Israel altered the American strategic objectives in the region. Thereafter, the United States' main objective shifted toward support of Egypt in order to maintain peace between Egypt and Israel, hoping that other Arab nations would follow suit. Since then, Egypt has become one of the largest recipients of U.S. foreign aid. The underlying rationale was that, in order to maintain long-term peace, both Egypt and Israel should experience the economic benefits associated with peace.[28] In this context, U.S. strategic objectives of economic assistance to Egypt can be summarized as follows:[29]

1. Foster economic and social development within Egypt, and thereby create the preconditions to a permanent peace;
2. Establish peace between Egypt and Israel; there was hope that Egypt would serve as a role model for other Arab countries, encouraging them to accept and negotiate a peace agreement with Israel; and
3. Contain Islamic fundamentalist ideology and organizations.

As a result of these strategic objectives, the United States has been the largest aid donor to Egypt since the inception of its USAID mission in Egypt, followed by the EU, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Canada, Scandinavian countries, Japan and Arab agencies. This aid is complemented by the World Bank, United Nations Development Program, International Monetary Fund, International Finance Corporation and other UN agencies.[30]

However, priorities and fields of activity of the USAID mission to Egypt have changed throughout the past 30 years. These changes can be classified into four overlapping phases:

The first phase – which took place from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s –

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28   Zimmerman, op. cit., 83.
29   Ibid.
30   "Regional Overview: Egypt," U.S. Agency for International Development, http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/bj2001/ ane/eg/.

focused on improving the physical infrastructure of Egypt. The key areas of focus in these early years also included advancing technical and scientific expertise as well as expanding agricultural productivity, health care and education. By the end of the decade, in recognition of Egypt's regional role, the United States expanded its assistance program, making it the beneficiary of one of the largest American assistance programs worldwide.[31] According to USAID, the achievements of the program during this first phase included the restoration and reopening of the Suez Canal and the expansion of Egypt's infrastructure in electric power generation, telecommunications, port facilities, grain storage capacity and clean water distribution.[32]

The second phase, during the second half of the 1980s, was marked by a shift toward education, health and family planning. Aid was concentrated directly on economic growth while targeting specific sectors, particularly agriculture, health care and basic education. USAID programs also supported Egypt's shift to a market economy through the structural adjustment policies, which strengthened the private sector.[33]

During the third phase, in the early 1990s, the focus was on economic reforms and liberalization, although the deeply entrenched interest in infrastructure support was maintained. During that phase, resources were concentrated on improving water-use efficiency, expanding access to the services of the growing infrastructural networks, reducing air pollution and protecting natural resources. New, non-economic interests were subtly introduced, most notably improving the civil courts and increasing support of Egypt's non-governmental organizations (NGOs), particularly service-oriented NGOs.[34]

The fourth phase of USAID aid in Egypt began with the 1994 U.S.-Egyptian Partnership for Economic Growth and Development, which focused on economic liberalization, trade and investment.[35] The partnership was designed to boost trade and attract more investment to Egypt while gradually decreasing aid. The partnership, aimed at "developing a policy framework and foundation for domestic and foreign direct investment to replace official development assistance in Egypt," was advanced in 1998 by the Gore-Mubarak decision to focus on trade and investment. "This agreement will enable us to achieve new trade and investment arrangements that will provide win-

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31   "USAID-Egypt History: A Historical Look," U.S. Agency for International Development, http://egypt.usaid.gov/Default.aspx?pageid=6.
32   Ibid.
33   Ibid.
34   Ibid.
35   Egypt-U.S. Economic Relations: Partnerships and Agreements, American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt, http://www.amcham.org.eg/BSAC/ustrade/Partnership.asp.

win opportunities for our economies and for our citizens," said former Vice President Al Gore in a public speech about the partnership.[36] In 1999, the United States and Egypt agreed on a plan to reduce economic aid to Egypt by one half over a period of 10 years, equaling a near $40 million reduction in aid per year through 2008.[37]

In this respect, the USAID-Egypt Strategic Plan 2000-2009 was published to outline the rationale and policy priorities for the decade to come.[38] The plan acknowledges that "coordination on the Middle East peace process, interest in a strong and open Egyptian economy, and cooperation in countering terrorism are pillars of the nations' relationship."[39] Influenced by the mindset of moving from "aid to trade," the 2008-2009 plan focuses mostly on the creation and effectiveness of the private sector and FDI. The plan notes, "Promoting sustainable development among developing and transitional countries contributes to U.S. national interests and is a necessary and critical component of America's role as a world leader."[40] The major instrumentation for sustainable development in the plan consisted of increasing investment, as the plan states that "both foreign and domestic investment is critical to expand exports, accelerate economic growth, generate jobs, and spread the benefits of growth equitably."[41] Despite all of this, there has been a common, persistent characteristic among these four phases: prioritizing economic reform policies before political reform, political reform nearly always assuming secondary importance. According to USAID, in order to improve the quality of life for Egyptians, it is essential that Egypt become a global economic player.[42]

Post-Sept. 11 Revisions

Since Sept. 11, 2001, the American perspective on Arab reform has changed dramatically. The current U.S. administration has elevated the issue of democratization to the top of its Middle East agenda. The correlation between anti-American sentiment and the prevalence of authoritarian rule in the region has boosted the importance of political reform, according to the United States. However, strategic factors have

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36   "Transcript: VP Gore, Mubarak 5/3 Press Availability in Cairo," United States Embassy in Israel, May 4, 1998, http://www.usembassy-israel.org.il/publish/press/whouse/archive/1998/may/wh2505.htm.
37   "Middle East: U.S. Foreign Assistance, FY 2001, FY2002, FY 2003 Request," Congressional Research Service, March 28, 2002, http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/9190.pdf.
38   "USAID/Egypt Strategic Plan Update for Fiscal Years 2000-2009," U.S. Agency for International Development, http://pdf.dec.org/pdf_docs/Pdaca516.pdf.
39   Ibid.
40   "USAID/Egypt Strategic Plan Update for Fiscal Years 2000-2009," U.S. Agency for International Development, 4, http://pdf.dec.org/pdf_docs/Pdaca516.pdf.
41   Ibid.
42   "Egypt," U.S. Agency for International Development, http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/cp2000/ane/egypt.html.

not diminished. The post-Sept. 11 mindset on the national interest, and its policy implications for aid, lies in the challenge of prioritizing security and democracy while mutually reinforcing objectives. The events of Sept. 11 and the USAID philosophy toward Egypt seem to be stuck in such a dilemma. Although USAID discourse does not specify a distinct post-Sept. 11 philosophy, aid policies and priorities have arguably changed.

