



Middle East Quarterly

FALL 2010

VOLUME 17, NUMBER 4

The Arab Lobby

Mitchell Bard
*Exposing America's
Anti-Israel Lobby*



Steven Rosen
*Europe Is the
Real Arab Lobby*

Burqas in the West

Phyllis Chesler

Banning the Burqa

Benjamin Ismail

*France's Road to the
Burqa Ban*



Mark Wilbanks
and

Efraim Karsh

The "Sons of Iraq"

Interview: Ali Allawi

Iraq's Future

Lee Smith

As Egypt's Mubarak Fades ...

Plus . . .

- *Dissident Watch:*
Syria's Anwar al-Bunni
- *Reviews by Abrahms, Berman, Daadaoui, Ibrahim, Plaut, Schwartz, Silinsky, Williams, and the Editors*



www.MEForum.org

The Middle East Forum works to define and promote American interests in the Middle East and to protect the Constitutional order from Middle Eastern threats. The Forum holds that the United States has vital interests in the region; in particular, it believes in strong ties with Israel and other democracies as they emerge.

- **Intellectually:** Through the *Middle East Quarterly*, staff writings, lectures, and conference calls, the Forum provides context, insights, and policy recommendations.

- **Operationally:** The Forum exerts an active influence through its projects, including Campus Watch, Islamist Watch, the Legal Project, and the Washington Project.

- **Philanthropically:** The Forum distributes nearly \$2 million annually through its Education Fund, helping researchers, writers, investigators, and activists around the world.

The MEF is a publicly supported, nonprofit organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions are tax deductible. For information about membership, please write or call the Middle East Forum, 1500 Walnut Street, Suite 1050, Philadelphia, PA 19102, Tel.: (215) 546-5406, Fax: (215) 546-5409, E-mail: MEF@MEForum.org.

Board of Governors

Irwin Hochberg, Executive Committee Chairman
David P. Steinmann, Executive Committee Vice Chairman
Albert J. Wood, Founding Chairman (1994-2006)

Philadelphia

Robert Guzzardi
Chairman
Edwin Seave
Vice Chairman
Marilyn Stern
Vice Chairman

Jack R. Bershad
Howard M. Casper
Patrick Clawson
Birtan Aka Collier
David E. Edman
Richard J. Fox
Stanley D. Ginsburg
Edward M. Glickman
Lawrence B. Hollin
Ira M. Ingerman
Arthur Karafin
Samuel M. Lehrer
Murray S. Levin
Myrna Linsenberg
Seymour G. Mandell
Michael Mooreville
Jeremy T. Rosenblum
Milton S. Schneider
William Seltzer
Murray H. Shusterman
Edward M. Snider
Ronni Gordon Stillman
Thomas H. Tropp

David V. Wachs
Carroll A. Weinberg
Ele Wood
Joseph S. Zuritsky

New York

Steven Levy
Chairman
Nina Rosenwald
Vice Chairman

Ziad K. Abdelnour
Nira Abramowitz
Wilma G. Aeder
Norman S. Benzaquen
Patricia D. Cayne
Brian T. Decker
David Eisenberg
Roger A. Gerber
Donald G. Ginsberg
Eugene M. Grant
N. Richard Greenfield
Martin Gross
Leon Korngold
David J. Kudish
Joshua Landes
Donald M. Landis
Robert J. Levine
Peter B. Levy
Harley Lippman

Judith Friedman Rosen
Scott S. Rosenblum
Henry Rosenfeld
Josiah Rotenberg
Melvin Salberg
Lawrence Shelley
Orna Shulman
Jonathan Torop
Margo Marbut Train

Boston

Joshua Katzen
Chairman
Richard Calmas
Vice Chairman

Robert Abrams
Howard Bleich
Susan Gardos Bleich
Benjamin Gordon
Brian Grodman
Lawrence K. Grodman
Irene Pipes
Mark H. Rubin
Herman Swartz
Judith Swartz
George A. Violin
Harry C. Wechsler
David Wolf
Maxine Wolf

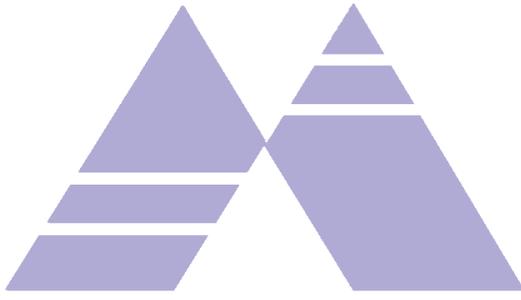
Cleveland

Lawrence Gould
Chairman
David Shifrin
Vice Chairman
Joseph Shafran
Program Chairman
Philip Baskin
Secretary

Yehuda Baskin
Jack Mandel
Dennis Seaman
Michael A. Weiss
Stephen Weiss

Daniel Pipes
Director

Amy Shargel
Managing Director



Middle East Quarterly

FALL 2010

VOLUME 17, NUMBER 4

THE ARAB LOBBY

- 3 **Mitchell Bard**, *The American Component*
An obscure alliance undermines U.S. Middle East interests
- 17 **Steven J. Rosen**, *The European Component*
The road to Washington runs through Paris, London, and Berlin

BAN THE BURQA?

- 33 **Phyllis Chesler**, *The Argument in Favor*
The burqa is not a religious garment but a reactionary political statement
- 47 **Benjamin Ismail**, *France Votes Yes*
After years of debate, the French government outlaws full-face veiling
- 57 **Mark Wilbanks** and **Efraim Karsh**, *How the “Sons of Iraq” Stabilized Iraq*
A predominantly Sunni movement helped turn the tide
- 71 *Interview: Ali Allawi, “Iraq Got the Worst of All Worlds”*
A former Iraqi minister reconsiders the 2003 Iraq war
- 79 *Dateline: Lee Smith, Egypt after Mubarak*
With their president rumored to be terminally ill, Egyptians fear for the future

REVIEWS

- 85 **Max Abrahms**, *What Makes Terrorists Tick?*
Do attackers seek political returns or social gain?
- 87 **Brief Reviews**
The Neo-Taliban ... Iran’s militaries ... Egypt’s politics ... Islamism’s threat
- 96 *Dissident Watch: Simcha Katsnelson, Anwar al-Bunni*
A Syrian human rights lawyer is imprisoned

Editor

Efraim Karsh

Senior Editors

Patrick Clawson

Denis MacEoin

Michael Rubin

Managing Editor

Judy Goodrobb

Publisher and Review Editor

Daniel Pipes

Deputy Publisher

Raymond Ibrahim

Assistant Editor

Hillel Zaremba

Editorial Assistants

William Aquilino, Alessandra Grace

Board of Editors

Fouad Ajami

Johns Hopkins University

David Cook

Rice University

Martin Kramer

The Shalem Center

Timur Kuran

Duke University

Habib C. Malik

Foundation for Human and Humanitarian Rights
in Lebanon

James Phillips

The Heritage Foundation

Steven Plaut

University of Haifa

Dennis Ross

Washington, D.C.

Barry Rubin

Global Research in International Affairs Center

James R. Russell

Harvard University

Franck Salameh

Boston College

Philip Carl Salzman

McGill University

Saliba Sarsar

Monmouth University

Robert B. Satloff

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Sabri Sayari

Sabancı University

Kemal Silay

Indiana University

Lee Smith

Washington, D.C.

Steven L. Spiegel

University of California, Los Angeles

Kenneth W. Stein

Emory University

The Arab Lobby

The American Component

by Mitchell Bard

“That is the best-organized lobby; you shouldn’t underestimate the grip it has on American politics—no matter whether it’s Republicans or Democrats.”¹ This recent comment by the European Union trade commissioner and former Belgian foreign minister, Karel de Gucht, epitomizes the pervasive belief that a Jewish-Zionist-Israel lobby has undue influence on U.S. Middle East policy.

This idea predates the establishment of the state of Israel. For the most part, the discussion was kept behind closed doors and limited primarily to State Department Arabists, but it gradually became popular among those who held a grudge (such as Congressman Paul Findley, who blamed his defeat in a reelection bid in 1982 on the lobby²) or who were open enemies of Israel (e.g., Pat Buchanan).³ The recent publication of Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer’s *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*,⁴ however, gave a patina of academic legitimacy to the long whispered complaints of the anti-Israel establishment.

Walt and Mearsheimer cavalierly dismissed the possibility that U.S. policy might be subject to countervailing influences by those who believe the national interest is best served by distancing the United States from Israel and cultivating ties with the Arab states. They are not alone. Many analysts have ignored or belittled the notion that an Arab lobby exists or has any influence.⁵ Yet one need only look at the first year of the Obama administration to reject Walt and Mearsheimer’s case. How can Obama’s solicitous policy toward the Arabs and hostility toward Israel be understood if the Israel lobby is so omnipotent or if pro-Arab forces are nonexistent? While *The Israel*

Mitchell Bard is the executive director of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise and Jewish Virtual Library. His latest book, *The Arab Lobby: The Invisible Alliance that Undermines America’s Interests in the Middle East* has just been published by HarperCollins.

1 “Commission Distances Itself from Remarks about Jews,” *The Irish Times* (Dublin), Sept. 4, 2010.

2 Paul Findley, “The Open Secret about the Israel Lobby,” *Counterpunch*, Petrolia, Calif., Oct. 16, 2007.

3 “Pat Buchanan: In His Own Words: On American Jews and the Pro-Israel Lobby,” Anti-Defamation League, Sept. 1999.

4 New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2008.

5 See, for example, Khalil M. Marrar, “Lobbying Public Opinion: The Pro-Arab Lobby and the Two-State Solution,” presented at the Annual National Conference of the International Studies Association, San Francisco, Mar. 26-29, 2008; *The Boston Globe*, Aug. 8, 1982; Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby*, pp. 140-6.

Lobby came out before Obama took office, one could as easily look to the hostility displayed toward Israel by the Eisenhower administration after the 1956 Suez War to see the fallacy of the hypothesis.

In reality, the Israel lobby has never had the lobbying playing field to itself. While detractors of Israel see a Zionist behind each

Middle East policy decision, they ignore all those who have been agitating behind the scenes for the adoption of policies favorable to the Arabs or hostile toward Israel. Thus, while Louis Brandeis may have

lobbied Woodrow Wilson for U.S. support for the Balfour declaration, the president's closest advisor, "Colonel" Edward House, vigorously opposed it.⁶ Harry Truman's friend Eddie Jacobson asked for the president's support for Israel but his secretary of state, George Marshall, threatened to vote against Truman if he recognized the newly established state.⁷ Similar examples can be found in the history of every U.S. administration.

The Israel lobby has never had the lobbying playing field to itself.

WHAT IS THE ARAB LOBBY?

The term "Arab lobby" may be somewhat misleading because it suggests that the principal members are Arabs and that their focus is on the Arab world, but Arab Americans are only a small and mostly ineffective part of the overall lobby. Moreover, while one might think that the Arab lobby would reflect the interests of the various Arab states and the Palestinians, it has historically shown little sustained interest in other Arab countries or issues within those coun-

tries. The lobby does not campaign for human rights or better governance in any of these countries; does not defend women, Christians, or other minorities in Arab states; and does not even try to get aid for Arab governments. The only time any interest is shown in an Arab country is if Israel is involved as was the case in the recent Israel-Lebanon war when the lobby expressed great concern for the people of Lebanon. Prior to the event, the lobby never talked about issues such as the Syrian occupation, Hezbollah's takeover of the organs of government, the undermining of democracy, or the massacres perpetrated by Lebanese factions against each other.

Most lobbies focus predominantly on a single issue—for example, the National Organization of Women on abortion rights and choice, the National Rifle Association on second amendment rights and gun control—but the Arab lobby really has two issues, which occasionally overlap. One is based on oil, is pro-Saudi, and is represented primarily by representatives of that government and corporations with commercial interests in the kingdom, including weapons-related firms. Even before an Israel lobby was organized, an Arab lobby that included American missionaries, State Department Arabists, and small organizations of Arab and non-Arab Americans had evolved to build ties with the Arab world and, following the discovery of oil in the region, to secure access to that resource.

The other issue of concern to the Arab lobby is the Palestinian question, which is the exception to the rule of lack of interest in Arab issues. The Palestinian question is the focus for Arab Americans who do not seem, however, to be working together actively and whose approach is primarily negative, aimed at criticizing Israel in an effort to drive a wedge between the United States and the Jewish state. These groups are backed by Christian anti-Zionists, such as Mennonites, Quakers, and a variety of mainline churches, and occasionally other elements of the lobby, such as State Department Arabists, who argue that the Palestinian issue must be resolved for the sake of U.S.-Arab relations.

One of the most important distinguishing

6 Richard Ned Lebow, "Woodrow Wilson and the Balfour Declaration," *The Journal of Modern History*, Dec., 1968, pp. 501-23.

7 Clark Clifford with Richard Holbrooke, "President Truman's Decision to Recognize Israel," *Jerusalem Viewpoints*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, May 1, 2008.

characteristics of the Arab lobby is that it has no grassroots support. While the Israel lobby has hundreds of thousands of active members, and U.S. public opinion polls consistently reveal a huge gap between support for Israel and the Arab nations or the Palestinians, the Arab lobby has almost no foot soldiers or public sympathy. On the other hand, while the Israel lobby is principally extra-governmental, a significant component of the Arab lobby may be part of the U.S. governing power structure. The Arabists, in particular, have been a force whose actions will remain unknown for decades until the State Department declassifies its correspondence and, even then, it is impossible to know how much of their activity will be kept secret for national security reasons, concealed to avoid embarrassment, destroyed purposely or inadvertently, or simply omitted because historians can only publish a tiny fraction of the correspondence produced each year.

THE SAUDI FACTOR

The most powerful part of the Arab lobby is represented almost exclusively by Saudi Arabia and the corporate—especially oil companies—and diplomatic interests that view Saudi well-being as paramount to U.S. economic and security concerns. No other Arab state has any representatives with even marginal clout; in fact, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) often is the most effective lobbyist for Israel's diplomatic partners Jordan and Egypt, supporting both governments' requests for aid and at least tacitly



President Harry Truman (left) meets with Israeli prime minister David Ben Gurion (right) and Abba Eban. Resisting the Arab lobby's pressure, Truman was the first world leader to recognize the newly-established state of Israel in May 1948. When Secretary of Defense James Forrestal reminded him of the importance of Arab oil for U.S. interests, Truman retorted that he would handle the situation in the light of justice, not oil.

approving U.S. arms transfers.

The Saudis put their own interests first even if these interests are in direct conflict with America's national interests. Saudi Arabia's overriding concern has always been the survival of the House of Saud. Everything else—the weakening of Israel, the spread of radical Islam—is secondary. Since the 1930s, the Saudis have succeeded in convincing Washington that its access to oil would be endangered if the U.S. government did not keep the house of Saud happy. Over the years, the threats from Riyadh have changed. Prior to World War II, the Saudis played on U.S. fears that the British would poach their petroleum concessions; after the war, they used the Cold War to their advantage; today, it is the threat from Iran.

As owners of the largest oil reserves in the world and possessors of vast financial resources, it is easy to understand why the Saudis have had such political clout. The most remarkable aspect of the U.S.-Saudi relationship, however, is that policymakers in Washington

Photo will not display.