A mid-way revision report on USAID's strategic plan in Egypt maintained that changing conditions in U.S. foreign policy required USAID assistance to Egypt to be re-allocated in order to reflect the priorities established by the Bush administration. According to the report, *USAID/Egypt Strategic Plan Update for Fiscal Years 2000-2009*, "the events of September 11, 2001, led to more active U.S. involvement in Egypt and the region, including the…new Middle East Partnership Initiative. This sharpening of U.S. foreign policy for the region led to the strategic revisions proposed in this document."[43]

In the field of democracy and governance, neither of which received much attention from any USAID Egypt country report, the document indicated that USAID will allocate part of its funding to secure three objectives: "promoting more transparent, accountable government and on citizens being better informed and afforded more opportunities for participation."[44] For education and healthcare, the report called for an increase of funds from 2003 to 2009, allocated funds for education at $209 million or 21.6 percent of the total USAID allocations, and boosted funding for democracy and governance from $96 million to $152 million, almost 16 percent of total funds.[45]

> **"In 1999, the United States and Egypt agreed on a plan to reduce economic aid to Egypt by one half over a period of 10 years, equaling a near $40 million reduction in aid per year through 2008."**

Additionally, traditional sectors persisted. The 2003-2009 funding for the healthcare sector was adjusted from $145 million to $165 million, or 17.1 percent of the total program funding. Adjustments in USAID's strategy for health, education and democracy resulted in a sharp drop in funding for infrastructure projects after having invested almost $6 billion since 1975 in physical infrastructure projects such as electricity, telecommunications

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43   "USAID/Egypt Strategic Plan Update for Fiscal Years 2000-2009," U.S. Agency for International Development, http://pdf.dec.org/pdf_docs/Pdaca516.pdf.
44   Ibid., 21.
45   Ibid.

and waste water and drinking water, the latter consuming almost half of the total. According to USAID's strategic plan, funding for infrastructure projects until 2006 remained at a mere $32 million, 3.4 percent of the total funding. Moreover, the report also indicated that, other than infrastructure, cuts would be made in

"[Since Sept. 11, USAID] boosted funding for democracy and governance from $96 million to $152 million, almost 16 percent of total funds."

funding for economic growth over the 2003-2009 period, from an amount originally estimated at $481 million (53.7 percent) to $382.5 million (39.5 percent).[46] Lastly, it is pertinent to remember that other cuts, such as the $200 million in military financing, will take place unless Egypt complies with the United States' wishes in how they handle human rights and their smuggling relations with neighbor Gaza.

Conclusions

The recent revisions of USAID activity priorities and foci signal a considerable departure from the aid priorities that have persisted during the past three decades. The new revisions reflect the need to make the aid relationship more visible to the Egyptian public while underscoring the "new" mindset of American national interest. The increase in funding levels for the health and education sectors to match those made in the 1980s comes from a different mindset: aiming to create more democratic societies in the Middle East through education systems based on religious tolerance and openness to the West and providing services with high and direct return for the population at large. The new strategies have sought to raise awareness of the amount of 'help' offered by the United States, especially as the prioritization of infrastructure and economic stabilization policies have proved counterproductive to 'public' appreciation of U.S. economic assistance. Egyptian public opinion of the United States has suffered from U.S. policy and aid choices; however, the increased visibility of future USAID funds provides an opportunity to improve the Egyptian public's perception of the United States. ■

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46   Ibid.

Missing in Action
The Democracy Agenda in the Middle East

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OVER THE LAST SEVERAL DECADES, the United States government has claimed to have significantly changed its policies toward the Middle East. After decades of supporting repressive and undemocratic Middle Eastern regimes during the Cold War, President George W. Bush announced that the United States would begin a policy of democracy promotion in the Middle East. However, that democratic agenda has been unevenly applied and even reversed when democratic elections produce governments that did not favor U.S. policies. Supporting elections in Egypt and the Palestinian Territories until the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas were democratically favored, the U.S. government appears to show only conditional support for Middle East democracies. In its occupation of Iraq, the U.S. has made an even greater blunder: under the guise of "spreading freedom," it has actually increased chaos and insecurity throughout the Middle East.

Arab perceptions of America have been greatly harmed by the ways in which the U.S. government has attempted to spread democracy in Iraq and beyond. The negative perceptions of the United States fostered by Cold War policy could have been alleviated by peaceful promotion of democracy in the Middle East; instead, however, the forceful methods and double standards of democracy building have further damaged the U.S. image in the Arab world. When asked about the primary motivation for Bush's Middle East policy in a 2006 study by Washington, D.C.-based think tank, the Brookings Institution, 40 percent of respondents in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi

Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates said it was "his pursuit of US national interests," while only 3 percent said it was "his strong belief in democracy." Nearly two-thirds believed that "democracy is not a real US objective," 69 percent said that the Iraq war brought less democracy to the Middle East, and the majority said their general attitude toward the United States was very unfavorable. Rather than improving Arab public opinion toward the United Sates, the inconsistent promotion of democracy on behalf of the United States has actually diminished approval.

Background

U.S. administrations during the Cold War supported many repressive regimes in the Arab world, considering them their best allies in the war against the Eastern bloc and the rising tide of communism. Maintaining the stability of these Arab regimes became a common theme for the U.S. administrations throughout the era. Unfortunately, the United States never questioned the legitimacy of these regimes, even though the majority of them attained power through fraudulent or non-existent elections or through military coups; nor did the United States question the dismal records of these regimes on basic human rights violations.

Instead, the United States provided many of these regimes with political, economic and military support, and in many cases, directly intervened to keep the regimes in power. For example, in 1958, U.S. Marines briefly entered Lebanon to block an attempt by Lebanese nationalist forces to topple a French government-imposed regime. In 1970, the United States increased its military aid to Jordan in order to counter the Palestinian resistance, and it did the same during the first Gulf War. During the Iran-Iraq war in the late 1980s, the United States provided the Iraqi regime with satellite pictures to help them target Iranian troop concentrations. The monarchy in Saudi Arabia enjoyed billions of dollars in military sales despite the absence of a constitution, political parties or free press. According to a report published by the Congressional Research Service in 2005, the Egyptian regime received more than $52 billion in economic and military aid between 1971 and 2001.[1] The Jordanian regime received more

> **"The Arab world developed an understanding that the U.S. government would always overlook its 'democratic' ideals in order to maintain stable Arab regimes that benefited its own interests."**

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1   Jeremy M. Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Assistance to the Middle East: Historical Background, Recent Trends, and the FY 2006 Request," Congressional Research Service, June 13, 2005.

than $4.5 billion during the same period. Politically, the United States has turned a blind eye and ignored the Arab regimes' undemocratic practices and violations of basic human liberties. Therefore, the Arab world developed an understanding that the U.S. government would always overlook its "democratic" ideals in order to maintain stable Arab regimes that benefited its own interests.

The U.S. policy toward the Arab world was shaped mainly by the Cold War.[2] For the United States, the Arab world was a Cold War theater where they sought to overcome and contain the Soviet Union; it was a policy of necessity rather than of a choice. Even with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the official end of the Cold War, the United States did not review its policy toward the Middle East, and despite new waves of democracy in Eastern Europe, it maintained its Cold War policies.

The rise of democracy promotion

One year after the tragedy of Sept. 11, 2001, the Bush administration published its first National Security Strategy (later known as the Bush doctrine). The strategy outlined the administration's goals to defend, preserve and extend peace around the globe. Bush asserted that "in keeping with our heritage and principles, we seek to create a balance of power that favors human freedom: conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty."[3]

In his introduction to the strategy, Bush also outlined the means he planned to use in order to achieve his goal: "We will defend the peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. We will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent."[4]

In June 2002, the Bush administration's agenda for promoting democracy in the Middle East took a more concrete form, when Bush stated that the democratization of the Palestinian political system was a precondition to establishing a Palestinian state.[5] In fact, Bush was criticized by many American scholars because he did not ask U.S. allies in the Arab world to adopt democracy as well.

In December 2002, Secretary of State Colin Powell announced the establishment of a Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). In a speech delivered at the Heritage

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2   Peter L. Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict: 1945-1961* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).
3   "National Security Strategy of the United States: September 2002," http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf.
4   Ibid.
5   "President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership," The White House, June 24, 2002, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020624-3.html.

Foundation in Washington, D.C. Powell declared that, "our government will support economic reform, strengthen civil society and expand political participation, and will work to bridge the knowledge gap with better schools and more opportunities for higher education." Powell rejected the skepticism of many American scholars who argue that the Middle East lacks the domestic conditions that set the stage for democratic change. "We reject the condescending notion that freedom will not grow in the Middle East or that there is any region of the world that cannot support democracy," he said.[6]

In early 2003, in preparation to topple the Saddam Hussein regime by direct military intervention, the Bush administration made promoting democracy in the Middle East a cornerstone to its policy. The Bush administration, supported by both public opinion and a chorus of democracy advocators, argued that installing a democratic regime in Iraq would unleash a democratic tsunami that would topple authoritative governments in the Middle East and bring peace between Arabs and Israel.[7] According to Mark Danner, a prominent American journalist who is known for his investigative war-reporting, the Bush administration believed that:

> "the presence of a victorious American Army in Iraq would then serve as a powerful boost to moderate elements in neighboring Iran, hastening that critical country's evolution away from the mullahs and toward a more moderate course. Such an evolution in Tehran would lead to a withdrawal of Iranian support for Hezbollah and other radical groups, thereby isolating Syria and reducing pressure on Israel. This leads eventually to a favorable solution of the Arab-Israeli problem." [8]

Just prior to the invasion of Iraq, Bush noted the effects that a democratic government in Iraq would have on the Middle East in a speech given at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C. on Feb. 28, 2003. Bush said that "a new regime in Iraq would serve as a dramatic and inspiring example of freedom for other nations in the region."[9] For the first time since the end of WWII, a U.S. president hinted that a current official Arab regime was no longer able to serve U.S. interests and that a pro-

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6   Colin Powell, "Transcript: The U.S. Middle East Partnership Initiative," The Heritage Foundation, December 12, 2002, http://www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/WM180.cfm.
7   "Empire State Building: Is America Becoming an Empire?" PBS, February 28, 2003, http://www.markdanner.com/orations/show/105.
8   Mark Danner, "Iraq: The War of the Imagination," The New York Review of Books, December 21, 2006, http://www.markdanner.com/articles/show/iraq_the_war_of_the_imagination.
9   "President Discusses the Future of Iraq," February 26, 2003, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030226-11.html.

found political change needed to occur in the region.

The attacks of Sept. 11 prompted the United States to review its foreign policy toward the Middle East, because all but one of the terrorists aboard the three planes that hit the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon were from or had lived in Middle

> **"For the first time since WWII, a U.S. president [George W. Bush] hinted that a current official Arab regime was no longer able to serve U.S. interests."**

Eastern countries that were close U.S. allies in the region. Fifteen of the hijackers were from Saudi Arabia, two came from the United Arab Emirates and one from Egypt, which in turn led the United States and the world to ask: "Has U.S. policy in the Middle East made the United States more secure, or has U.S. support for repressive regimes somehow contributed to the Sept. 11 tragedies?"

Bush answered this question in a speech on Nov. 6, 2003, at the 20th anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy, a private, non-profit organization whose mission is to strengthen democratic institutions around the world:

> "Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe – because in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty." … "As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export." … "It would be reckless to accept the status quo."[10]

Family ties

Arab regimes have two main characteristics in common: first, whether they are nominally referred to as "republics," "kingdoms," or "emirates," they are all, in practice, monarchies. Second, these regimes are politically closed and don't accept any political partnership from outside the rulers' families or close political circles.

To illustrate, a few days after the death of former Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad in July 2000, the Syrian constitution was quickly changed to ensure that Al-Assad's son, Bashar Al-Assad, would succeed him. Thus, the Syrian parliament changed the constitution in order to ensure a smooth transition, and amended it so that Bashar's age, then 34 years, would become the new minimum age for any Syrian to be a presi-

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10   "President Bush Discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East," November 6, 2003, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html.

dent – not 30 or 35 years, but 34. In the original constitution, it was 40 years.

Changing the constitution to support the ruling family is not an issue exclusive to Syria. In the Jordanian kingdom, when King Hussein nominated his son Abdullah II to succeed him in February 1999, the Jordanian constitution changed within a matter of days. According to the old constitution, the king should be born to an Arab father and an Arab mother. The amended constitution requires only the father to be of Arab origin, as King Abdullah's mother is British. In Morocco, the new king, Mohammed VI, had to marry secretly after his father's death in 1999 to meet the constitutional condition that the king must be married. In Tunis, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali has changed the constitution several times to ensure that he can run for office an unlimited number of times – he has been president since 1956.