Ignoring Saudi Arabia's rebuff of his request to support the 1978 Camp David accords—which helped sabotage the best hope for a comprehensive Middle East peace—President Jimmy Carter (second from left, with wife Rosalynn), shown here with King Khalid (center) in Riyadh, January 3, 1978, proceeded to sell the Saudis the most sophisticated fighter plane in the U.S. arsenal.

have kowtowed to the Saudis from the time of the discovery of oil in the kingdom in 1938 and for roughly forty years afterward even though the United States did not then need their oil for its domestic needs. During this period, as today, it seems never to have occurred to anyone in the State Department to demand that the Saudis cooperate in supporting America's interests in democracy, human rights, or the establishment of a Jewish state in exchange for the U.S. security umbrella. As President Truman's political advisor, Clark Clifford, noted in frustration in 1948, the "Arab states must have oil royalties or go broke ... Their need of the United States is greater than our need of them."⁸

Had the principle been established at the outset when the Saudis were dependent on the United States, the history of the region could have been much different. Instead, Washington has consistently given in to what amounts to Saudi blackmail. Officials working out of the State Department have seemed unfazed by their supposed Saudi allies threatening to turn to America's enemies if they did not receive what they wanted. This was especially ironic during the Cold War when the Saudis portrayed themselves as staunch anti-communists; it was partly on this basis that Washington offered them arms and a security umbrella. At the same time, the Saudis would often threaten to go to the communists if an administration did not meet their demands. The threat became a reality in 1987 when the Saudis, frustrated by congressional scrutiny over arms sales, secretly purchased Chinese missiles.⁹ The Reagan administration was infuriated but eventually responded by removing the U.S. ambassador who protested the sale and then offering new weapons to the kingdom.¹⁰

This illustrates another pattern in the relationship. When Washington does seek the Saudis' help, they refuse. Then, instead of punishing such recalcitrance, Washington rushes to make amends by supplying Riyadh with more weapons. This occurred after the Saudis imposed the October 1973 oil embargo. The Saudis repeatedly rebuffed Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's demand to end this economic warfare and only terminated the embargo in March 1974 after Egyptian president Anwar Sadat convinced King Faisal it had become a liability. The Nixon administration responded a month later with an arms sale.¹¹

8 Peter Grose, *Israel in the Mind of America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), p. 270.

9 Robert Shuey and Shirley A. Kan, "Chinese Missile and Nuclear Proliferation: Issues for Congress," Congressional Research Service, Washington, D.C., Nov. 16, 1995.

10 Robert D. Kaplan, *The Arabists: The Romance of an American Elite* (New York: Free Press, 1995), pp. 232-3.

During the Carter administration, the president put his faith in the Saudis to back the Camp David accords, and their failure to do so may have sabotaged the best hope for a comprehensive Middle East peace by ostracizing Egypt and discouraging other Arab states from following in Sadat's footsteps. Jimmy Carter's reaction? Sell the Saudis the most sophisticated fighter plane in the U.S. arsenal.¹² Barack Obama is continuing the pattern: After his personal request for King Abdullah's support for his Arab-Israeli agenda in spring 2009 was unceremoniously rebuffed, the administration announced plans for a new multibillion dollar arms sale in the summer of 2010.¹³

Interestingly, Washington's support for Israel has never been a central concern of the Saudis. In fact, the record shows that a typical meeting with the king would begin with a request that Washington stop supporting the Jewish state, and then the king would continue with "what we really are concerned about is ..."—referring to whomever the Saudis saw as the most immediate threat to their survival at the time.¹⁴ In the 1940s and early 1950s, it was the Hashemites, whom Abdul Aziz ibn Saud had expelled from the Hijaz, and whose revanchist ambitions he constantly feared. From the mid-1950s to 1967, the Saudis' main concern was Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser, whose quest for pan-Arab hegemony was viewed as destabilizing the conservative Arab regimes. This was followed by fear of the Soviets, and since 1979, by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

At the same time, there is a loud, though

ultimately feigned, interest in the Palestinian issue. The Saudis have been vocal opponents of Zionism but have always refrained from threatening Israel directly, sending only token forces to fight in Arab-Israeli wars. The Saudis have shown their supposed commitment to the Palestinian cause by financially backing other countries as well as terrorist groups such as Hamas in their periodic attempts to "liberate Palestine."¹⁵ Riyadh's disposition toward Israel has less to do with sympathy for the Palestinians than antipathy for Jews and the firm belief that a Jewish state has no place in the midst of the Islamic world. The founder of the dynasty, Abdul Aziz ibn Saud, for example, declared, "Our hatred for the Jews dates from God's condemnation of them for their persecution and rejection of Isa [Jesus] and their subsequent rejection of His chosen Prophet [Muhammad]," adding that "for a Muslim to kill a Jew, or for him to be killed by a Jew, ensures him an immediate entry into heaven and into the august presence of God Almighty."¹⁶ Ibn Saud's son, King Faisal, repeated the blood libel of Jews using the blood of non-Jews to make Pass-over matzos and used to give copies of the anti-Semitic tract *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* to his visitors.¹⁷ In 2004, Crown Prince (now king) Abdullah blamed Zionists for an al-Qaeda attack on a Saudi oil facility¹⁸ and, more recently, King Abdullah reportedly told French defense minister Hervé Morin, "There are two countries in the world that do not deserve to exist: Iran and Israel."¹⁹

Washington has consistently given in to what amounts to Saudi blackmail.

11 *Near East Report*, American Israel Public Affairs Committee, Washington, D.C., Sept. 18, 1974; David Long, *The United States and Saudi Arabia: Ambivalent Allies* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), p. 55.

12 Steven Emerson, *The American House of Saud* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1985), pp. 174-5.

13 *The Washington Post*, Jan. 31, 2010.

14 See, for example, Parker T. Hart, *Saudi Arabia and the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 42; The Minister [Childs] in Saudi Arabia to the Secretary of State, Jan. 13, 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (henceforth *FRUS*), vol. V, 1948, p. 209; Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs [Henderson] to the Secretary of State, Jan. 26, 1948, *FRUS*, vol. V, 1948, p. 218; The Minister [Childs] in Saudi Arabia to the Secretary of State, Apr. 24, 1948, *FRUS*, vol. V, 1948, pp. 235-7.

15 Dore Gold, "The Saudi State and Terrorism," Middle East Forum Briefing, Apr. 4, 2003; "Has the Saudi Kingdom Reformed?" *Middle East Quarterly*, Spring 2006, pp. 53-62.

16 British Foreign Office, no. 371/20822 E 7201/22/31 in Elie Kedourie, *Islam in the Modern World* (London: Mansell, 1980), pp. 69-72.

17 *Al-Musawwar* (Cairo), Aug. 4, 1972.

18 *MSNBC Nightly News*, July 26, 2004.

19 *Le Figaro* (Paris), June 30, 2010.

The desire to placate the Saudis has led U.S. presidents to overlook the fact that Saudi Arabia is one of the world's worst human rights abusers. Even Carter, who made human rights a centerpiece of his foreign policy, turned a blind eye to Saudi behavior and, after leaving office, became an apologist for the regime; not coincidentally, the Carter Center became a major beneficiary of Saudi donations.²⁰ The only U.S. president to stand up to the Saudis was John F. Kennedy who demanded that the kingdom put

The establishment of Israel did little to dampen the hostility of the Arabists.

an end to slavery, which was still being practiced in Arabia in the 1960s.²¹ The Saudis complied, albeit temporarily and inconsistently, demonstrating that a determined U.S. president could force changes on the kingdom even if they challenged

the country's cultural norms. It is remarkable to speculate what the region might have become had U.S. administrations shown more determination in the past.

In the past, the Saudis did much of their lobbying on a personal level, leader to leader. As Saudi Arabia's longtime and highly influential ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar ibn Sultan, candidly explained, "If the reputation ... builds that the Saudis take care of friends when they leave office, you'd be surprised how much better friends you have who are just coming into office."²²

Despite their efforts, the Saudis remain unloved by the American people. While they expected Israel to be blamed for the crippling effect of the 1973 embargo on the U.S. economy, the public viewed the Saudis as the culprits. Their public image only grew worse when it was discovered that fifteen of the nineteen 9/11 hijack-

ers proved to be Saudis. In a February 2002 Gallup poll, 64 percent of Americans held unfavorable views of the Saudis. Dislike of the kingdom peaked at 66 percent in 2004 and, in 2010, 58 percent still have mostly or very unfavorable opinions of Saudi Arabia.²³ Small wonder that after the 9/11 attacks, the Saudis embarked on a public relations campaign, spending roughly \$100 million to hire lobbyists and PR consultants²⁴ to convince Americans that they were allies in the war on terror rather than one of the principal sponsors of jihadists. Nor was this a new phenomenon: Saudi attempts to influence future decision makers by propagandizing the education system date back to the late 1960s when they began to invest in American universities, creating chairs, centers, and programs in Arab and Islamic studies to the tune of more than \$130 million (since 1986), including \$20 million contributions to both Harvard and Georgetown in 2005 by Prince Waleed ibn Talal, the king's nephew.²⁵

FOGGY BOTTOM'S MACHINATIONS

Arab states have benefited in the United States from the support of oil companies, defense contractors, and, perhaps most of all, from Arabists within the State Department. This can be seen most readily in the steady antipathy toward the Jewish state expressed by career diplomats at Foggy Bottom.

During the 1930s and 1940s as Washington was beseeched by a growing public outcry to support the aims of the Zionists in Palestine,

23 "Country Ratings," Gallup Poll, Feb. 1-3, 2010.

24 The U.S. Department of Justice Foreign Agents Registration Act lists the following registered on behalf of Saudi interests: Akin, Grump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld, LLP; Boland & Madigan, Inc.; Burson-Marsteller, Cassidy & Associates, Inc.; DNX Partners, LLC; Dutton & Dutton, PC; Fleishman-Hillard; Gallagher Group, LLC; Iler Interests, LP; Loeffler Group, LLP; Loeffler Tuggey Pauerstein Rosenthal, LLP; Loeffler, Jonas & Tuggey, LLP; MPD Consultants, LLP; Patton Boggs, LLP; Powell Tate, Inc.; Qorvis Communications, LLC; Sandler-Innocenzi, Inc.

25 "All Foreign Gifts Report," Department of Education, Washington, D.C., Feb. 13, 2008; *The Washington Post*, Dec. 13, 2005.

20 *NBC News*, July 26, 2004; "Health and Peace Program Donors," Carter Center, Atlanta, Ga., accessed Aug. 31, 2010.

21 Thomas Lippman, "Inside the Mirage: America's Fragile Partnership with Saudi Arabia," Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, New York, June 2, 2004.

22 *The Washington Post*, Feb. 11, 2002.

the Arabists at the State Department became vocal opponents. Many believed that America's national interests would be best served by distancing itself from the Jews of Palestine and working closely with the Arab states, disregarding the more objectionable aspects of their internal affairs.

The debate over partition and the recognition of Israel is a case in point. Though often presented as proof of the Jewish lobby's power, the Arabists' failure to prevent the creation of a Jewish state was not for a lack of trying. In a 1947 memo, William Eddy, U.S. representative in Saudi Arabia, warned Secretary of State George Marshall that partition would be an endorsement of a "theocratic sovereign state characteristic of the Dark Ages."²⁶ Once the majority of the U.N. Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) proposed the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state, Arabists within the administration lobbied to withhold support for the plan. When that failed, they tried to whittle away the borders of the Jewish state by advocating the inclusion of the Negev in the Arab state.²⁷

While the State Department complained about Zionist pressures, it rarely mentioned the lobbying by Arab delegations. When the staunchly anti-Jewish British foreign secretary Ernest Bevin complained about U.S. lobbying at the U.N., Marshall, himself hardly sympathetic to the idea of a Jewish state, noted that "the Arabs also had been bringing pressure to bear



Abdul Aziz ibn Saud (center), founding monarch of Saudi Arabia who laid the foundations of the desert kingdom's influential position in Washington, here with U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt (right), was a religious zealot who believed that "for a Muslim to kill a Jew, or for him to be killed by a Jew, ensures him an immediate entry into heaven."

everywhere."²⁸ Loy Henderson, director of the State Department's Office of Near Eastern Affairs, who was to play a prominent role in attempts to sabotage the U.N. partition plan, admitted that "complaints [were] reaching the White House that our delegates in New York were sitting on their hands while the Arabs and their friends were working."²⁹

In an effort to weaken the Zionists, in 1947, Henderson proposed an arms embargo to the region that hardly affected the Arabs who were armed and trained by Britain. Once the embargo was written into the U.N. truce resolutions, President Truman could not shift policy without ap-

26 Michael Cohen, "William A. Eddy, the Oil Lobby, and the Palestine Problem," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Jan. 1994, pp. 166-80.

27 Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State, Sept. 30, 1947, *FRUS*, 1947, vol. V, p. 1167; Memorandum for the File by Mr. Robert M. McClintock, Nov. 19, 1947, *FRUS*, 1947, vol. V, p. 1271-2; Frank J. Adler, "Review Essay," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, June 1973, p. 418; Harry S. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1956), p. 156.

28 British Memorandum of Conversations, Dec. 17, 1947, *FRUS*, 1947, vol. V, p. 1313.

29 Richard D. McKinzie "Loy W. Henderson Oral History Interview," Washington, D.C., Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, June 14, July 5, 1973.

pearing to undermine efforts to bring the fighting under control,³⁰ and thus a clearly pro-Arab policy was implemented. Contrary to those who maintain that an omnipotent Jewish lobby stifled

Efforts to distance the United States from Israel did not result in any improvement in U.S.-Arab ties.

any debate in the run-up to the partition resolution and in its wake, a vigorous war of persuasion was raging between the two sides, and the Arab lobby's view did at times prevail. For example, while Truman's advisor Clark Clifford prevented the Arabists from subverting parti-

tion, he failed to convince the president to adopt more proactive policies, such as arming the Jews, creating a volunteer international peacekeeping force, or having the U.N. brand the Arabs as aggressors.³¹

The establishment of Israel, its victory in the 1948 war, and U.S. recognition did little to dampen the hostility of the Arabists, who persistently tried to undo what they viewed as the mistakes of the Truman administration.³² By way of doing so, they articulated over the years a number of common themes:

- Support for Israel weakens America's ties with the Arab world.
- Israel, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and/or the Palestinian issue are the root of all problems in the Middle East.
- The United States should pursue an "evenhanded" policy, namely, to shift away from support for Israel and give greater support to the Palestinians and Arab states.
- U.S. pressure can change Israeli policy,

and such leverage should be used to force Israel to capitulate to Arab demands.

- The most important U.S. policy objective is to secure the supply of oil, and to do so, the Arabs must be placated.
- Support for Israel allowed the Soviet Union (and, later, Muslim extremists) to gain influence in the region to the detriment of U.S. interests.
- Support for Israel provokes anti-U.S. sentiment among the peoples of the Middle East and is a cause of terror directed at Americans.
- Israelis don't know what is best for them, and Washington needs to save them from themselves by imposing policies that are really aimed at satisfying U.S. interests in the Arab world.³³

One remarkable aspect of Arabist thinking is its consistent advocacy of policies that have no obvious advantage to U.S. interests apart from placating Saudis or other Arabs. For example, in the wake of the Suez war in 1956, Israel insisted on freedom of navigation in the Red Sea since its blockade by Nasser had been a *casus belli* for the war. Washington supported this position. Saudi King Faisal declared, however, that the Gulf of Aqaba was "one of the sacred areas of Islam," stating he was prepared to defend the area against the Jews, who had allegedly threatened the "approaches to the Holy Places."³⁴

The issue was a red herring since only a tiny fraction of Muslim pilgrims came to Saudi Arabia by sea, and Israel did not interfere with their journey. Saudi charges that Israel had been bombarding their territory were blatant fabrications. Still the State Department pressured Is-

30 Shlomo Slonim, "The 1948 American Embargo on Arms to Palestine," *Political Science Quarterly*, Fall 1979, pp. 497-8.

31 Memorandum by the President's Special Counsel [Clifford], Mar. 6, 1948, *FRUS*, vol. V, pp. 687-96.

32 Kaplan, *The Arabists*, p. 7.

33 See, for example, George Ball, "The Middle East: How to Save Israel in Spite of Herself," *Foreign Affairs*, Apr. 1977, pp. 453-63.