> **"To consolidate absolute political control, the ruling families and their close circles deliberately destroyed and ruined civil societies in most Middle Eastern countries."**

Moreover, sons of rulers are occupying the most important positions in their countries. In Egypt, Gamal Mubarak, the current president's son, is leading Egypt's economic development programs and is a member of the high leadership committee of the ruling national Egyptian party. Qusay Saddam Hussein, the son of the late Saddam Hussein, was the head of the Republican Guard in Iraq. In Libya, Seif Al-Islam, the son of the de facto head of state Col. Muammar al-Gaddafi, is his father's special envoy and the chief of the Olympic committee. In the Gulf Emirates, it's hard to find one minister not affiliated with the ruling family.

To consolidate absolute political control, the ruling families and their close circles deliberately destroyed and ruined civil societies in most Middle Eastern countries. They stymied the creation of independent media outlets, the formation of political parties and evolution of a free market. Benefiting from the Cold War, Arab regimes engaged for decades in a non-stop campaign to repress and silence their enemies, from the Marxists to the Islamists, pan-Arabists and national liberal democrats. In addition to repression, they also encouraged Islamists to organize religious movements and campaigns against anyone not toting the party line. In almost all Arab countries, the Islamic movements were the only political parties that were (and in many cases, still are) allowed to organize and to hold activities freely. These Islamists also campaigned against Israel, the United States and the Soviet Union, avoiding any direct collision with the Arab regimes to ensure a continuation of their activities. There were cases, however, when small Islamic groups attempted to overthrow the ruling party – such as when the Islamic Jihad in Egypt sought to topple the Egyptian regime – but these

were the exception rather the rule. This policy has weakened the Arab liberals and the secularists, who subsequently became a minority in their societies, while reinforcing the position of the Islamists. Moreover, the internal hatred against the Arab regimes that began to brew was redirected toward external enemies.

By the end of the Cold War, it was apparent that U.S options were very limited: either they continue to support the existing regimes or work with the Islamists as an alternative. In this perspective, the Arab regimes were not defending U.S. interests but, more importantly, they were defending their own interests to remain in power.

The new, conflicting mission

When Bush declared his policy of democracy promotion in the Middle East, the Arab regimes responded very slowly and defiantly to his initiative. At first, they weren't sure how genuine the U.S. administration was, or how committed they were to the policy. A global, sustained "war on terror" requires sharing intelligence information, cutting financial support to terror organizations, and in some cases, common operational military activities. These factors would certainly increase U.S. dependence on the undemocratic Arab regimes Bush theoretically opposed.

For instance, the military intervention in Afghanistan to oust the Taliban regime and pursue al-Qaida might not have been successful without the support of the repressive regimes in Pakistan and Uzbekistan, and without the support of Arab regimes in general. Moreover, the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003 would not have been possible if Kuwait and Qatar had refused to allow their land to be used as a base for attacking Iraq, and without the secret cooperation of Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

Over time, Arab regimes came to view the Bush rhetoric on democracy promotion as a U.S. public relations strategy aimed at improving the U.S. image abroad during the war on terror. What supported this perception was that U.S. goals in the region after Sept. 11 apparently remained unchanged: to sustain the flow of oil to the United States and to ensure Israel's military superiority in the Middle East.

Consequently, Arab regimes defied the United States on two main fronts. First, they argued that the double-standard policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict led to the hatred directed toward Americans. The regimes cited their frustration with the fact that the United States implemented UN Security Council resolution 678 *by force* to oust Saddam Hussein from Kuwait in 1991, while failing for decades to

> **"U.S. goals in the region after Sept. 11 apparently remained unchanged: to sustain the flow of oil to the United States and to ensure Israel's military superiority in the Middle East."**

implement resolution 242, which asks Israel to withdraw from the Arab land it has occupied since 1967. To challenge the Bush administration, the Arab regimes, under Saudi leadership, proposed an Arab Peace Initiative in late March 2002 that recommended "complete peace and normalization with Israel in return for a complete withdrawal from all the Arab occupied land." The Bush administration, however, ignored it.

Second, the Arab regimes argued that democracy would bring those Islamists to power who are against U.S. interests and against democracy. The examples were numerous. For instance, the Mullahs regime in Iran has pursued a policy counter to U.S. interests since the Islamic revolution in 1978. They supported Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Palestinian territories against Israel, made a strategic alliance with Syria, increased influence in Iraq, and became a major threat to the small gulf countries. Under control of the Taliban, Afghanistan became an asylum for al-Qaida, and Islamists gained power in Sudan by direct election in 1986 and subsequently prevented any further elections. Their vision resonated with the views of some American scholars; Bernard Lewis, for example, argued that the Islamists understand democracy as "one man, one vote, one time."[11]

Miscalculations

If the American invasion in Iraq had set a model of a stable, democratic regime in the center of the Arab world, then the expected "democratic tsunami" might have taken place in neighboring countries. However, it was clear from early on that the American adventure in Iraq was based on miscalculations and the mission was doomed to fail.

The possession of weapons of mass destruction was a flawed excuse, and by no means a justified reason, to declare war on Iraq; otherwise the United States would have invaded North Korea, which at the time was very close to having their own nuclear weapon. The choice to invade Iraq was based on the assumptions that a) it would be easy to topple Saddam's regime; b) Saddam's military was weak; c) the Iraqis wanted "emancipation" and would welcome U.S. forces; and d) the richness of Iraq, its secularist curriculum and the existence of a middle class would make U.S. engagement in the nation-building of Iraq very limited.

The Bush administration, however, failed to anticipate the reaction of the Iraqis and its neighboring states and paid little attention to Arab public opinion. Iraq is divided among Sunnis, who enjoyed power for decades; the Shiites, who are loyal to Iran and even though among the majority, suffered the most from the Saddam regime;

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11   Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam* (New York: Random House, 2003), 112.

and the Kurds, who continue to seek their independence. The Sunni resistance to the American presence in Iraq was, at the very least, expected. It was also understood that Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Syria had no interest in seeing a successful American presence in Iraq, as it would be against their very interests. This might explain how al-Qaida, a group that thrives in lawless, chaotic areas, in a very short time, succeeded in building a stronghold in Iraq.