34 Memorandum of a Conversation, Feb. 7, 1957, pp. 101-2, editorial note, Arab-Israeli Dispute 1957, *FRUS*, vol. XVII, p. 498.

rael to tie up its warships in Eilat, and Near Eastern Affairs chief William Rountree wanted them removed from the Red Sea altogether. When the Israelis asked if complying with the U.S. request would influence Faisal's attitude toward the Jewish state, Rountree answered that he did not believe it would alter the Saudi position at all but insisted, nonetheless, that Israel's compliance would somehow contribute to regional stability.³⁵

During his first year in office President Obama pressured Israel to impose a settlement freeze with the idea that this would lead the Saudis and others to make positive peace gestures and bring the Palestinians to the negotiating table. While officials may have earnestly believed this would work when they first devised the idea, it became quickly obvious the Israeli action would not bring about the expected result. Still, the administration continued to insist that settlements were an obstacle to progress toward peace.

NOT A ZERO-SUM GAME

Essentially, Arabists in Washington have viewed U.S. Middle East policy as a zero-sum game in which relations between Washington and Jerusalem and with the Arab states are inversely related. The historical record, however, shows just the opposite. Efforts to distance the United States from Israel did not result in any improvement in U.S.-Arab ties whereas the evolution of a de facto U.S.-Israel alliance coincided with the development of better relations with most Arab states.³⁶ Perhaps the best illustration of this can be seen in actions taken by the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration.

Despite President Eisenhower's initial pur-



Loy Henderson (right), director of the State Department's Office of Near Eastern Affairs and the quintessential "Arabist," pictured here with Jordan's King Hussein (left), March 1959, played a prominent role in the attempt to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state.

suit of policies toward Israel that were unhelpful at best, such as keeping the Jewish state out of military alliances and opposing arms and aid requests and, later, during the Suez crisis, threatening to take a variety of punitive actions if Israel did not withdraw from the Sinai,³⁷ relations with much of the Arab world worsened. The Soviets gained a foothold in the region using Egypt as a proxy to weaken U.S. allies in the late 1950s. The Saudis failed to emerge as a reliable counterweight to promote U.S. interests; U.S. (and British) troops were forced to intervene to

³⁵ Memorandum of a Conversation, Apr. 4, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. XIII, p. 36-8.

³⁶ See, for example, David Pollock, "Actions, Not Just Attitudes: A New Paradigm for U.S.-Arab Relations," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington, D.C., June 2010.

³⁷ President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, Nov. 7, 1956, "Eisenhower Tells Israel to Withdraw from Sinai and Ben-Gurion Responds," Jewish Virtual Library, accessed Sept. 1, 2010.

save pro-Western regimes in Lebanon and Jordan while the pro-Western Iraqi monarchy was overthrown.

By the end of his term, Eisenhower had become disenchanted with the Saudis and concerned with the nationalist and pan-Arabist forces unleashed and stoked by Nasser.³⁸ Oil companies worried that the Nasserites would push for nationalization of their interests and supported the administration's greater emphasis on propping up anti-communist regimes and leaders. Those within the Arab lobby who advised seeking friends among the revolutionary regimes lost influence.

Israel benefited from this perceptual change since it was no longer seen as an obstacle to U.S. policy. In fact, Israel came to be viewed for the first time as a potential asset after the July 1958 coup that ended Iraq's Hashemite dynasty and the growing threat to the Lebanese and Jordanian regimes by the pan-Arabist forces spear-

headed by Nasser. When Jordan's King Hussein felt threatened by his neighbors, Eisenhower agreed to ship vital strategic materials to the kingdom, including petroleum, as part of a joint Anglo-U.S. airlift. Saudi Arabia refused to allow either country to use its air space and even denied access to the U.S.

airfield in Dhahran; instead, the supplies were flown through Israel, which was happy to cooperate.³⁹

This demonstration of Israel's value helped bring about a nearly 180-degree shift in the administration's attitude. This was reflected in a

memorandum submitted on August 19, 1958, to the National Security Council by its planning board:

It is doubtful whether any likely U.S. pressure on Israel would cause Israel to make concessions which would do much to satisfy Arab demands which—in the final analysis—may not be satisfied by anything short of the destruction of Israel. Moreover, if we choose to combat radical Arab nationalism and to hold Persian Gulf oil by force if necessary, then a logical corollary would be to support Israel as the only pro-West power left in the Near East.⁴⁰

Arabist influence continued to diminish with the crisis leading up to the Six-Day War. In June 1967, the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and its Arabist experts were bypassed in favor of the Bureau of International Affairs, run by Joseph Sisco, which took charge of managing the crisis. Ambassador Alfred Atherton recalled,

The impression people had was that this was building up to a life and death struggle for Israel. . . . And therefore it was, I guess, viewed as perhaps not politic to have the bureau of the Department which was perceived to be more on the Arab than the Israeli side, running the crisis.⁴¹

According to Samuel Lewis, a former ambassador to Israel, from the Eisenhower administration through the Johnson years, the dominant view was that Washington's overriding interests were in the Arab world and that Israel was a nuisance. But beginning with Kennedy, presidents became more directly involved in Middle Eastern issues moving into areas that the State Department had hitherto handled. There were now a diversity of voices within the administration, including advocates for Israel. Lewis commented,

After the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the balance of lobbying power began to shift with the gulf Arabs' oil weapon.

38 Lt. Col. Stephen D. Brown, "The Eisenhower Model of Shared War Powers," National War College, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C., 1993, p. 7.

39 "Factors Affecting U.S. Policy toward the Near East," in Abraham Ben-Zvi, *The Origins of the American-Israeli Alliance: The Jordanian Factor* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 31-53.

40 Ibid.

41 Alfred Leroy Atherton, Jr., Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Summer 1990.

Starting with Lyndon Johnson, every president saw Israel as a military ally—an idea reinforced by the Six-Day War. From 1967 on, an unwritten alliance became more of a reality despite Arabist concerns.⁴²

OILING THE ARAB CAUSE

From President Truman through the end of Nixon's first term, the Arab lobby's influence was exerted almost exclusively through the Arabists, Arab embassies, and the oil companies. Meanwhile the Israel lobby, AIPAC, was at the time basically a one-man show run by Isaiah Kenen, which focused all its attention on Congress in order to counter the State Department's Arabists and to try to secure economic and military assistance for Israel. Following the October 1973 Yom Kippur War, those aid figures began to increase dramatically,⁴³ but the balance of lobbying power also began to shift with the introduction of the gulf Arabs' oil weapon.

Contrary to the claims of Walt and Mearsheimer,⁴⁴ the oil industry has always actively participated in the Arab lobby. James Terry Duce, then vice-president of Aramco operations, for example, met with State Department officials on November 4, 1946, to complain about Truman's support for a Jewish state; he issued dire warnings about the fate of American oil concessions, going so far as to suggest that Aramco might have to "convert itself into a British corporation to save its investment."⁴⁵ While the oil companies did express pro-Arab views, they were mostly neutral on Zionism, admitting that King Ibn Saud was more dependent on the United States than the other way around.⁴⁶

Abe Fortas, undersecretary of the interior, told one of the pro-Zionist lobbyists "even the oil companies hardly believe that strong American backing of Zionism would result in a permanent endangering of American interests."⁴⁷ Typically, the oil companies lobbied quietly behind the scenes, careful not to leave a paper trail, but they became more visibly active in the Arab lobby in the 1970s and early 1980s under pressure from the Saudis.

Most dramatically, in May 1973, oil executives from Aramco, Standard Oil of California, Texaco, Exxon, and Mobil met in Geneva with King Faisal who warned them that if they did not take measures to inform the public and government officials about America's "true interests" in the Middle East, they would "lose everything."⁴⁸ A week later, oil company executives flew to Washington to lobby officials in the White House, State Department, and Pentagon. Their message was simple and unequivocal: If U.S. policy toward Israel did not change, "all American interests in the Arab world will suffer."⁴⁹

When the Arab embargo was subsequently imposed, the oil companies collaborated against their own government by complying with the embargo and cutting even more than the 10 percent the Arabs demanded. They were also encouraged to lobby the U.S. government to support the Arab position by the U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia James Akins. Not surprisingly, Akins was fired by Secretary of State Kissinger⁵⁰

American public sympathy is overwhelmingly on the side of Israel.

42 Author's interview with Samuel Lewis, May 22, 2009, Chevy Chase, Md.

43 Jeremy M. Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel," Congressional Research Service, Washington, D.C., Dec. 4, 2009, p. 19.

44 Walt and Mearsheimer, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, pp. 142-6.

45 Cohen, "William A. Eddy, the Oil Lobby, and the Palestine Problem," pp. 166-80.

46 Mitchell G. Bard, *The Water's Edge and Beyond: Defining the Limits to Domestic Influence on United States Middle East Policy* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991), pp. 131-2.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 132.

48 Emerson, *The American House of Saud*, pp. 23, 28; Kenneth C. Crowe, *America for Sale* (New York: Anchor Books, 1980), pp. 150-1; Daniel Yergin, *The Prize* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), pp. 595-6.

49 Emerson, *The American House of Saud*, p. 30.

50 *The New York Times*, July 24, 2010.

for representing the Saudi kingdom more than the United States government.

DIVIDED WE STAND

One element within the Arab lobby that can make some claim to advancing U.S. national interests is the defense industry. For roughly half a century, the United States has sold the Saudis weapons that, for the most part, they could not use and did not need. As Ambassador Hume Horan noted, the Saudis believe in a simple relationship:

We get the arms; you get the oil. Your weapons shops keep producing, and at lower unit costs. From time to time we'll denounce *al-Kiyaan al-Sahyouni*, the Zionist entity, but everyone knows we are not a factor in the Arab-Israeli conflict. You ought to leave well enough alone.⁵¹

The Saudis pay lip service to the Palestinian cause, having provided funding for cam-

Over the last two decades, American Muslims have had no discernible impact on policy.

paigns on the Palestinians' behalf within the United States, and have supported some organizations, such as Americans Near East Refugee Aid and the Council on American-Islamic Relations. This domestic Arab lobby, consisting mainly of Arab Ameri-

cans and Muslims, is also comprised of a small number of former government officials, retired Arabists, and anti-Zionist Christians.

This component of the lobby is limited by a number of factors. One is the relative unpopularity of the Palestinian cause. While today most Americans, like most Israelis, support the creation of a Palestinian state, public sympathy is overwhelmingly on the side of Israel (63 percent

in a February 2010 Gallup poll, compared to 15 percent for the Palestinians).⁵² A second limiting factor in their influence are the divisions among Arabs and Muslims, which carry over to their expatriates and their descendants in the United States. According to the 2000 U.S. census, 1.2 million Americans were of Arab descent. Unlike the Israel lobby, which can stand up for the strengthening of America's relationship with a single nation, it is difficult, if not impossible for Arab Americans to represent all Arabs because Americans of Arab descent come from no fewer than twenty-one countries with conflicting interests and which are often feuding among themselves. As Jawad George, the executive secretary of the Palestine Congress of North America said, "The same things that divide the Arab world divide the Arab-American world."⁵³

For example, there are Arab Americans with a nationalist view who are critical of U.S. policy and supportive of the Palestinian cause as well as those who have a regional or religious orientation making them apathetic or even hostile toward the Arab lobby. Lebanese comprise more than one-third of all Arab Americans,⁵⁴ and Christians from Lebanon, in particular, have very different attitudes about Middle East issues than many other Arabs because of their bitter experience with Muslim and Palestinian organizations in Lebanon. Many Maronites, for example, supported the American Lebanese League (ALL), an anti-Palestinian group that believed U.S. policy should take a tougher stand against the Palestine Liberation Organization and Syria.⁵⁵

Since it is so difficult for these domestic groups to agree on what they support, they focus most of their energy on what they are against.

52 Lydia Saad, "Support for Israel in U.S. at 63%, Near Record High," Gallup, Princeton, N.J., Feb. 24, 2010.

53 Amy Kaufman Goot and Steven J. Rosen, eds., *The Campaign to Discredit Israel* (Washington, D.C.: AIPAC, 1983), p. 6.

54 2000 U.S. Census, U.S. Census Bureau, Suitland, Md., Apr. 1, 2000.

55 Ernest Nasseph McCarus, *The Development of Arab-American Identity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 81.

51 Interview with Hume Horan, Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Nov. 3, 2000.

Rather than support legislation to help Palestinians or improve the lives of Arabs in the Middle East, their agenda focuses on weakening the U.S.-Israel alliance by reducing aid to Israel or forcing Israel to capitulate to Palestinian demands. American Muslims have become more politically active and used the counterterrorism measures taken after 9/11 as a rallying point for asserting their rights, fighting perceived discrimination, and gaining access to the educational system with the aim of influencing what students are taught about the Middle East and Islam.

Over the last two decades, these domestic groups have had greater success in gaining access to decision makers and the media but have had no discernible impact on policy. Their legislative initiatives are routinely rejected, and even one of their leading spokesmen, Hussein Ibish, admitted that numerous Arab-Muslim organizations have been created, but “none of these organizations are particularly strong or effective representatives of the Arab-American community.”⁵⁶

CONCLUSION

The charge of dual loyalty, a throwback to the longstanding anti-Semitic caricature of Jews as lacking true patriotism, is one that Israel’s enemies have never tired of making against the “Is-



In May 1973, Saudi King Faisal (left, here with President Nixon and his wife Pat) told the heads of the main U.S. oil companies that unless they informed their public and government about America’s “true interests” in the Middle East, they would “lose everything.” A week later, these executives warned officials in the White House, the State Department, and the Pentagon that if U.S. policy toward Israel did not change, “all American interests in the Arab world will suffer.”

rael lobby” and Jewish Americans more generally.⁵⁷ Arab lobbyists have been no exception to this rule. It is far easier, after all, to blame a mythological Jewish cabal for their repeated failure to advance an anti-Israel agenda than to concede that one’s arguments are unpersuasive and have, therefore, been rejected by the majority of Americans. In the final tally, it would seem that most Americans would rather support their longest and most loyal Middle Eastern ally—and the only country in the region that shares their democratic ethos and ideals—than heed organizations that have consistently opposed American values such as freedom, democracy, and human rights or which are linked to nations that have, or are seen to have, undermined U.S. security interests.



⁵⁶ Hussein Ibish, lecture, Bahrain Center for Studies and Research, Manama, Oct. 27, 2008.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Stephen M. Walt, “On Dual Loyalty,” *Foreign Policy*, Apr. 2, 2010.

The **only** foreign affairs journal
coming to you **directly** from Jerusalem



Published by the Israel Council on Foreign Relations
icfr@wjc.co.il

The Arab Lobby

The European Component

by Steven J. Rosen

In the early 1980s, there was a palpable concern among staffers at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) of the looming rise of an Arab-American lobby aimed at challenging the pro-Israel community. The National Association of Arab-Americans (NAAA), founded in 1972, was at a high point, and in 1980, former U.S. senator James Abourezk established the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC). In 1985, James Zogby added the Arab American Institute. Some pundits predicted that AIPAC had finally met its match, and a few of AIPAC's own top supporters were alarmed. The Arab-American lobby looked as if it was on an upward trajectory.

AN ARAB-AMERICAN LOBBY?

However, attempts to mobilize Americans of Arab origin in a crusade against Israel have been limited by the fact that this agenda is not a critical interest for the majority. About two thirds of Arab Americans (63 percent) derive from Christian minorities in the Middle East, who have suffered at the hands of extremist Arab-nationalist and Muslim groups in their home countries. More than half of all Arab Americans are Lebanese and Syrian Christians, who know the damage done to Lebanon by Syrian Baathists, Palestinian terrorists, and the Shiite Hezbollah.¹ A third of all Arab Americans are Maronite Christians and are

more faithfully represented by organizations such as the American Lebanese League, devoted to saving Lebanon from Arab extremists, rather than organizations crusading against Israel or supporting the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Only a minority of Arab Americans, then and now, seeks to support organizations whose sole or main purpose is conducting political action against Israel; and some of those who are attracted to the anti-Israel agenda are so radical that such organizations do not want them.

The largest Arab-American group, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), attracts recruits by combating anti-Arab bias and stereotyping inside the United States, a cause understandably closer to the hearts of many mainstream Arab-American families than

Steven J. Rosen served for twenty-three years as a senior official of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. He is now director of the Washington Project of the Middle East Forum.

¹ "Arab Americans," US4Arabs.com, accessed Aug. 16, 2010; "Arab Americans," Arab American Institute, accessed Aug. 16, 2010.

importing into the United States the struggle against Israel that brought so much misery in their countries of origin. The National Association of Arab-Americans, which focused on the Israel agenda, has ceased to exist altogether since it merged into ADC in 2001.² Today, Arab-American organizations are a factor in the Middle East debate but certainly have not risen to a level that can challenge the influence of the American friends of Israel.

A PETRODOLLAR LOBBY?

Another issue that raised concern in the pro-Israel community in the 1980s was the growth of a “petrodollar lobby” in the United States, fueled by the giant oil companies and embassies of Middle East countries such as Saudi Arabia, awash in a flood of money since the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) quadrupled oil prices in the 1970s. AIPAC founder Isaiah Kenen had described the Arab lobby as a “petro diplomatic complex.”³ Steven Emerson wrote about the petrodollar lobby in his 1985 best-seller, *The American House of Saud*, revealing how Arab embassies and firms

that seek Arab contracts employ prominent U.S. figures such as former Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman William Fulbright, former White House aide Frederick G. Dutton, former secretary of the treasury William Simon, former Texas governor

The Arabs consider Europe to be the soft underbelly of the U.S. alliance with Israel.

John Connally, former budget director Bert Lance, and former vice president Spiro Agnew.

Yet it is difficult to see significant evidence of the impact of the petrodollar lobby in the Arab-Israeli sphere or any major effort on their part to interfere in the bilateral relationship between the

United States and Israel. Oil firms, Arab embassies, and their lobbyists do have considerable influence in the sphere of energy policy, and on some Persian Gulf issues, including arms sales to Arab gulf states.⁴ But their main focus is on the rich and comparatively moderate Arab countries, not Israel’s less prosperous neighbors such as Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and the Palestinians.⁵ And they have shown no signs of seeking to do battle against AIPAC and the friends of Israel. In fact, on a few select projects (notably Turkey policy and the Baku-Ceyhan Caspian pipeline), AIPAC and their interests have aligned and the two lobbies have in fact cooperated with each other. Even when they differed, as on Iran, it was a clash of interests about economic sanctions rather than an ideological dispute about Iran itself.

EUROPE AS THE REAL ARAB LOBBY

Long experience in Washington leads to a different and somewhat surprising conclusion. The strongest external force pressuring the U.S. government to distance itself from Israel is not the Arab-American organizations, the Arab embassies, the oil companies, or the petrodollar lobby. Rather, it is the Europeans, especially the British, French, and Germans, that are the most influential Arab lobby to the U.S. government. The Arabs know this, so their preferred road to Washington often runs through Brussels or London or Paris. Nabil Shaath, then Palestinian Authority “foreign minister,” said in 2004 that the European Union is “the ally of our choice.”⁶ The Arabs consider Europe to be the soft underbelly of the U.S. alliance with Israel and the best way to drive a wedge between the two historic allies.

The Europeans are particularly formidable in their influence over U.S. Middle East policy because of four advantages. First, although there

2 “Press Statement on ADC NAAA Merger,” Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee, Dec. 29, 1999.

3 Isaiah Kenen, *The Jewish Digest*, Dec. 1975.

4 Steven Emerson, *The American House of Saud* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1985).

5 Ibid.

6 *Ha'aretz* (Tel Aviv), Jan. 9, 2004; Reuters, Jan. 9, 2004.

exist subtle differences, many European leaders share a broad set of common beliefs about Israel, the Palestinians, the Arab world, and the Middle East conflict that are considerably closer to the Arab perspective than to Jerusalem's point of view, and closer to the Arab end of the spectrum than the prevailing views of U.S. policymakers.

Second, they—especially representatives of Britain, Germany, and France—have easier and closer access to U.S. officials up to and including the president than do either the Arabs or the Israelis.

Third, the Europeans couch their presentations within a wider framework of shared values and interests and mutual trust with the United States, so the message is taken more seriously than if it came from an unelected leader of an Arab society vastly different from the United States.

Fourth, U.S. officials believe that it is in the national interest to keep the European allies happy, lest they change to an independent European policy toward the Middle East, falling under the sway of such Europeanists as former European Union commissioner for external affairs Christopher Patten. Thus, for example, Patten said in July 2010, "The default European position should not be ... if the Americans don't do anything, to wring our hands. We should ... be more explicit in setting out Europe's objectives and ... try to implement them."⁷

The direct access to the president that is available to the prime minister of the U.K., the president of France, and the chancellor of Germany has less to do with the personal chemistry that may exist between them and any given U.S. president than with the objective importance of their countries to the United States. Britain, France, and Germany are three of the top six economies in the world and three of the top six military powers, as



ranked by defense expenditures.⁸ Two of them—France and Britain—are among the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council who hold the power to veto. The same two are among the world's leading nuclear powers. Four European countries—France, Germany, Britain, and Italy—sit among the Group of Eight (G8), a forum also including the United States, Canada, Russia, and Japan. The British, French, and German governments have the greatest influence over the foreign policy of the European Union and the greatest influence over Europe's voice in the Middle East Quartet (which consists of the United States, the EU, Russia, and the U.N.).

The United States also has a longer and deeper history of shared values and common interests with the major European countries, and fewer conflicting interests, than with Russia, China, or any Arab nation. For sixty-five years, Britain, France, and Germany have been our key allies in the United States' principal military and

7 *The Guardian* (London), July 18, 2010.

8 "Military Defense Spending and Budgets by Country," GlobalFirepower.com, accessed Aug. 16, 2010.

Photo will not display.

In August 1991, British prime minister John Major (right) visited George H.W. Bush (left) at the Bush family summer home in Maine where he persuaded the president to withhold loan guarantees from Israel in order "to give peace a chance."

political alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Their opinions are stated in a moderate tone and are deemed to be more reasonable than the majority of Arab countries. There is a presumption on both sides that they are America's principal partners, the ones whose interests Washington must always take into account, and who can be expected to give greater deference to America's own needs.

This presumption of shared interests also gives European counterparts privileged access and enhanced credibility with senior members of the U.S. bureaucracy at the National Security Council, the Department of State, the Pentagon, and within the intelligence community and other agencies. Assistant secretaries, office directors, and senior advisers give special weight to the opinions of their French, German, and British counterparts and spend more time with them than they do with the Arabs. These Europeans also have easy access to members of Congress and their senior staffs.

1,000 LOBBYISTS VS. ONE LONELY GUY

A dramatic example of how European intervention can drive a wedge between the United States and Israel occurred nearly twenty years

ago in the sharp confrontation between President George H.W. Bush and Jerusalem. The untold story about this was the role of a European leader, British prime minister John Major, in provoking what may have been the worst episode ever to occur between a U.S. president and the government of Israel. It was a famous clash but one that might well not have occurred but for the European leader's intervention.⁹

The Kuwait war had just ended in 1991, and President Bush announced on March 6 his intention to convene an international conference on peace in the Middle East.¹⁰ At the same time, the Soviet Union was in its final stages of collapse, and Soviet Jews who had

been prevented from emigrating were flooding out. More than 200,000 had already arrived in Israel, and a tidal wave of more than one million was expected to follow imminently. Israel faced grave challenges to absorb such an enormous influx, equal to 20 percent of its existing population. On May 5, 1991, the Israeli ambassador to the United States, Zalman Shoval, announced that Israel would soon ask Washington for \$10 billion in loan guarantees to help provide housing for one million Soviet immigrants expected to arrive during the next five years.¹¹

The Palestinians feared that the new immigrants would settle in the disputed territories.¹² President Bush and his secretary of state, James A. Baker, declared that if any new loan guarantees were to be granted they would have to be linked to a commitment by Israel not to use the money in the territories.¹³ A mechanism would

9 Donald Neff, "Israel Requests \$10 Billion in U.S. Loan Guarantees for Soviet Immigrants," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, Apr./May 1995, pp. 79-80.

10 George H.W. Bush, address before joint session of Congress, Mar. 6, 1991.

11 Neff, "Israel Requests \$10 Billion."

12 *The New York Times*, Jan. 31, 1990.

13 Neff, "Israel Requests \$10 Billion"; *The Christian Science Monitor*, Jan. 11, 2010.

have to be found to ensure that the loan guarantees would not be used to support settlement activity, lest the international conference announced by the president be undermined.

To permit time to find a formula, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir agreed to delay Israel's official request for the loan guarantees for three months until September 6.¹⁴ During the summer of 1991, Secretary Baker made numerous trips to the region, looking for a way to avoid a collision between the loan guarantees and the peace process.¹⁵ A few AIPAC colleagues and I were involved in some of the behind-the-scenes negotiations, conducted primarily by Elyakim Rubinstein, the Israeli government secretary, Secretary Baker and his staff, and Senator Robert Kasten, Jr. (Republican of Wisconsin) on behalf of pro-Israel members of Congress, and Ambassador Shoval.

By mid-August, we were relieved to learn, via communication with Baker and his staff, that a solution acceptable to Washington had been devised. The president had not yet approved it, but Baker was confident that he had a formula that would be acceptable to all sides. For AIPAC, this was a matter of paramount importance because it affected the fate of a million imperiled Jews, a historic effort to initiate a peace process, and the bilateral relationship between Israel and its most important ally.

George H.W. Bush was vacationing at his family's summer home in Kennebunkport, Maine, in late August 1991 when British prime minister John Major and his wife Norma visited. It was the kind of informal quality time directly with the president, unmediated by aides and advisers, that makes European leaders so influential on issues like the Middle East. Major had just told the Egyptian press that Israeli settlements, including those in East Jerusalem, were "illegal" and "damaging" to the peace process, and he

wanted Bush to stand up to Israel.¹⁶ Baker was pressing the president to compromise, but the British leader urged him to take an absolute stand.

Bush returned from Kennebunkport with his mind changed according to subsequent reports from U.S. officials. To Baker's surprise, the president rejected the package of assurances the secretary had carefully assembled and decided to throw down the gauntlet to Israel and its supporters. On September 6, 1991, he asked Congress for a 120-day delay on the loan guarantees "to give peace a chance."¹⁷

Six days later, Bush went a step further. On September 12, more than 1,000 Jewish leaders from around the country descended on Capitol Hill to lobby lawmakers for the loan guarantees. President Bush responded by calling a news conference the same day to warn that he would veto loan guarantees if Congress insisted on approving them despite his plea for a 120-day delay. He also criticized the pro-Israeli lobbyists, saying,

We're up against very strong and effective ... groups that go up to the Hill ... There were something like a thousand lobbyists on the Hill working the other side of the question. We've got one little guy down here doing it. ... The Constitution charges the president with the conduct of the nation's foreign policy ... There is an attempt by some in Congress to prevent the president from taking steps central to the nation's security. But too much is at stake for domestic politics to take precedence over peace.¹⁸

The presumption of shared interests gives Europeans privileged access with members of the U.S. bureaucracy.

Asked what was the lowest point in the his-

14 Leon T. Hadar, "Showdown at the Settlements Corral: Can Obama Remake the Bush-Baker Classic?" *Foreign Policy*, Mar. 25, 2010.

15 "The Arab-Israeli Peace Process Progress Report - 8 Apr. 1992," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem, Apr. 8, 1992.

16 "Al-Aqsa Intifada," The Jerusalem Forum, Amman, accessed Aug. 16, 2010.

17 *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 7, 1991.

18 Neff, "Israel Requests \$10 Billion."

tory of U.S.-Israel relations, many experts would pick this clash over the loan guarantees.¹⁹ It was, at the very least, one of the most serious set-

backs in the relationship. But the role of a British prime minister in undoing months of effort by the mediators and instigating the clash has never been exposed until now. It is an example of the way a key European can interact with the highest

decision-maker in the United States and move him toward the Arab point of view and away from Israel.

Europe depends more heavily on Arab trade and oil than does the United States.

EUROPE IS CLOSER TO THE ARABS

This kind of European influence is difficult to track because it occurs behind-the-scenes, invisible to the public. It covers a wide range of Middle East issues: pushing Washington to pressure the Israelis to make concessions to the Palestinians; urging engagement with terrorist organizations such as Hamas on the theory that it will moderate them; getting Washington to restrain Israeli security measures such as the “fence,” targeted killings, the blockade of Gaza, and allegedly excessive use of force; and provoking intensified opposition to Israeli settlement activity, especially in Jerusalem.

There are many suppositions why Europeans tilt against Israel and toward the Arabs. For one thing, the Middle East is a place where Europeans can flaunt their foreign policy independence from the United States without responsibility for causing catastrophic results because they assume that the United States will protect Israel from any dire consequences such may produce. For another, Europe depends more heavily on trade with the Arab world and on Arab oil exports than does the United States.

For example, the Arab gulf states are a \$300 billion import market for world products,²⁰ compared to Israel’s \$50 billion imports.²¹ Europe may also have a desire to appease the “strong horse” in the region (e.g., Israel has but one vote in the U.N.; the Arabs have twenty-five votes, the Muslim nations, fifty votes). Then there is the guilt among many Europeans over their discredited imperial past, leading them to falsely view Israelis as oppressing Third World peoples. Then, again, it may be the growing influence of Europe’s own Muslim populations (e.g., Arabs in France, Turks in Germany, South Asians in Britain) and their need to keep such segments of their domestic populations as quiescent as possible. Some analysts suggest that there may also be an element of satisfaction at being free to censure Jews in Israel, relieving European guilt over responsibility for the Holocaust. Finally, it may be that the Europeans simply do not understand that Israel is a democracy at war, living in a mortally dangerous neighborhood, which must act in self-defense in ways that may seem excessive to onlookers in a benign environment such as twenty-first-century western Europe (even though the Western democracies and the United States have used harsher means than Israel in wars far removed from their own territory).

DEADLINES FOR A PALESTINIAN STATE

One of the things the Europeans want from Washington is intensified pressure on Jerusalem to make concessions in peace negotiations, in order to get an agreement with the Palestinians. Europeans like the idea of deadlines, international conferences, verbal and economic pressure on Israel, and other devices, to dislodge the Israeli government from what they tend to see as its “intransigence.”

19 *Foreign Policy*, Mar. 25, 2010.

20 “GCC: Trade in Goods,” Europa, European Union, Brussels, accessed Aug. 19, 2010.

21 “Middle East: Israel, Economy,” *2010 World Fact Book*, U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, McLean, Va., Aug. 3, 2010.

For example, in 2002, the Europeans hatched the idea of a “road map” with deadlines for the creation of a Palestinian state to force Israeli-Palestinian negotiations to a conclusion. On September 17, 2002, European officials presented a plan to Washington that they had drafted with Palestinian participation and endorsement.²² Jerusalem strenuously objected to deadlines that ignored Palestinian noncompliance with past signed obligations, and U.S. officials expressed reservations about the European approach because the blueprint was too detailed at too early a stage.²³ But Secretary of State Colin Powell, nonetheless, joined the EU, the secretary general of the United Nations, and Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov in signing the Quartet statement announcing “a concrete, three-phase implementation road map that could achieve a final settlement within three years.”²⁴ German foreign ministry spokesman Andreas Michaelis said that the content of the Quartet pact was “nearly identical” to proposals put forward by EU foreign ministers.²⁵ EU Middle East envoy Miguel Angel Moratinos said it was “a European idea and not an American idea.”²⁶ It was a vehicle for European and U.S. pressure on Israel.

Washington was able to condition the road map deadlines, however, by insisting that the plan be “performance based.” While the road map announced “clear phases, timelines, target dates, and benchmarks,”²⁷ the Bush administration forced the Quartet partners to agree that

progress between the three phases would be strictly based on the parties’ compli-

22 Reuters, Sept. 17, 2002.

23 *Ha'aretz*, Sept. 18, 2002.