The Arabs scornfully received the Bush administration's rhetoric of "freeing" the Iraqi people from the dictatorship. Their immediate response was to question the inherent double standard: "What about the Palestinians who were under the Israeli occupation for decades?" they asked. The Arabs viewed the American occupation in Iraq as punishment to Saddam for his position against Israel and a war to takeover the Iraqi oil reserves. "Spreading freedom" as a reason for this war was never a theme that resonated within the region.

The American presence in Iraq, however, forced some Arab regimes to adopt cosmetic democratic changes. For instance, Saudi Arabia held a municipal election in 2005 for the first time in its history. In Kuwait, women were granted the right to vote and to run for parliament in May 2005, although none of their 28 candidates won a seat in the June 2006 parliamentary election. In United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zaied formed a National Advisory Council composed of 40 representatives (20 of them appointed directly by him, and the other 20 appointed by the seven emirates that compose the union); the council, however, has no legislative authority.

The superficial nature of the changes did not go unnoticed by the domestic populations and the international community, however. In Egypt, the Islamists were allowed to run for the parliamentary elections as independents in late 2005, but the policemen fired guns at voters to prevent them from voting for Muslim Brotherhood candidates. Judges requested authorities to oversee the elections, but the government refused. International organizations were also prevented from monitoring the elections. The turnout was only 24 percent, indicating that the majority of Egyptians didn't trust the election process. (Egypt also witnessed a presidential election after amending article 76 in the constitution to allow a competition over presidential post, but the amendment gave vast authorities to a special committee in the parliament to accept or refuse the candidates.)

Even more troubling, sometimes these cosmetic democratic changes worked to reinforce the existing regimes' hold on power. By creating undemocratic election laws, for instance, some regimes were able to further marginalize minority groups within their borders. For instance, in Jordan, the "one vote election system" allows every Jordanian to elect only one candidate for the legislative assembly even if his or her district

is represented by more than one seat. The law was made to counter the Islamists' voting block by forcing it to divide. The law also divides Jordan into 45 electoral districts under the guise that the government wants better representation for all Jordanians. However, the law has actually led to weak representation of Jordanians. According to the law, a candidate in a small district in southern Jordan, for example, needs 5,000 votes to win a seat, while in Amman, the candidate needs 52,000 votes. It was clear that the law was made to help candidates allied with the government win a majority of seats in the 2003 elections.

"The only two countries in the Arab world that had free and transparent elections were occupied Iraq and Palestine, where Iran's allies won the majority in both."

In short, Arab regimes held 'elections' to show respect for the ideal of political participation, but the constraints placed on the processes guaranteed that the results would be in their favor. Freedom to form political parties, freedom to express beliefs and ideas, and free and open access to information – preconditions for a true democracy – were noticeably absent. The only two countries in the Arab world that had free and transparent elections were the occupied Iraq and Palestine, where Iran's allies won the majority in both.

To expand on these examples, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki would lose his parliamentarian majority if his allies from the al-Sadr group left his coalition. Muqtada al-Sadr, the leader of the group, is known for his strong ties with Iran and for his position against the American occupation. His militants engaged several times in armed confrontation with the U.S. Army. In the Palestinian territories, Hamas won a comfortable majority – 76 out of 132 votes – to form a Cabinet alone. The results have proven that in any free election in the Middle East, Islamists are likely to win.

Stability or Chaos

Four years after the American occupation began, Iraq is on the brink of a civil war between Sunnis and Shiites, its unity of land is threatened and ongoing violence has claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Iraqis. The occupation delivered neither security nor democracy to the Iraqi people; instead it brought chaos and anarchy. Iraq has turned into a quagmire for Americans and a new base for al-Qaida that is threatening the stability of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and even Lebanon.

The failure in Iraq has emboldened America's foes. From Iran on the Persian Gulf to Gaza on the Mediterranean Sea, a front has been formed against the United States and Israel. Even events that the United States and allies in the Middle East have claimed as victories are dubious. In March 2006, following the assassination of former Lebanese

Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, hundreds of thousands of Lebanese filled the streets, forcing Syria to leave Lebanon. This was portrayed by Western media as a victory for the promoters of democracy in the Middle East. The victory was less than certain, however, when Hezbollah, upon its success in the July 2006 war with Israel, mobilized with its allies against the Fuad Siniora government, preventing the parliament from even holding a session to approve the international tribunal. Soon thereafter, Lebanon became threatened by civil war.

In the Palestinian territories, the situation is not much different. Since its rise to power after the election in early 2006, Hamas is taking steps to grab the lead of the Palestinian national movement from Fatah. Not only is Hamas calling for a full partnership in Palestinian institutions, but it also demands a proportional representation in the Palestinian National Council to take over the Palestinian Liberation Organization. Bush's statement in November 2003 that "representative governments in the Middle East will reflect their own cultures" didn't forbid him from inciting the international community to impose political and economic isolation on the Hamas government. This has increased the tension between Hamas and Fatah, the former Palestinian ruling party, and rounds of military fights between both sides has put the Palestinian Authority in jeopardy. If this is any indication of U.S. policy, then the Bush administration obviously does not favor democracy when parties against U.S. interests win power.

The United States has been caught in check. Chaos, and not democracy, is now widespread in the region. On the one hand, remaining in Iraq would only increase American casualties, increase the hatred toward them from the Arab world, consume their economy and divert their focus from other important threats and challenges around the world. On the other hand, leaving Iraq would lead to a full-scale civil war, a partition of its land, and an increase in Iranian influence in the Arab region, not to mention that it would allow al-Qaida to declare victory. Expanding the war into Iran or Syria also seems unlikely. American public opinion polls suggest that support for a new war would be hard to come by; the Americans want their army out of Iraq, and overall Americans believe that the situation in Iraq and the region will continue to destabilize.[12]

Restoring stability in Iraq and in the Arab world has become the Bush administration's primary objective.[13] The Baker-Hamilton recommendations, found in the *Iraq Study Group Report*, emphasize the need to collaborate with Iran and Syria in order to

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12   "Americans, Bush out of sync on staying in Iraq," USA Today, May 8, 2007, http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2007-05-08-iraq-poll_N.htm.

13   James A. Baker and Lee H. Hamilton, et al, The Iraq Study Group Report, http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/iraq_study_group_report.pdf.

stabilize Iraq and advocate for fixing the peace process between the Arabs and Israel as a tool to establishing regional stability. The recommendations reflect a consensus between the Democratic and Republican parties in the United States that stability, not promoting democracy in the Middle East, should have priority in U.S. foreign policy.