24 “Quartet Roadmap to Israeli-Palestinian Peace,” MidEast Web, Rehovot, Sept. 17, 2002.

25 Agence France-Presse, Sept. 18, 2002.

26 “Chronological Review of Events Relating to the Question of Palestine, November 2002,” United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), New York, accessed Aug. 16, 2010.

27 “Quartet Roadmap to Israeli-Palestinian Peace,” MidEast Web, Rehovot, Apr. 30, 2003.



French foreign minister Bernard Kouchner rode roughshod over Israel’s political and security sensibilities by suggesting that the international community recognize a Palestinian state even without an agreed border and urging Hamas’s participation in the negotiations.

ance with specific performance benchmarks to be monitored and assessed by the Quartet ... Progress ... will be based upon the consensus judgment of the Quartet of whether conditions are appropriate to proceed, taking into account performance of both parties.²⁸

However, by 2010, the road map has still not produced a Palestinian state, and the Europeans are again growing impatient about the slow pace of negotiations. European leaders are beginning to revert to their original concept of deadlines and a date certain to force an earlier result. In July 2009, Europe’s foreign policy chief Javier Solana called for the U.N. Security Council to recognize a Palestinian state by a certain deadline even if Israelis and Palestinians had failed to agree among themselves:

After a fixed deadline, a UN Security Council resolution should proclaim the adoption of the two-state solution ... set a calendar for implementation ... [and] accept the Palestinian state as a full member of the UN ... If the

28 “Quartet Statement on the Middle East,” European Union @ United Nations, European Commission, Sept. 17, 2002.

parties are not able to stick to it [the timetable], then a solution backed by the international community should be put on the table.²⁹

Solana's plan is a classic example of the pressure paradigm: Frustrated by the slow pace of direct negotiations between the parties, the world powers seek to dictate a final status outcome, especially to Israel.

French foreign minister Bernard Kouchner moved in the same direction in February 2010: "One can imagine a Palestinian state being ... recognized by the international community, even before negotiating its borders. I would be tempted by that."³⁰ Kouchner and his Spanish counterpart Moratinos wrote that the European Union "must not confine itself to the ... outlines of the final settlement;" it "should collectively recognize the Palestinian State ... There is no

more time to lose. Europe must pave the way."³¹

The EU as a whole has not gone this far yet. In November 2009, the Palestinians formally asked the EU to urge the U.N. Security Council to recognize a unilaterally declared state,³² only to be told that conditions were not yet ripe for such

a move.³³ But in March 2010, under EU pressure, the Quartet set a 24-month deadline for final settlement of the conflict and the creation of an independent Palestinian state.³⁴ Kouchner said: "France supports the creation of a viable, independent, democratic Palestinian state ... by the first quarter of 2012."³⁵

ENGAGEMENT WITH TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS

Another persistent theme of European policy is pressure on U.S. administrations to engage with terrorist organizations on the theory that such engagement will moderate their behavior.

The PLO: For years, the U.S. government had a strict policy of not negotiating with the PLO until it renounced terror. The Ford administration affirmed it in writing in 1975: The United States "will not recognize or negotiate with the PLO so long as the PLO does not recognize Israel's right to exist and does not accept U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338."³⁶ In 1985, President Reagan signed it into law.³⁷ In November 1988, Yasser Arafat finally bowed to the U.S. conditions and renounced armed struggle, and Reagan authorized the first contacts between U.S. officials and the PLO.³⁸

The Europeans never accepted the idea that recognition of the PLO should be conditioned on it renouncing terror and accepting Israel's right to exist. Fully eight years before Arafat seemingly renounced terror and recognized Israel, the European Economic Community, including the governments of Britain, France, and Germany, warned Washington in the 1980 Venice declaration, that the PLO had to "be associated with [peace] negotiations ... to exercise fully [the Palestinian] right to self-determination."³⁹ Throughout the period that U.S. administrations shunned the PLO as a form of pressure to induce it to renounce terror, European leaders condoned contact with the organization and various forms of recognition and tried to move the U.S. policy.⁴⁰

Several European countries have told Washington that Hezbollah is a legitimate Lebanese political party.

29 Reuters, July 12, 2009.

30 *Ibid.*, Feb. 21, 2010.

31 Bernard Kouchner and Miguel Angel Moratinos, "A Palestinian State: When?" *Le Monde* (Paris), Feb. 23, 2010.

32 *The Guardian*, Nov. 16, 2009.

33 Voice of America, Nov. 17, 2009.

34 "Statement by Middle East Quartet," U.N. Secretary General, New York, Mar. 19, 2010.

35 *Palestine Note* (Washington, D.C.), July 27, 2010.

36 Israel-United States Memorandum of Understanding, *Congressional Record*, Washington, D.C., Sept. 1, 1975.

37 *The International Security and Development Cooperation Act of 1985*, 22 U.S.C. 2151 note, Public Law 99-83, sect. 1302, Oct. 1, 1985.

38 "U.S. opens dialogue with PLO - Ronald Reagan, George Shultz statements," U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., Dec. 14, 1988.

39 "Venice Declaration," archives, The State of Israel, Jerusalem, June 13, 1980.

Hezbollah: A similar tension exists today between European and U.S. policies toward Hezbollah. The U.S. State Department designated Hezbollah as a foreign terrorist organization in 1997,⁴¹ and U.S. officials have repeatedly called on EU governments to implement a similar ban to allow their own law enforcement and intelligence agencies to curb Hezbollah operations.⁴² Hezbollah's secretary general Hassan Nasrallah publicly admitted that if the EU did this, "our funding [and] moral, political, and material support will ... dry up."⁴³ But EU foreign policy chief Solana claimed in July 2006 that the EU did not have enough evidence to determine whether Hezbollah should be listed as a terror organization. Two-hundred and thirteen members of Congress wrote to Solana in protest.⁴⁴ In June 2009, Solana went even further and met with a Hezbollah official who had been elected to the Lebanese parliament, saying that "Hezbollah is a member of the Lebanese society."⁴⁵

Likewise, several European countries, led by France, have told Washington that Hezbollah is a legitimate Lebanese political party with a military wing, not primarily a terrorist organization, as if the idea of an armed political party is not a contradiction in terms.

In 2005, French president Jacques Chirac rebuffed a U.S. request to add Hezbollah to the EU terrorist blacklist, arguing that it is an important part of Lebanese society.⁴⁶ In 2006, Italian foreign minister Massimo D'Alema said that



Hezbollah's secretary general Hassan Nasrallah publicly admitted that without European Union aid and backing, "our funding [and] moral, political, and material support will ... dry up."

"apart from their well-known terrorist activities, they also have political standing and are socially engaged."⁴⁷ In July 2007, French foreign minister Kouchner hosted a meeting that included Hezbollah in an effort to broker a Lebanese political compromise, in spite of objections expressed by ninety-one U.S. congressmen. A Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson declared, "Hezbollah is an important political group [that should be] fully integrated into the political scene."⁴⁸ The spokesperson was prompted to make this statement only two years after the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik al-Hariri, for which Hezbollah leader Nasrallah has stated that he expects a U.N. tribunal to indict members of his group,⁴⁹ and twenty-two years after the October 1983 attack on the Beirut barracks where fifty-eight French paratroopers were killed,⁵⁰ an act for which

40 Rory Miller, "The PLO factor in Euro-Israeli relations, 1964-1992," *Israel Affairs*, Oct.-Dec. 2004, pp. 123-55, fnt. 33.

41 "Hezbollah," International Terrorist Symbols Database, accessed Aug. 17, 2010.

42 "Adding Hezbollah to the EU Terrorist List," hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C., June 20, 2007.

43 Muriel Asseraf, "Prospects for Adding Hezbollah to the EU Terrorist List," American Jewish Committee, New York and Washington, D.C., Oct. 1, 2007.

44 Softpedia, Aug. 2, 2006; European Jewish Press (Brussels), Aug. 1, 2006.

45 France 24 TV news, June 14, 2006.

46 *Ha'aretz*, Aug. 2, 2005.

47 *Egypt.com News* (Cairo), Apr. 15, 2009.

48 Briefing, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris, July 10, 2007.

49 Reuters, July 22, 2010.

50 Pierre Tristam, "The 1983 Attack on U.S. Marines in Lebanon," About.com, accessed Aug. 17, 2010; "23 October 1983: A Blast that Still Echoes," U.S. Naval Institute, Annapolis, no. 22, Oct. 2009.

Hezbollah leader Imad Mughniyah was indicted by a U.S. grand jury in 1985⁵¹ and for which a U.S. federal judge found Hezbollah to be guilty in 2003.⁵²

Although the Europeans may not yet have succeeded in getting Washington to accept Hezbollah as a legitimate political party, they have contributed to an environment in which such a shift will be a growing temptation for U.S. leaders as Hezbollah tightens its noose around Lebanon.

Hamas: European policy toward Hamas

**Europe affected
U.S. policy on
Israel's security
fence by funding
the Negotiation
Support Unit
of the PLO.**

is somewhat different than its stance toward Hezbollah. Under U.S. pressure, the military wing of Hamas was put on the EU terror list in December 2001,⁵³ and its "political" wing was added to the list in September 2003.⁵⁴ Hamas's violent takeover of Gaza in June 2007 placed con-

flicting pressures on the Europeans. The violence of the Hamas putsch, the organization's fierce ideological doctrine, and the firing of thousands of Qassam rockets into Israel since the Gaza takeover,⁵⁵ cast doubts even among the most gullible Europeans that the organization was in fact evolving in a moderate direction. But the reality that Hamas has control over the people of Gaza, a population for whom many Europeans feel a special responsibility, reinforces the belief that it must be deemed a partner, both for the delivery of humanitarian aid (even if a terrorist organization might siphon off funds) and for political negotiations over the future of Gaza.

Many Europeans still believe that engagement with Hamas will result in a moderation of its position; for them, the terror listing is an impediment. In August 2007, Italian prime minister Romano Prodi called for dialogue with Hamas:

Hamas exists. We should not ignore this fact. It's a complex structure that we should help to evolve toward pro-peace positions ... One must push for dialogue so that it happens ... There will be no peace in the Middle East as long as the Palestinians are split in two.⁵⁶

Javier Solana, then the European Union's foreign policy chief, said in 2006 that it was "not impossible" for Hamas to change. "I don't think the essence of Hamas is the destruction of Israel. The essence of Hamas is the liberation of the Palestinians."⁵⁷ This idea is disputed by statements by Hamas itself, reiterating its long-standing commitment to Israel's destruction as a prerequisite to the establishment of an Islamic state in the whole of Palestine.⁵⁸

French foreign minister Kouchner thinks there will not be an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement without Hamas at the table. He said in January 2009 that "we realized this long ago—that Hamas was one of the interlocutors" in the Middle East peace process and that "we believe we will have to talk to them when they ... agree to start negotiations." A ministry spokesman said that Paris would be ready to talk to a Palestinian unity government that included Hamas as long as it "respects the principle of the peace process."⁵⁹

Lord Patten, EU commissioner for external relations, 2000-04, says the sole condition for talks with Hamas should be an agreement to a cease-fire even if Hamas refuses to accept past signed agreements.⁶⁰ Massimo D'Alema, Italy's foreign minister, 2006-08, believes that Hamas is more like the Irish Republican Army (IRA) than

51 Muhammad Sahimi, "The Fog over the 1983 Beirut Attack," *Frontline*, Public Broadcasting Service, Oct. 24, 2009.

52 *USA Today*, May 30, 2003.

53 "Freezing Funds: List of Terrorists and Terrorist Groups," Europa, European Union, Brussels, Dec. 27, 2001.

54 *Journal of the European Union*, C70E/140, Mar. 20, 2004.

55 "The Hamas Terror War against Israel," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed Aug. 17, 2010.

56 *European Jewish Press*, Aug. 13, 2007.

57 "EU's Solana: 'Hamas Doesn't Want to Destroy Israel,'" *Jihad Watch*, Oct. 30, 2006; Israel News Agency (Jerusalem), Jan. 15, 2009.

58 Reuters, Mar. 12, 2007.

59 France 24 TV news, Jan. 21, 2009.

60 *The Guardian*, July 18, 2010.

akin to al-Qaeda.⁶¹ Sweden granted a visa to a Hamas minister in 2007,⁶² and the former Finnish foreign minister, Erkki Tuomioja, claimed that Hamas “is not the same party it was” before it won the 2006 elections.⁶³ Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the EU’s external relations commissioner, 2004-09, announced that she would review the EU ban on direct aid to the Hamas-led Palestinian government⁶⁴ though she backed away from this position after Hamas seized control of Gaza and arrested Fatah officials in June of 2007.⁶⁵

These European voices advocating political negotiations with Hamas have not yet convinced either EU officials or Washington. The main obstacle is not Jerusalem’s objections but reluctance to undermine the Palestinian Authority (PA) headed by Mahmoud Abbas and Salam Fayyad. But if the “moderates” led by these two slip, resistance to pressure from supporters of negotiations with Hamas may begin to erode. Many Europeans may simply not have the fortitude for a long struggle with implacable foes and may be easily lulled into wishful thinking that the West can moderate Islamic extremists simply by talking to them.

ISRAEL’S SECURITY FENCE IS “ILLEGAL”

A third continuing theme of the Europeans is that many of the measures that Israel employs to assure its security are excessive and dispro-

61 *YNet* (Tel Aviv), Aug. 29, 2006; *The Irish Times* (Dublin), Jan. 28, 2009.

62 Rory Miller, “Why the European Union Finally Sidelined Hamas,” *inFocus Quarterly*, Fall 2007.

63 *EUobserver* (Brussels), Sept. 1, 2007.

64 *European Jewish Press*, May 14, 2007.

65 Miller, “Why the European Union Finally Sidelined Hamas.”

Photo will not display.

Israel’s security fence, which slashed Israeli terror casualties from hundreds of dead and thousands wounded in each of the first three years after the launch of Arafat’s terror war in September 2000 (euphemized as al-Aqsa intifada), to fewer than ten fatalities per annum in subsequent years, has been sharply criticized by the European Union.

portionate if not actual violations of international law. This is how Europe sees Israel’s security barrier, its targeted killings of known terrorists, its blockade of Gaza, its campaign against Hezbollah in Lebanon, and its settlements in the West Bank. Europeans are constantly urging Washington to restrain Israel.

Israel’s security fence against terrorist infiltration, under construction since 2003, has strong support among the Israeli public because the barrier has been effective in preventing suicide attacks. A recent public opinion poll finds that “it is hard to find any issue in Israel about which there is so wide a consensus.”⁶⁶ When there was no fence, during the first three years after the launch of Arafat’s al-Aqsa *intifada* in September 2000, Israel suffered ninety-three suicide attacks that left 447 Israelis dead and 4,343 Israeli civilians wounded. In the most recent four years, since most of the fence has been completed, the number of attacks has declined to

66 *YNet*, June 7, 2007.

fewer than five a year, and the number of Israelis killed by terrorists has averaged fewer than ten per year.⁶⁷

Washington has acknowledged the importance of the barrier for Israel's security but expressed concern about its route wherever it deviates from the pre-1967 line.⁶⁸ In the words of President George W. Bush:

The barrier being erected by Israel as a part of its security effort must be a security, rather than political, barrier. And its route should take into account, consistent with security needs, its impact on Palestinians not engaged in terrorist activities ... It should be temporary rather than permanent, and, therefore, not prejudice any final status issues, including final borders.⁶⁹

The Europeans, on the other hand, have been unanimous and firm in opposing the construction of the fence since its inception. On November 18, 2003, the European Council urged

Israel "to stop and reverse the construction of the so-called security fence inside the occupied Palestinian territories, including in and around East Jerusalem, which is in departure of the armistice line of 1949," adding that the fence was not only unacceptable but also "in

contradiction to the relevant provisions of international law."⁷⁰ On July 20, 2004, all twenty-five members of the European Union voted for a

resolution in the U.N. General Assembly, opposed by the United States, demanding the barrier's removal.⁷¹ The European Council reiterated in its "Conclusions" of December 8, 2009, that the "separation barrier where built on occupied land [is] illegal under international law."⁷²

Europe affected U.S. policy on the fence by funding a sophisticated PLO diplomatic team, the elite Palestinian unit known as the Negotiation Support Unit of the PLO (NSU), headed by Palestinian chief peace negotiator Saeb Erekat. The NSU is funded by Britain's Department for International Development and has also received financial support from the governments of Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden.⁷³ It consists of more than twenty professionals who periodically lobby Washington policymakers on behalf of the PLO with the participation of Palestinian advisers including Diana Buttu (Canadian-Palestinian), Michael Tarazi (American-Palestinian), Omar Dajani, and Amjad Atallah. A high point in the work of the NSU was a dramatic PowerPoint presentation on Israel's security fence given to National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice by the NSU's Stephanie Koury (a Lebanese American from Texas) during a visit to the West Bank on June 28, 2003. Hours later, Rice shocked and angered members of the Israeli cabinet when she asked them to "reconsider" the fence. Koury's presentation caused the Bush administration to become much more critical of the security fence. A few days after the Koury briefing, an AIPAC colleague and I met with Rice privately and heard an unfiltered expression of her reaction to Koury. Three weeks later, the NSU team flew to Washington to make the presentation to other U.S. officials and members of Congress.⁷⁴ Rice's anger over

Some European governments engage in targeted killings while calling Israel's use unlawful.