Conclusion

Had the United States focused its war on al-Qaida, engaged in solving the Arab-Israeli conflict, and promoted democracy by peaceful political and economic means, the results would have been very different. Arab perceptions toward the United States would have surpassed the negative consequences of the Cold War. This would have reinforced the position of liberal Arabs and forced the Islamists to focus on nation-building instead of making their existence dependent on regional conflicts. Instead, the methods and double standards of U.S. democracy-building have further soured Arab public opinion toward the United States.

The Bush administration chose the wrong path in its decision to occupy Iraq; it added fuel to a region already inflamed due to repressive governments, occupation, and decades of undeveloped economies. This has sharpened the Arabs negative perception against the United States and hardened the Islamists position toward the existing regimes and moderate Arabs. More importantly, this policy has spread chaos and insecurity beyond Iraq. Though U.S. policy toward the Middle East should focus on democracy promotion and freedom, it is more imminent now to work at restoring security and stability in the Arab world, creating a peaceful environment where democracy can flourish. ■

Lessons from Libya:
How to Make Friends with Arabs

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IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, particularly since Libya abandoned its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in December 2003, Libyan-American relations have been profoundly transformed. After decades of chilly relations that were at times tense and conflict-ridden, the ice has finally broken. The qualitative transformation in the two countries' relations in the wake of Libya's announcement raises important questions about the conditions of building a model for American-Arab relations and whether voluntarily renouncing the pursuit of nuclear weapons is a prerequisite for such. Does the current improvement in U.S.-Libyan ties represent a temporary détente, or is it the foundation for a close, cooperative future relationship?

To answer these questions, the unique characteristics of the U.S. relationship with Libya must be compared to those with other Arab states. This comparison provides an opportunity to investigate the sources behind the declining popularity of the United States in the Arab world, and to see whether these sources are so structural as to prevent leadership from introducing sweeping foreign policy changes.

The Libyan case study suggests that popular hatred of the United States was not deeply ingrained enough to obstruct the political leadership from sharply shifting course in its foreign policy toward the United States. It also points to the political leadership's ability to make such a transformation, though a transformation is dependent on a number of factors, including the level of pragmatism within the leadership, the extent of the gap between the leadership and the public, and related international

and regional development issues. The more pragmatic the political leadership, and the wider the gap between the leadership and the people, the easier it becomes for the leadership to introduce radical foreign policy changes. Additionally, if the leader views international and regional developments as detrimental to national interest, the leader is more prone to introduce fundamental foreign policy changes.

What influenced the change in the U.S.-Libya relationship?

There are three main viewpoints that can help explain the revolution in U.S.-Libyan relations. In the first, the transformation is attributed to a set of crucial developments in the international environment since Sept. 11, 2001, together with the influence of lobbying groups (within both countries) pushing for warmer bilateral relations. In the second viewpoint, the closer ties are ascribed to a number of strategic structural factors, from the role of Libyan oil wealth to the presence of common U.S.-Libyan interests in the "war on terror." The third viewpoint looks at the role of internal factors within each of the two countries, which played a prominent role in setting the stage for such a radical transformation, and each country's reexamination of their foreign policy goals toward each other.

In fact, an objective understanding of the relative transformation which took place in U.S.-Libyan relations has to rely on all of the aforementioned factors – whether internal, international, or geopolitical – side-by-side with psychological and historical dynamics. Since the transformation from confrontation to normalization cannot be explained by relying on a single viewpoint, it can be argued that these factors intertwined to help bring about the change.

"Commercial interests were pressuring policy-makers to lift sanctions and open the Libyan economy and oil sector to American companies."

In the United States, there was a growing realization that the policy of unilateral sanctions had not been effective against Libya and had not brought about the desired results, especially as the sanctions had not won full European backing. In addition, within the United States, commercial interests were pressuring the policymakers to lift sanctions and open the Libyan economy and oil sector to American companies.

On the Libyan side, it could be said that Libya made a careful assessment of the changing international environment at the beginning of the 21st century and chose to alter both its foreign and domestic policy in response to the changing times. In other words, this adjustment did not seek to simply ease tensions with the United States, but rather was also imposed by considerations of preserving Libya's national security,

political system, national heritage and the Libyan culture in the context of the values, principles and concepts defined by its choices.

This new orientation for Libyan foreign policy is not restricted to accommodating American policy; it also includes closer ties toward the secondary powers of the international order as well. Diplomatic relations have been restored on the embassy level with the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan and Canada. Meanwhile, Libya has improved relations with the EU, accepted the Barcelona Process, and actively participates in the "five-plus-five" framework.[1]

After Sept. 11, a type of conformity emerged between American and Libyan policy at a time when U.S. rhetoric toward the greater Middle East focused on goals concerned with political stability, ensuring the flow of oil supplies, protecting Israel and spreading democracy and human rights. In this regard, Libya represented one of the regional countries with the most stability and the most control over extremist organizations. Furthermore, the war in Iraq, the crisis with Iran, internal unrest in Nigeria, unstable American-Venezuelan relations and the growth in global demand for oil all helped put Libya – which may be able to double its current output of 1.5 million barrels of oil per day over the next decade, and which currently enjoys proximity to the European market as well as very high-quality, low-sulfur reserves – at the forefront for American policy-makers.

Finally, the Arab-Israeli conflict did not pose a barrier to closer Libyan-American relations in comparison with the frontline states for a number of reasons. For one, Libya does not directly border Israel and there had already been a decline in Libyan support for Palestinian military action against Israel. Libya had backed these actions before the 1993 Oslo Accords as a means of supporting an armed national struggle and the right to self-determination according to international law. However, after the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements, with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) amending its charter and giving up the "armed struggle" option, Libyan support appeared to be in violation of international law, which blurred the line between resistance and terrorism (particularly after Sept. 11). The decline in Libyan support for armed Palestinian action – regardless of the motives – was an important factor in creating common ground between the United States and Libya, especially post-Sept. 11.

Moreover, Libya has called for a single democratic state in historical Palestine,

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"The Arab-Israeli conflict no longer serves as the backdrop to tension in Libyan-American relations the way it does for America's relationship with several other Arab countries."

where all would live without ethnic, racial or religious discrimination (the "Isratine" or one-state solution of Libyan leader Muammar al-Gaddafi's White Book[2]). Libya seeks to end this hostility between the Arabs and the Jews, which has exhausted the peoples and states of the region, caused enormous suffering and pushed extremist forces (on all sides) to believe that the conflict is never-ending. This one-state solution (even if it is rejected by a number of extremist forces in Israel and the United States because they see it as a threat to Israel and is also opposed in the Arab world) is supported by a number of intellectuals in Israel and America.