67 "Suicide and Other Bombing Attacks in Israel Since the Declaration of Principles (Sept 1993)," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem, accessed Aug. 17, 2010.

68 "U.S. Policy on the Separation Barrier and Statements from Church Leaders," Churches for Middle East Peace, Washington, D.C., accessed Aug. 17, 2010.

69 George W. Bush to Ariel Sharon, Ariel Sharon to George W. Bush, in *Ha'aretz*, June 6, 2009.

70 "Declaration of the European Union," Fourth Meeting of the Association Council EU-Israel, Brussels, Nov. 17-18, 2003, p. 5.

71 Res. ES-10/15, U.N. General Assembly, New York, July 20, 2004.

72 "Council Conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process," European Union, Brussels, Dec. 8, 2009.

73 "Development Assistance and the Occupied Palestinian Territories," International Development Committee, House of Commons, London, p. 21; "About Us," PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, accessed Aug. 18, 2010.

74 *The Forward* (New York), July 18, 2003.

the fence was the low point of relations between Washington and Jerusalem during the George W. Bush years, and Palestinian lobbying funded by the Europeans achieved it.

ISRAEL'S TARGETED KILLING OF TERRORISTS IS "ILLEGAL"

Israel follows a policy of targeted killings of terrorists who are preparing specific acts of violence or operationally engaged in organizing, planning, financing, and arming such operations. The purpose is to prevent imminent attacks when Israel does not have the means to make an arrest or foil the attacks by other methods. Israeli security officials believe that this policy keeps potential bomb makers on the run and serves as a deterrent to militant terrorist operations. Israelis also believe that targeted killings have less impact on Palestinian non-combatants than would a military incursion into a Palestinian population center aimed at their capture.⁷⁵ On December 13, 2006, the Supreme Court of Israel ruled that targeted killing was a legitimate form of self-defense against terrorists within specified rules of conduct.⁷⁶ The Israeli public strongly supports the policy of targeted killing: 90 percent in one poll, 75 percent in another.⁷⁷

U.S. State Department spokespersons have at times expressed disagreement with the Israeli policy of targeted killings, for example, on August 8, 2001,⁷⁸ November 5, 2002,⁷⁹ and April 17, 2004.⁸⁰ In reality, Washington accepts the Is-

raeli policy as long as it seeks to neutralize imminent threats.⁸¹ The United States itself has become the world's leading practitioner of targeted killings according to a recent report by the U.N.'s special rapporteur on extrajudicial executions.⁸²

The George W. Bush administration used drones to attack militant targets forty-five times.⁸³ The Obama administration has increased the attacks to fifty-three in 2009 and to thirty-nine in the first half of 2010 in Pakistan

alone, according to the New America Foundation,⁸⁴ which also found that drone strikes since Obama took office had accounted for approximately 450 deaths, about one-quarter of them civilians.⁸⁵ Michael E. Leiter, head of Obama's National Counterterrorism Center, defended the policy on July 1, 2010, saying that it would be "wholly irresponsible" not to stop those plotting to harm Americans.⁸⁶ Like the Israeli public, majorities of Americans support targeted killings of terrorists.⁸⁷

But the Europeans have shown less tolerance than do Americans for the Israeli policy. On December 13, 2002, the European Council called upon Israel "to stop excessive use of force and extrajudicial killings, which do not bring security to the Israeli population."⁸⁸ On November 18, 2003, the council said targeted killings were unlawful and urged Israel "to abstain from any pu-

**The pre-1967
line was never
recognized by
either side as a
permanent
political border.**

75 Gal Luft, "The Logic of Israel's Targeted Killing," *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2003, pp. 3-13.

76 *HCI 769/02 Summary Judgement, The Public Committee against Torture in Israel v. The Government of Israel*, Israeli Supreme Court, Jerusalem, Dec. 13, 2006.

77 Steven R. David, "Fatal Choices: Israel's Policy of Targeted Killing," Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Sept. 2002, p. 7.

78 News briefing, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., Aug. 8, 2001.

79 *BBC News*, Nov. 6, 2002.

80 *Ha'aretz*, Apr. 17, 2004.

81 Chris Toensing and Ian Urbina, "Israel, the U.S. and 'Targeted Killings,'" *Middle East Report*, Feb. 17, 2003.

82 Philip Alston, "Report by the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions," United Nations, New York, May 28, 2010.

83 CNN, Apr. 28, 2010.

84 National Public Radio, Mar. 25, 2010.

85 "The Year of the Drone," New America Foundation, Washington, D.C., and Sacramento, Calif., accessed Aug. 18, 2010.

86 *Los Angeles Times*, July 1, 2010.

87 David, "Fatal Choices: Israel's Policy of Targeted Killing," p. 18.

88 "Conclusions of the Copenhagen European Council," Brussels, Dec. 13, 2003.

nitive measures which are not in accordance with international law, including extrajudicial killings and destruction of houses.”⁸⁹ On January 17, 2004, EU spokesman Diego Ojeda said that the “European Union has spoken on several occasions against [Israel’s] so-called extrajudicial killings of suspected terrorists.”⁹⁰ In February 2010, President Nicolas Sarkozy declared France’s “irrevocable condemnation of what is nothing less than an assassination” by Israeli agents of a Hamas commander in Dubai.⁹¹ In December 2007, the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights produced a harshly critical paper on the illegality of “extrajudicial execution” by Israel, a publication “produced with the assistance of the European Union.”⁹²

Europeans put Israel on the defensive about its Gaza blockade, making it difficult for Washington to support Israel’s right to self-defense.

There is an element of hypocrisy in the European claim that Israel’s use of targeted killings is unlawful because some of the European governments that approve these statements engage in the practice themselves. In July 2010, a British official

revealed that a U.K. spy agency pinpoints the hiding places of al-Qaeda and Taliban chiefs in Afghanistan and Pakistan for targeted killings by U.S. drones.⁹³ British agents attempted to kill German field marshal Irwin Rommel during the North African campaign⁹⁴ and did kill SS Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich in 1942.⁹⁵ In May 1987, in Loughgall, Northern Ireland, a British special operations unit killed eight Irish Republican Army (IRA) militants who were prepar-

ing to attack a police station.⁹⁶ A year later, on March 7, 1988, British security forces killed three IRA militants in Gibraltar as they walked toward the border with Spain.⁹⁷ In July 2010, the French government acknowledged that its security forces assisted in killing six terrorists in Mali linked to al-Qaeda to prevent a terrorist attack in Mauritania.⁹⁸

ISRAEL’S BLOCKADE OF GAZA IS “ILLEGAL”

On May 31, 2010, French ambassador Gérard Araud told the U.N. Security Council that Israel’s blockade of Gaza is illegal and unsustainable and should be lifted. Araud added that Israel’s use of force against the Turkish flotilla was unjustifiable and disproportionate.⁹⁹ British prime minister David Cameron agreed: “The Israeli attack on the Gaza flotilla was completely unacceptable ... Gaza must not be allowed to remain a prison camp.”¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile Foreign Secretary William Hague told the House of Commons that the blockade of Gaza was “unacceptable and unsustainable.”¹⁰¹ The British ambassador to the U.N. demanded that Israeli restrictions on access to Gaza be lifted to allow unfettered access and the unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods, and persons to and from the enclave, which, he said, was among the highest international priorities of the new British government.¹⁰² Former EU commissioner Patten argued that the Israeli blockade was “immoral, illegal, and ineffective.”¹⁰³

Here again the European position is hypo-

89 “Declaration of the European Union,” Nov. 17-18, 2003, p. 4.

90 International Middle East Media Center (West Bank), Jan. 17, 2004.

91 *The Tehran Times*, Feb. 23, 2010.

92 “Position Paper: Extra-Judicial Execution,” Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, West Bank, Dec. 2007.

93 *Fox News*, July 25, 2010.

94 *Time*, May 19, 1980.

95 “The Assassination of Reinhard Heydrich,” Central Intelligence Agency, McLean, Va., Sept. 22, 1993.

96 “Special Air Service (SAS) - Loughgall, Northern Ireland,” British Special Forces and Elite Units, Kent, U.K., accessed Aug. 18, 2010.

97 “1988: IRA Gang Shot Dead in Gibraltar,” BBC, accessed Aug. 18, 2010.

98 Reuters, July 23, 2010.

99 “Security Council Condemns Acts Resulting in Civilian Deaths during Israeli Operation against Gaza-bound Aid Convoy,” U.N. news office, New York, May 31, 2010.

100 *The Guardian*, July 27, 2010.

101 *Ibid.*, June 2, 2010.

102 “Security Council Condemns Acts Resulting in Civilian Deaths during Israeli Operation,” May 31, 2010.

103 *The Jewish Chronicle* (London), July 19, 2010.

critical. From 1993 to 1996, twelve European navies participated in a NATO-Western European Union blockade known as “Sharp Guard,” enforcing both an arms embargo and economic sanctions on the former Yugoslavia. This involved the navies of Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, and the U.K. Some 74,000 ships were challenged; almost 6,000 were inspected at sea, and more than 1,400 were diverted and inspected in port.¹⁰⁴ Had there been violent resistance to this blockade, all the parties enforcing it were committed to the use of force. The fact that no one dared to challenge this powerful blockade prevented violence from occurring, not any principled objection to the use of force. Nonetheless, the Europeans at the U.N. Security Council continue to put Israel on the defensive about its Gaza blockade, making it more difficult for Washington to support Israel’s right to self-defense under article 51 of the United Nations charter.¹⁰⁵

The Europeans evidenced a similar attitude in July 2006 when Israel went into Lebanon in response to Hezbollah attacks. An agreed statement by the EU presidency stated, “The European Union is greatly concerned about the disproportionate use of force by Israel in Lebanon in response to attacks by Hezbollah on Israel.”¹⁰⁶ French foreign minister Philippe Douste-Blazy agreed that Israel’s strikes were “a disproportionate act of war” and said that the French government supported “Lebanon’s demand for a referral to the United Nations Security Council as soon as possible.”¹⁰⁷

ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS ARE “ILLEGAL”

President Ronald Reagan said in 1981 that Israel’s settlements were “ill-advised,” “unnec-

essarily provocative,” and “an obstacle to peace,” but he also said that they were “not illegal.”¹⁰⁸ This distinction has been the implicit policy of all successive U.S. administrations since Reagan.¹⁰⁹ The George W. Bush administration added a further distinction between settlement blocs on territory that the Palestinians are expected to cede to Israel in a land swap in future negotiations (as Arafat agreed as part of the Clinton parameters negotiated at Camp David in 2000), versus isolated settlements deeper in the West Bank interior on land expected to fall under eventual Palestinian sovereignty. President Bush considered that the settlements in the West Bank interior

were more problematic while the blocs on land to be swapped could be accommodated. Barack Obama apparently has rejected these Bush refinements, and his administration seems to consider all Israeli settlements equally problematic. But even Obama has not returned to the pre-Reagan assertion that the Israeli settlements are illegal.¹¹⁰

However, on this issue, again Europe is closer to the Arab side and is more critical of Israel than the United States is. On June 13, 1980, the European Economic Community, the precursor to the EU, affirmed in its Venice declaration that “these settlements, as well as modifications in population and property in the occupied Arab territories, are illegal under international law.”¹¹¹ On December 8, 2009, the EU Council reiterated this belief: “Settlements ... demolition of homes and evictions are ille-

European intervention often inflames controversies over settlements between Washington and Jerusalem.

104 “NATO/WEU, Operation Sharp Guard,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Brussels, Oct. 2, 1996.

105 *Charter of the United Nations*, San Francisco, June 26, 1945, art. 51.

106 *Deutsche Welle* (Bonn), July 14, 2006.

107 Gerald M. Steinberg, “Europe’s Disproportionate Criticism,” *The Wall Street Journal*, July 17, 2006.

108 “Quotes from U.S. Government Officials on Israeli Settlements,” Churches for Middle East Peace, Washington, D.C., accessed Aug. 18, 2010.

109 *The Washington Post*, June 17, 2009.

110 Steven J. Rosen, “Tough Love Is No Love at All,” *ForeignPolicy.com*, July 21, 2009.

111 “Venice Declaration,” June 13, 1980.

gal under international law.”¹¹²

The juridical premise on which the European policy is based is that Israel is occupying land taken from another sovereign power. But the pre-1967 boundary was nothing more than a

European leaders are the most effective external force urging Washington to move away from Israel.

demarkation of the positions held by opposing armies when the fighting stopped in 1949, never recognized by either side as a permanent political border. Nor has the Jordanian occupation of the West Bank prior to 1967 been recognized by any country apart from Britain and Pakistan. The

West Bank is disputed rather than occupied territory, so the Geneva Convention cannot be applied¹¹³ as the Europeans seek to do. The Europeans are reifying a temporary holding line that existed for less than eighteen years (1949-67) while ignoring realities that have lasted for twice as long (1967-2010).

For Israelis, more important than an arcane legal dispute is the practical impact of declaring all Jewish communities across the pre-1967 line to be equally illegal. That statement, if true, would mean that more than half the Jews in Jerusalem, the nation's capital, are living unlawfully on somebody else's land¹¹⁴ in homes the Israelis built and paid for in completely Jewish, established communities including Gilo, French Hill, and Pisgat Ze'ev, which are across the previous armistice line. Israelis do not consider these to be settlements at all.¹¹⁵ It would mean that Maale Adumim, a sprawling metropolis of 36,500 people, is lumped together with nearly unpopulated dots on the map. It would also mean that the militarily indefensible pre-1967 line is recognized under international law as permanent,

in contravention of a fact that was implicitly acknowledged by Security Council Resolution 242,¹¹⁶ which envisaged Israel's retention of some territories captured in the 1967 war.

European intervention often inflames controversies over settlements between Washington and Jerusalem, frictions that have had a particularly destructive effect in the case of the Obama administration. Martin Indyk, an adviser to Obama's secretary of state Hillary Clinton and Middle East envoy George Mitchell, said recently: "I don't think that ... Barak Obama, Hillary Clinton or George Mitchell—want to get waylaid again by an argument about settlements [instead of] the main challenge which is to reach an agreement on what the borders of the Palestinian state will be ... The settlement issue will be resolved as a result of that."¹¹⁷ European pressure has pushed the Obama administration to emphasize the thorniest part of the settlement issue, Jewish housing in Jerusalem. Bill Clinton wisely avoided this minefield even when, in 1995, the Yitzhak Rabin government gave approval for 5,000 new housing units to go up in East Jerusalem because, as an adviser said, "To take action now ... would be very explosive in the negotiations, and frankly, would put us out of business as a facilitator of those negotiations."¹¹⁸

CONCLUSION

European leaders are the most effective external force urging the U.S. government to move away from Israel and closer to the Arabs. Europe is not hostile to Israel on every issue, and not every European intervention with U.S. officials is meant to move U.S. policy in the Arab direction. But, on the whole, the Arab road to Washington runs through Paris, London, and Berlin.