Thus, the Arab-Israeli conflict no longer serves as the backdrop to tensions in Libyan-American relations the way it does for America's relationships with several other Arab countries.

Despite previous hostilities, a potentially strong relationship

The crucial point that cannot be ignored when addressing Libyan-American relations – present and future – is that years of conflict and hostility did not eliminate the basis of a potentially close relationship between Libya and the United States. It is natural that countries compete with one another and have shifting stances, particularly when two countries have a huge disparity in terms of political, military and economic power, geographic location, population, influence within international organizations (such as permanent membership on the UN Security Council), levels of technological development, etc. In other words, for the case study of Libyan-American relations, the conflict was between a relatively new state (the United States), which during a short period of time (230 years) has managed to become a major player and even become the world's sole superpower (if only temporarily) and another state (Libya) belonging to a deep-rooted civilization and nation. This has inflated the Libyan sense of rightness and consequently caused the state to treat the United States as a rival and challenger. However, like other states, Libya believes that it has no say in the writing of modern history. This feeling of helplessness has led the Libyan Republic to an almost inevitable

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2   The White Book "aims at the achievement of a just and equitable solution to the chronic so-called Middle East Question, and to rid the region of the disastrous effects of violence, war and destruction," compiling "views and concepts previously put forward by Arabs and Jews alike, in addition to international plans and projects for its solution." ALGathafi Speaks, *The White Book*, http://www.algathafi.org/en/white_book_en.htm.

clash with American policies, and similarly between American and Libyan ambitions.

It is natural that countries disagree and vie for power, and war has always been a staple of nations in conflict. American-Libyan relations, in various stages, have held this pattern, with periods of tension followed by the restoration of relations. Attraction and strife between the various units in international politics is in constant fluctuation. Although international relations are theoretically ruled by justice, equality in sovereignty and the rule of law, it is actually economic interests, political and social inputs, doctrinal sources of reference (whether divine or positivist), pressure from business lobbies, political parties, the media and the public which lead influence in policymaking. Whims, egotism, election campaigns and financial and military interests often weaken the value of international law; wars reflect not so much the wisdom of international law as much as an expression of power relations.

In this context, Libyan-American relations have constantly been shaped by power: the four-year-long war and the *USS Philadelphia* prisoners at the turn of the 19th century;[3] American military bases and later the evacuation of those bases (June 1970); economic changes (the nationalization of the American oil companies in 1973); the strategic position; and the power of public opinion. During a time when Libya always resorted to the UN Security Council and the International Court of Justice (Lockerbie, the Continental Shelf, and the Aouzou Strip cases[4]) and to international organizations (the Gulf of Sidra[5]), the United States paid little heed to international legal rulings in its

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3   *USS Philadelphia* traveled, and served as a blockade to Tripoli, during the late 1700s and early 1800s. On Oct. 31, 1803 the ship ran aground while chasing an enemy. Despite desperate efforts to get her afloat, she remained on the rocks and was soon forced to surrender in the face of an overwhelming force of Tripolitan gunboats. Philadelphia's Commanding Officer, Captain William Bainbridge, and her entire crew became prisoners until 1805. Department of the Navy, Naval Historical Center, *USS Philadelphia*, http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-p/philad2.html.

4   The Lockerbie case concerned a dispute arising from a joint request by the United States and the United Kingdom in 1991 that Libya surrender for trial to either the United States or the United Kingdom two of its nationals charged with the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 on Dec. 21, 1988, over Lockerbie, Scotland. Vera Gowlland-Debbas, "The Relationship Between the International Court of Justice and the Security Council in the Light of the Lockerbie Case," *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 88, No. 4. (Oct. 1994), 643-677.

   In the early 1980s, Libya and neighboring Tunisia asked the International Court of Justice to help clarify the principles and rules of international law which may be applied to determine the boundaries of the continental shelf of each country as oil drilling in one another's waters was at dispute. Mark B. Feldman, "The Tunisia-Libya Continental Shelf Case: Geographic Justice or Judicial Compromise?" *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 77, No. 2, (April 1983), 219-238.

   The outbreak of hostilities between Chad and Libya in August 1987 concerning sovereignty over the Aouzou Strip in Northern Chad. Gino J. Naldi, "The Aouzou Strip Case – A Legal Analysis," *Journal of African Law*, Vol. 33, No. 1. (Spring, 1989), 72-77.

> **"There was … President George W. Bush describing Ariel Sharon as a 'man of peace'…which influenced Arab foreign policies – including Libya's."**

dealings with Libya (such as in the bombing of Tripoli and Benghazi in 1986), while it also repeatedly ignored the sovereignty of a member-state in the international community.

Libyan-American relations emerged under historical circumstances accompanying the birth of the United States and the crystallization of the nascent U.S. institutions, at a stage (the end of the 18th century) in which international organizations had not yet been formed. One of the first foreign wars for the young American republic was against the state of Tripoli in modern-day Libya. This war was a leading cause behind the formation of the American Navy to protect American commercial shipping from maritime raids in the Mediterranean, particularly by Libyan mariners. On April 25, 1805, American Marines attacked and captured the Eastern Libyan city of Darnah, raising the American flag over its citadel. This capture compelled the ruler of Tripoli to sign a commercial treaty between Libya and the United States on June 4, 1805, upon which the Marines withdrew from Darnah. This incident and its important historical dimension cannot be ignored in the history of the relations between the two countries.

The deterioration in U.S.-Libyan relations cannot be understood without considering important international developments in the Middle East, which were followed by a general weakening of American relations with a number of Arab countries. In other words, American-Libyan relations were partly an expression of changes in the international and regional environment and within American policy toward the Middle East. Internationally, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of socialism had a resounding impact on a number of Arab countries, including Libya, which had enjoyed excellent relations with the Soviet bloc states. Regionally, the Iran-Iraq war, the 1990-1991 Gulf War and the war in Iraq in 2003 held serious repercussions for the Arab regional order. In addition, Israeli policy in the occupied Arab lands and American support for the Israeli occupation, which was met by the consecutive Intifadas from the Palestinians, further hindered America's image in the Middle East. There were images of farms being bulldozed, houses destroyed, Palestinian leaders assassinated, children

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5   The clashes in the Gulf of Sidra (off the coast of Libya) refers to the dispute that took place between the United States and Libya in the last week of March 1986, which brought about legal problems surrounding the Libyan claims regarding the juridical status of the body of water – a maritime area of 22,000 miles. Yehuda Z. Blum, "The Gulf of Sidra Incident," *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 80, No. 3. (July 1986), 668-677.

killed, and Palestinian fighters being blown up. Additionally, there was a besieged Yasir Arafat, the growing separation barrier, and President George W. Bush describing Ariel Sharon as a "man of peace" – all of which influenced Arab foreign policies – including Libya's – whether by acknowledging the influence of the United States and its role as superpower (out of the desire to contain support for Israel) or seeking to avoid a confrontation with the United States.