112 "Council Conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process," Dec. 8, 2009.

113 Jeffrey Helmreich, "Diplomatic and Legal Aspects of the Settlement Issue," *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, Jan. 19, 2003.

114 *The Yale Globalist* (New Haven), July 4, 2010.

115 CNN, Mar. 23, 2010.

116 "The Situation in the Middle East," U.N. Security Council Res. 242, Nov. 22, 1967.

117 Natasha Mozgovaya, "Martin Indyk: I Think the Settlement Issue Will Be Resolved," *Ha'aretz*, July 28, 2010.

118 Steven J. Rosen, "Obama's Foolish Settlements Ultimatum," *Foreign Policy*, Apr. 1, 2010.

Ban the Burqa?

The Argument in Favor

by Phyllis Chesler

Should other Western states follow the Belgian and French examples and ban the full Islamic body and face-covering veil—or more specifically, the *burqa* and the *niqab*? In other words, should the West ban any and all clothing which obliterates one's identity? Most Europeans, according to recent surveys, seem to think so.¹ Still, significant numbers, especially in the United States,² and including quite a few feminists,³ have viewed such a ban as religiously intolerant, anti-woman, and anti-Western. They maintain that the state has no place in deciding what a woman can and cannot wear—it is her body, not public property;⁴ that given the worldwide exploitation of women as pornographic sex objects, wearing loose, comfortable, modest clothing, or actually covering up, might be both convenient and more dignified;⁵ that because of the West's tolerance toward religions, the state cannot come between a woman and her conscience for that would betray Western values;⁶ and that women are freely choosing to wear the burqa.⁷ Some Western intellectuals oppose banning the burqa although they understand the harm it may do and the way in which it may “mutilate personhood.”⁸ Algerian-American academic Marnia Lazreg, for example, implores Muslim women to voluntarily, freely refuse to cover their faces fully—to spurn even the headscarf; however, she does not want the state involved.⁹

It is arguable that the full body and face cover is not a religious requirement

Phyllis Chesler is emerita professor of psychology and women's studies at the Richmond College of the City University of New York and co-founder of the Association for Women in Psychology and the National Women's Health Network. The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Nathan Bloom in the preparation of this article.

1 “Widespread Support for Banning Full Islamic Veil in Western Europe,” Pew Global Attitudes Project, Washington, D.C., July 8, 2010; United Press International, July 17, 2010; *The Toronto Sun*, July 28, 2010.

2 *New Atlanticist* (Washington, D.C.), Mar. 1, 2010; *Los Angeles Times*, July 13, 2010.

3 Martha Nussbaum, “Veiled Threats?” *The New York Times*, July 11, 2010; Naomi Wolf, “Behind the Veil Lives a Thriving Muslim Sexuality,” *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Australia), Aug. 30, 2008; Joan Wallach, “France Has the Burqa All Wrong,” *Salon*, Apr. 12, 2010; Joan Wallach, “Don't Ban Burqas—Or Censor South Park,” BigThink.com, May 21, 2010; Yvonne Ridley, “How I Came to Love the Veil,” *The Washington Post*, Oct. 22, 2006.

4 Marnia Lazreg, *Questioning the Veil: Open Letters to Muslim Women* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 62.

5 Wolf, “Behind the Veil Lives a Thriving Muslim Sexuality.”

6 Nussbaum, “Veiled Threats?”; Leon Wieseltier, “Faces and Faiths,” *The New Republic*, July 27, 2010.

7 Nussbaum, “Veiled Threats?”; Wolf, “Behind the Veil Lives a Thriving Muslim Sexuality.”

8 Wieseltier, “Faces and Faiths.”

9 Lazreg, *Questioning the Veil*, pp. 62-3.



The phrase “the Islamic veil” refers to a variety of female clothing that differs from country to country and from century to century. The Afghan burqa, for example, covers the entire head, face, and body and has webbing or grille work over the eyes that allows the wearer no peripheral vision. Another version of the burqa, which covers the mouth, part of the forehead and lower jaw, and the head, exists (or existed) among Arabs in southern Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar.

the Western state does have an interest in public appearances and, therefore, does not permit public nudity or masked people in public buildings; and that it is strange that the very feminists (or their descendents) who once objected to the sexual commoditification of women “can explain to you with the most exquisitely twisted logic why miniskirts and lip gloss make women into sexual objects, but when it comes to a cultural practice, enforced by terror, that makes women into social nonentities, [they] feel that it is beneath [their] liberal dignity to support a ban on the practice.”¹¹ To this may be added that face-veil wearers (“good” girls) endanger all those who do not wear a face veil (“bad” girls). But before addressing these arguments at greater length, it is instructive to see what political and religious leaders in the Muslim world, as well as Muslim women, have to say about the issue.

THE HOUSE OF ISLAM UNVEILS ITS WOMEN

The forced veiling and unveiling of Muslim women, both in terms of the headscarf and the face veil, ebbed and flowed for about a century as Muslim elites strove to come to terms with the demise of the Islamic political order that had dominated the Middle East (and substantial parts of Asia and Europe) for over a millennium. Turkey’s founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, for example, generated a new and vibrant brand of nationalism that sought to extricate Turkey from its imperial past—and its Islamic legacy—and to reconstitute it as a modern nation state. Iran’s Reza Shah distanced his country from Islam for the opposite reason, namely, as a means to link his family to Persia’s pre-Islamic imperial legacy,

in Islam but represents a minority tradition among a small Islamist minority; that it is not a matter of free choice but a highly forced choice and a visual Islamist symbol—one that is ostentatiously anti-secularist and misogynist;¹⁰ that

The Huffington Post, Feb. 15, 2010; Samia Labidi, “Faces of Janus: The Arab-Muslim Community in France and the Battle for Its Future,” in Zeyno Baran, ed., *The Other Muslims: Moderate and Secular* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 116-9; Melanie Philips, in “Should France Ban the Burqa?” *National Review Online*, July 23, 2010; Elham Manea, in Valentina Colombo, “Europe: Behind the Burqa Debate,” Hudson Institute, New York, Mar. 12, 2010.

10 Bernard-Henri Levy, “Why I Support a Ban on Burqas,”

11 Stuart Schneiderman blog, “Burqaphilia,” July 17, 2010.



The niqab can cover the entire face with a small space cut out for the eyes. It can also cover the lower face, but leave more room for the eyes. In Saudi Arabia, women wear the burqa and the niqab in a variety of forms.

which is vividly illustrated by his adoption of the surname Pahlavi, of ancient Persian origins,¹² and the name Iran, or “[the land] of the Aryans,” as the country’s official title in all formal correspondence.¹³

During the 1920s and 1930s, in this new international environment, kings, shahs, and presidents unveiled their female citizens, and Muslim feminists campaigned hard for open faces in public. They were successful in Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran, to name but a few countries.

As early as 1899, the Egyptian intellectual Qasim Amin published his landmark book *The Liberation of Women*, which argued that the face veil was not commensurate with the tenets of Islam and called for its removal.¹⁴ According to photographs taken by Annie Lady Brassey in Egypt in the 1870s, Egyptian women wore heavy,

dark coverings with full niqab (face covering) or partial niqab when possible.¹⁵ In 1923, the feminist Hoda Hanim Shaarawi, who established the first feminist association that called for uncovering the face and hair, became the first Egyptian woman to remove her face veil or niqab.¹⁶ In the following decades, the veil gradually disappeared in Egypt, so much so that in 1958, a foreign journalist wrote that “the veil is unknown here.”¹⁷

In Afghanistan, Shah Amanullah Khan (r. 1919-29) “scandalized the Persians by permitting his wife to go unveiled.” In 1928, he urged Afghan women to uncover their faces and advocated the shooting of interfering husbands. He said that he “would himself supply the weapons” for this and that “no inquiries would be instituted against the women.” Once, when he

12 Farvardyn Project, “Pahlavi Literature,” accessed Aug. 25, 2010.

13 M. Sadeq Nazmi-Afshar, “The People of Iran, The Origins of Aryan People,” Iran Chamber Society, accessed Aug. 25, 2010.

14 Amin Qasim, *The Liberation of Women and The New Woman: Two Documents in the History of Egyptian Feminism*, trans. Samiha Sidhom Peterson (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 2000).

15 Reina Lewis and Nancy Micklenwright, eds., *Gender, Modernity and Liberty: Middle Eastern and Western Women’s Writings: A Critical Sourcebook* (New York: I.B. Tauris and Co., 2006), pp. 36-7; Afaf Lufti al-Sayyid Marsot, “The Revolutionary Gentlewomen in Egypt,” in Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie, eds., *Women in the Muslim World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 261-76.

16 Colombo, “Europe: Behind the Burqa Debate.”

17 *Sarasota Herald Tribune*, Jan. 26, 1958.



The hijab (left), or headscarf, does not cover the face and is not the subject of this article. The abaya (right) in Saudi Arabia is also not synonymous with a face-covering although add-ons to the garment may cover the face.

saw a woman wearing a burqa in a Kabul garden, he tore it off and burned it.¹⁸ However, Amanullah was exiled, and the country plunged back into the past.¹⁹ Turkey banned the Islamic face veil and the turban in 1934, and this prohibition has been maintained ever since by a long succession of governments that adhered to Atatürk's secularist and modernist revolution. Moreover, from the 1980s onward, Turkish women have been prohibited from wearing headscarves in parliament and in public buildings, and this law was even more strictly enforced after a 1997 coup by the secular military. In recent years, the Islamist Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), which has ruled Turkey since 2002, has tried to relax this restriction, only to be dealt a humiliat-

scarf.²¹ Ten years later, on January 7, 1936, the shah ordered all female teachers and the wives of ministers, high military officers, and government officials "to appear in European clothes and hats, rather than chadors"; and by way of "serving as an example for other Persian women," the shah asked his wife and daughters to appear without face veils in public. Ranking male officials were dismissed from their jobs if their wives appeared with face veils in public, and the police began breaking into private homes to arrest women wearing chadors there. A report from the city of Tabriz stated that only unveiled girls could receive diplomas.²² These and other secularizing reforms were sustained by Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, who in September 1941 succeeded his

ing blow on June 15, 2008, when the country's Constitutional Court annulled a government reform allowing students to wear Muslim headscarves at university on the grounds that it contravened Turkey's secular system.²⁰ In recent years, women wearing both hijabs and burqas have been seen on the streets of Istanbul.

As early as 1926 in Iran, Reza Shah provided police protection for Iranian women who chose to dispense with the traditional

18 Rhea Talley Stewart, *Fire in Afghanistan 1914-1929: Faith, Hope, and the British Empire* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), pp. 127, 376-8.

19 Rosanne Klass, *Afghanistan: The Great Game Revisited* (New York: Freedom House, 1987), p. 39; idem, *Land of the High Flags* (New York: Odyssey Books, 1964), pp. 202-3.

20 *The Muslim Observer* (Farmington, Mich.), Jan. 31, June 19, 2008.

21 Hamideh Sedghi, *Women and Politics in Iran: Veiling, Unveiling, and Reveiling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 85.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 85-7.

father on the throne and instituted a ban on veiled women in public.

Lebanon has always been the most Westernized Arab society, owing to its substantial Christian population with its close affinity to Europe, France in particular. A Palestinian-Lebanese-Syrian woman visiting the United States said, "In the 1920s, my mother, a university professor, was the first woman to take off her veil in Beirut. She had to remain at home under house arrest for one year due to the violence threatened by street mobs. Then, things changed for the better."²³

Since 1981, women in Tunisia have been prohibited from wearing Islamic dress, including headscarves, in schools or government offices. In 2006, since this ban was increasingly ignored, the Tunisian government launched a sustained campaign against the hijab. The police stopped women in the streets and asked them to remove their headscarves; the president described the headscarf as a "sectarian form of dress which had come into Tunisia uninvited." Other officials explained that Islamic dress was being promoted by extremists who exploited religion for political aims.²⁴

In 2006, in neighboring Morocco, a picture of a mother and daughter wearing headscarves was removed from a textbook. The education minister explained, "This issue isn't really about religion, it's about politics ... the headscarf for women is a political symbol in the same way as the beard is for men."²⁵ However, the government could only go so far in its ability to restrict the face veil or headscarf. In 1975, Moroccan feminist Fatima Mernissi described the lives of Moroccan women as circumscribed by Ghazali's view of women, including women's eyes, as erotically irresistible, and as such, dangerous to men.²⁶ In 1987, Mernissi analyzed the Islamic

veil in both theological and historical terms.²⁷ Clearly, as fundamentalism or political Islam returned to the historical stage, "roots" or Islamic identity, both in Morocco and elsewhere, was increasingly equated with seventh century customs that were specific to women and to the Prophet Muhammad's own life.

Public servants in Malaysia are prohibited from wearing the niqab. In 1994, the Supreme Court ruled that the niqab "has nothing to do with [a woman's] constitutional rights to profess and practice her Muslim religion" because it is not required by Islamic law.²⁸ On July 18, 2010, Syria became the latest Muslim state to ban full face veils in some public places, barring female students from wearing the full face cover on Syrian university campuses. The Syrian minister of higher education indicated that the face veil ran counter to Syrian academic values and traditions.²⁹

In October 2009, Sheikh Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, perhaps the foremost, formal spiritual authority in Sunni Islam and grand sheikh of al-Azhar University, Sunni Islam's highest institution of religious learning, was reportedly "angered" when he toured a school in Cairo and saw a teenage girl wearing niqab. Asking the girl to remove her face veil, he said, "The niqab is a tradition; it has no connection with religion." He then instructed the girl never to wear the niqab again and issued a *fatwa* (religious edict) against its use in schools.³⁰

In 2010, at a time when Britain's department of health relaxed the strict National Health Service dress code by allowing Muslim nurses and

**"The niqab is a tradition; it has no connection with religion."
—Grand Sheikh, al-Azhar University**

23 Author interview with the wife of an Arab ambassador to the United Nations, New York, 1980.

24 *BBC News*, Sept. 26, 2006.

25 *Ibid.*, Oct. 6, 2006.

26 Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc., 1975).

27 *Ibid.*

28 Nurjaanah Abdullah and Chew Li Hua, "Legislating Faith in Malaysia," *Singapore Journal of Legal Studies*, 2007, pp. 264-89.

29 *BBC News*, July 19, 2010.

30 *The Daily Telegraph* (London), Oct. 5, 2009.

doctors to wear long sleeves for religious reasons—despite the high risk of spreading deadly superbugs—the Egyptian ministry of health outlawed the niqab (which often included glove-wearing) for hospital nurses, threatening those who failed to comply with dismissal or legal prosecution. The Iraqi religious authority, Sheikh Ahmad al-Qubaisi, supported this Egyptian decision and issued a fatwa which stated, “People have the right to know the identity of the person they are in front of in order not to feel deceived. The obligation of niqab was only for the Prophet’s wives as they were the mothers of all believers.”³¹

FREE CHOICE OR FORCED CHOICE?

These examples challenge the increasing number of Muslim women in the West, including converts and educated women, who claim to be freely choosing to wear the burqa and the niqab. They are doing so in stark contrast to the

The battle to impose the veil was launched again by resurgent Islamists.

ethos and values of their adopted societies at a time when governments in the part of the world where this custom originated have been progressively unveiling their women.

These supposed defenders of women’s rights appear oblivious

to what is implied by the phrase “to cover,” namely, that women are born shamed—they are nothing beyond their genitalia, which can shame or dishonor an entire family—and it is this shame which they must cover or for which they must atone. Qur’anic verse (7:26) states, “We have sent down clothing to cover your shame.” Certainly, this applies to both men and women, but patriarchal customs have almost exclusively targeted women. Ironically, this verse also says

that “the clothing of righteousness is the best”—a point lost on Islamists and their unwitting sympathizers in the West.