Finally, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 by U.S.-led coalition forces prompted a comprehensive review by the Arab states of their previous strategies and policies, and a careful examination of the international reality, fully realizing the consequences of American technological and military superiority.

In all stages of confrontation between the United States and Libya, even at the peak of Libyan-American tensions, the Libyan people never expressed any hatred for the American people. The policy of American sanctions against Libya had placed responsibility on the Security Council and the failure of the official Arab organizations such as the Arab League. Also bearing blame were the successive American regimes, the American media, the inability of the American think tanks and academic institutions to reign in the biased policy-making process and the overwhelming force of electoral calculations and lobbying. Nonetheless, the period of political clashes did not leave a legacy of hatred between the Americans and Libyans as peoples.

Ironically, Libyan-American relations were severed under Republican rule (President Ronald Reagan) and restored under his neoconservative successors (George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice), showing the ability of the American and Libyan leaderships to put aside the past and previous policy blunders.

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The legacy of the clash and mobilization of public opinion during earlier stages necessitates the reestablishment of trust between the two sides while overcoming the forces which still seek to demonize Libya, requiring patience, persistence and the reciprocal belief that the two countries' interests lie in planting the spirit of mutual understanding, forgiveness and respect. However, disagreements will remain between the two countries on a number of issues, especially democracy and human rights.

American-Libyan relations: building a model for strategic relations

The resolution of the Lockerbie case and Libya's announcement on Dec. 19, 2003 that it was voluntarily relinquishing all WMD components worked to ease bilateral tensions. Bush speech praised the WMD decision, saying, "Libya can regain a secure and respected place among the nations and over time achieve far better relations with the United States." Libya was removed from the State Department's list of countries sponsoring terrorism on June 30, 2006, shortly before diplomatic representation was raised to the ambassador level. While these are welcoming steps, this does not mean that relations are as close as they could be; nor does it mean that all of the sources of possible dispute between the two sides have disappeared. The development of a solid strategic relationship is still contingent on Libya's ability to provide the United States with answers to two fundamental issues.

The first issue relates to the future of the nascent economic reform process in Libya and the transition to a market economy with accountability, transparency and a reformed legal system. Some argue that the opening of the Libyan oil market and the increased flow of financial resources to the regime will lead the regime to feel once again that internal pressures for reform are absent and embark on further expansion of the state's role.

The second concerns the Libyan regime's ability to change the nature of the decades-old social contract between the state and society from a welfare or distributive state to a new social contract based on the concept of a liberal democratic state.

Based on these two factors, some question the future of U.S.-Libyan relations and ask whether the current transformation is only a temporary shift. There are three main points of view on the topic:

The first viewpoint argues that this transformation reflects a genuine transformation in Libyan-American relations and is laying the foundation for a new era in bilateral ties. These scholars believe that the transformation is based on the structural factors that pushed both sides toward a friendlier relationship and their relevant national interests. They believe that the United States will preserve the current Libyan regime, or at least not seek to change it, given that the Libyan opposition is weak and hardly offers a viable alternative to the current government. This point of view downplays the significance of any contact that might take place between the United States and the Libyan opposition, viewing such contact only as a tool to pressure the Libyan regime into keeping its promises to the United States and not deviating from its recent shift in foreign policy.

The second point of view claims that the current improvement in relations is only a temporary, transitional stage which will be followed by an American policy of regime

change in Libya, toppling the current government and setting up an alternative regime, as it did in Afghanistan and Iraq. This viewpoint further argues that the current improvement in bilateral relations, or the postponement of regime change, does not mean that this scenario can be ruled out. As evidence, proponents cite the statements of neoconservatives on the link between the lack of democracy in the Arab world and the emergence of terrorism. This point of view also rules out the possibility of Libyan-American relations really significantly improving, since it argues that the current Libyan regime is unwilling or unable to introduce radical changes in political reform or the social contract.

The third point of view claims that future Libyan-American relations will be a combination of the above two scenarios, with the process of normalizing ties continuing but without the United States giving up its means of pressuring and threatening the Libyan regime. This argument is based on the primary determinant in American-Libyan relations being U.S. interests in Libya (decisively renouncing anti-Israeli rhetoric, opening up the Libyan markets – particularly the oil sector – for U.S. companies, and not having ties with any terrorist organizations). The United States would reward Libyan moves in these fields with continued progress toward normalization, though without discarding pressure politics as a means to ensure Libya's commitment to U.S. interests. Those holding this point of view cite the fact that the period since the beginning of liberalization and normalization was not accompanied by an end to U.S. pressure tactics.

Conclusion

Libyan-American relations have seen a notable improvement during the last three years, and though the period of conflict between the two countries did not prevent normalization of relations and the possibility of building stronger ties, the recent improvement does not rule out the possibility of negative relations spurring in the future. Moving too hastily and arbitrarily in opening doors that had been previously closed might not necessarily create the foundation for a stable future relationship.

The improvement in Libyan-American relations came as part of the general improvement in Libyan-Western relations, as a result of a realistic Libyan assessment of developments in the international and regional environment which had forced the reconsideration of Libya's traditional foreign policy. This transformation would not have happened if the Libyan political leadership did not possess a significant degree of pragmatism and an ability to make decisive choices at a vital historical moment with the goal of protecting Libya's greater national interest.

Conserving the transformation in Libya's foreign policy orientation and maximiz-

ing the expected gains by building strategic relationships with the developed world at large, and the United States in particular, will partly depend upon the connection of that transformation to sweeping domestic changes: restructuring of the Libyan economy; reforming the administrative, financial and education systems; and building a strong economy, scientific institutions, an effective bureaucracy and entering into a serious dialogue to emerge out of the backwaters of international marginalization. ■

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