The fact is that Muslim women are increasingly not given a free choice about wearing the veil, and those who resist are beaten, threatened with death, arrested, flogged, jailed, or murdered for honor by their own families, by vigilante groups, or by the state.³² Being fully covered does not save a Muslim woman from being harassed, stalked, raped, and battered in public places, or raped or beaten at home by her husband. Nor does it stop her husband from taking multiple wives and girlfriends, frequenting brothels, divorcing her against her will, and legally seizing custody of their children.³³ A fully covered female child, as young as ten, may still be forced into an arranged marriage, perhaps to a man old enough to be her grandfather, and is not allowed to leave him, not even if he beats her every day.³⁴

Moreover, after decades of attempted modernization in Muslim countries, the battle to impose the veil was launched again by resurgent Islamists. The establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran sent shock waves throughout the region and set in motion a string of violent eruptions. These included the 1979-80 riots in the Shiite towns of the oil-rich Saudi province of Hasa, the Muslim Brotherhood’s attempt to topple the secularist Syrian Baath regime in the early 1980s, the Algerian civil war of the 1990s, the ascendance of Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank, and the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan. All these developments placed substantial areas under Islamist control and influence with dire consequences for women. As one Egyptian man lamented, “My grandmother would not recognize the streets of Cairo and Port Said. The women are covered from head to toe; the mosques blare hatred all day long.”³⁵

32 Phyllis Chesler, “Worldwide Trends in Honor Killings,” *Middle East Quarterly* Spring 2010, pp. 3-11.

33 Phyllis Chesler, *The Death of Feminism: What’s Next in the Struggle for Women’s Freedom* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), chap. 6, 7.

34 David Ghanim, *Gender and Violence in the Middle East* (Wesport: Praeger, 2009), chap. 2, 4.

35 Author interview, New York, 2008.

31 Colombo, “Europe: Behind the Burqa Debate.”

And this in a country where the authorities go to great lengths to fight Islamist influences.

The Taliban, for example, flogged women on the street if their burqas showed too much ankle while Islamist vigilantes poured acid on the faces of Afghan and Pakistani schoolgirls who were not sufficiently covered.³⁶ As an Afghan woman noted, “For nearly two decades, we wore no chadors and dressed in modern ways. As the war against the Soviet occupation intensified, women were again forced to wear chadors. Now, even under an American occupation, they are again fully covered.”³⁷

In Algeria, a leading Islamist group proclaimed that all unveiled women are military targets and, in 1994, gunned down a 17-year-old unveiled girl.³⁸ In 2010 in Chechnya, roving vigilante bands of men harassed and threatened women for not wearing headscarves. They punched women and taunted them with automatic rifles and paintballs. The vigilante groups have the backing of Chechnyan president Ramzan Kadyrov’s government, which also encourages polygamy.³⁹

In 1983, four years after the Iranian revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini instituted a ban on women showing their hair and the shape of their bodies. The chador, which does not cover the face, is, nevertheless, a severe, dark, heavy, and shapeless garment that has demoralized and enraged what was an essentially Westernized and modern upper and middle class.⁴⁰ Thereafter, the Iranian government beat, arrested, and jailed women if they were improperly garbed and has recently warned that sun-tanned women and girls who looked like “walking mannequins” will be arrested as part of a

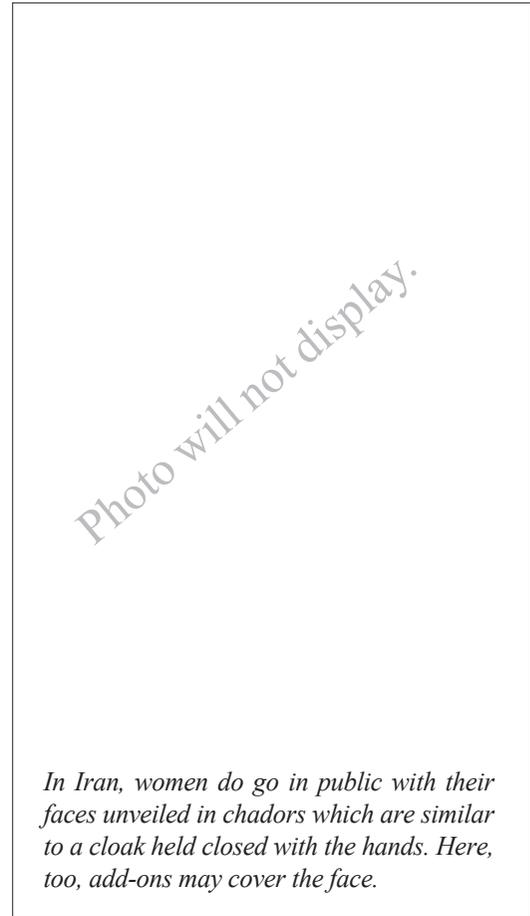
36 “Women’s Lives under the Taliban: A Background Report,” National Organization of Women, Washington, D.C., accessed Aug. 25, 2010; *The Daily Telegraph*, Nov. 12, 2008.

37 Author interview, New York, 2005.

38 “Equality Now Submission to the UN Human Rights Committee: Algeria,” United Nations, New York, July 1998.

39 Reuters, Aug. 21, 2010.

40 See, for example, Roya Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2004); Azar Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (New York: Random House, 2003).



In Iran, women do go in public with their faces unveiled in chadors which are similar to a cloak held closed with the hands. Here, too, add-ons may cover the face.

new drive to enforce the Islamic dress code.⁴¹ Saudi Arabia does not have to resort to such violence. No Saudi woman dares appear open-faced in public. In 2002, when teenage Saudi schoolgirls tried to escape from a burning school without their headscarves and abayas (black robes), the Mutawa, or religious police, beat them back. Fifteen girls were burned alive.⁴² According to Tunisian-French feminist Samia Labidi, an increasing number of Islamist husbands force or pressure their wives—whose own mothers went about with uncovered faces—to cover.⁴³ Then, they pressure their new sisters-in-law to

41 Associated Press, Apr. 23, 2007; *The Daily Telegraph*, Apr. 27, 2010.

42 *BBC News*, Mar. 15, 2002.

43 Labidi, “Faces of Janus,” pp. 117-8.

do likewise. In the West, some families have honor-killed their daughters for refusing to wear hijab.⁴⁴

A man from Istanbul remembered that his grandmother had fully veiled but not his mother. But, he explained, “It is mainly peer pressure that makes things happen in Turkey. Neighbors tell you to go to mosque; they watch how young girls and women look and behave very closely. The pressure to conform is tremendous.”⁴⁵

Westerners do not understand how pervasive such pressure can be. On July 17, 2010, for example, the newspaper *Roz Al-Yousuf* addressed the coercive nature of hijab in Egypt. Wael Lutfi, assistant chief editor writes in the first person feminine:

Society persecutes women who do not wear a hijab. Of course, I wear a hijab. If I want

to be practical and interact with this society while [sustaining] minimal damage, I must wear a hijab. A woman who does not wear a hijab is guilty until proven [innocent]. Why should I waste my time proving that I am a respectable and educated girl?

Lutfi tells “Suha’s” story. She comes from a prominent Egyptian family and does not wear a hijab. At work, she is cajoled and harassed by hijab-wearing women who bombard her in person and via e-mail; they give her pro-hijab audio cassettes and invite her to hear a popular preacher whom hijab-wearers follow. Suha loses one marriage proposal after another when she refuses to promise that she will wear the hijab and stop working after marriage. Finally, Suha’s married male boss questions her closely, agrees with her anti-hijab position—and then asks her to secretly become his common law wife. He views her as a prostitute because she is not wearing the hijab.

Likewise, Walaa was verbally insulted and her brothers were assaulted by neighborhood boys because she was not wearing a hijab. Now, she dons one when she leaves home, removes it elsewhere, returns home wearing it again. Another young girl wears the hijab because her father has asked her to do so and because her beloved younger brother said that his friends were judging him harshly because she did not do so. She says:

I wear a hijab because we live in a society that allows the preacher Safwat Hijazi to call women who do not wear a hijab “prostitutes,” and I do not want to be called a prostitute.⁴⁶

Thus, one can hardly view the covering of one’s face as a free choice but rather as a forced choice. One must also realize that non-veiled women, including non-Muslims, who do not veil are then seen by Islamists as “fair game” or “uncovered meat that draws predators,” to use the words of a prominent Australian sheikh.⁴⁷

To be sure, some religious women dress modestly, not “provocatively,” because they view this as a religious virtue. Yet only Muslims engage in full face covering to satisfy the demand for modesty, and there is a crucial difference between a free choice and a forced choice. A forced choice is not really a choice at all. One either submits or is punished, shunned, exiled, jailed, even killed. A free choice means that one has many options and freely chooses one of two or one of ten such options.

Many children who are brought up within fundamentalist religions or in cults are trained, by a system of reward and punishment, to obey their parents, teachers, and religious leaders. As adults, if they wish to remain within the community (and the opportunity for leaving did not and still does not exist for most Muslim women), they must continue to conform to its norms. Most are already socialized to do so and thus,

Face and body covering can facilitate acts of violence from petty crime to terrorism.

44 Chesler, “Worldwide Trends in Honor Killings.”

45 Author interview, New York, 2010.

46 “Egyptian Newspaper *Roz Al-Yousuf* Criticizes Phenomenon of Compelling Egyptian Women to Wear a Hijab,” The Middle East Media Research Institute, Washington, D.C., Sept. 6, 2010.

47 *The Times* (London), Oct. 28, 2006.

some Muslim women will say that they do not feel that anyone is forcing them to wear the headscarf; they will, in a private conversation, denounce the face veil, the burqa, the chador, and the Saudi abaya.

In the West, young Muslim women may feel they are responding to perceived racist “Islamophobia” by donning the headscarf or the face veil as a revolutionary act,⁴⁸ one in solidarity with Islamists whom they may fear, wish to please, or marry.

EUROPE DEBATES THE VEIL

The Islamist resurgence throughout the Middle East and the Muslim world has triggered a mass migration to the West; Muslim and ex-Muslim dissidents and feminists as well as Christians have exited Muslim lands.⁴⁹ Still, it has taken Westerners decades to understand that the battle for Muslim women’s freedom as well as for Western Enlightenment values also has to be fought in the West.

Thus, in 2004, France became the first European country to legally restrict Islamic dress by passing an ethnicity-neutral law that forbade the wearing of religious clothing in public schools. Veils, visible Christian crosses, Jewish skullcaps, and the hijab were all forbidden. Also in 2004, eight of Germany’s sixteen states enacted restrictions on wearing hair-covering veils, particularly in public schools.⁵⁰ Since then, many European governments have debated whether or not to ban the face veil.

In February 2010, the French government refused to grant citizenship to a Moroccan man



House Speaker Nancy Pelosi covers herself with a scarf before attending a dinner with Afghan president Hamid Karzai at the official residence of Vice President Joe Biden on the grounds of the U.S. Naval Observatory, Washington, D.C.

who forced his wife to wear a burqa;⁵¹ later that year, three women actually engaged in a physical fight after a burqa-clad woman supposedly overheard another woman making snide remarks about her choice of dress.⁵² In Norway, adult neighbors and their children came to blows over the question of whether Muslim women should wear the headscarf,⁵³ and in March 2010, a ban on the burqa in public places was proposed although defeated in the Norwegian parliament.⁵⁴ On April, 29, 2010, the lower house of the Belgian parliament approved a bill banning the burqa and imposing a fine or jail time on violators;⁵⁵

48 *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 12, 2005; Al-Jazeera TV (Doha), Sept. 17, 2008.

49 See, for example, *CBN News*, Oct. 15, 2009; David Raab, “The Beleaguered Christians of the Palestinian-Controlled Areas,” *Jerusalem Letter/Viewpoints*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Jan. 1-15, 2003.

50 “Discrimination in the Name of Neutrality,” Human Rights Watch, New York, Feb. 26, 2009.

51 *The Guardian* (London), Feb. 2, 2010.

52 *The Daily Telegraph*, May 18, 2010.

53 *Islam in Europe Blog*, Aug. 4, 2010.

54 *The Foreigner* (Raege, Norway), Sept. 7, 2010.

55 *BBC News*, Apr. 30, 2010.

three months later, Spanish lawmakers debated banning the burqa in public although they ultimately decided against it.⁵⁶ In August 2010, Sweden's education minister announced his intention to make it easier for Swedish schools to ban the burqa.⁵⁷ In July 2010, by a majority of 336 to 1, the lower house of the French parliament approved a government bill that bans face-covering in public, and the bill was approved by the French senate on September 14. (For France's road to the bill, see Benjamin Ismail's article, "Ban the Burqa? France Votes Yes," page 47.)

While these bills await ratification, local European officials have already taken concrete steps against the burqa. Since January 2010, the Netherlands has limited the wearing of burqas in public spaces.⁵⁸ In May 2010, a local council in north Switzerland voted to introduce an initiative to ban the burqa in public places while, in 2005, the Belgian town of Maaseik passed a law mandating a fine for anyone wearing a face veil.⁵⁹ In April 2010, a French woman was fined for wearing a burqa while driving,⁶⁰ and in the same

month, a girl wearing hijab was sent home from her school in Madrid.⁶¹

Britain, by contrast, has conspicuously refused to consider banning the burqa. There has, of course, been the odd case when a radical

Islamist has been taken to task for unlawful insistence on the Muslim dress code, such as the Manchester dentist who refused to treat Muslim patients unless they wore traditional Islamic dress,⁶² but efforts at a ban have gone nowhere in parliament.

In response to the French parliamentary vote of July 2010, Britain's immigration minister, Damian Green, stated that "forbidding women in the U.K. from wearing certain clothing would be 'rather un-British'" and would run contrary to the conventions of a "tolerant and mutually respectful society."⁶³ The following month, Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, the first Muslim cabinet minister in the U.K., defended the right of women to choose whether or not to wear the burqa, claiming, "Just because a woman wears the burqa, it doesn't mean she can't engage in everyday life."⁶⁴

Many non-Muslim, Western, female politicians have been cowed by doctrines of political correctness, cultural relativism, misguided beliefs about religious tolerance, and by the fear that if they oppose the burqa, they will be condemned as "Islamophobes" or racists. Ignorance about Muslim jurists' rulings that the full-face covering is not religiously mandated and about the history of the Islamic veil in Muslim lands has led to a curious Western and feminist abandonment of universal human values as they bear on the Islamic veil.

Ironically, powerful Western women, while claiming to represent an anti-colonialist or post-colonialist point of view, are reminiscent of Victorian-era and early twentieth century British colonial administrators who believed that the needs of empire would not be well served by interfering with local customs. This British position was very different from the position of American, Christian missionary women who tried to help, teach, and sometimes save Muslim women from their plight.⁶⁵

Thus, both U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton have donned the hijab when visiting Arab and Muslim countries whereas Arab and Muslim female dignitaries and spouses do not remove the hijab or the niqab while visiting the West. On July 18,

The burqa visually signals the subordination of women.

56 Associated Press July 20, 2010.

57 *The Swedish Wire*, Aug. 5, 2010.

58 Benjamin Ismail, "Ban the Burqa? France Votes Yes," *Middle East Quarterly*, Fall 2010, pp. 47-55.

59 Associated Press, May 6, 2010; "Brussels Burqa Ban Backfires When City Ends up Paying Fines for Muslim Women on Welfare," *Militant Islam Monitor*, Aug. 26, 2005.

60 *The Daily Telegraph*, June 3, 2010.

61 *Ibid.*, Apr. 16, 2010.

62 *The Daily Mail* (London), July 2, 2009.

63 *ABC News*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, July 19, 2010.

64 *The Guardian*, Aug. 1, 2010.

65 Penelope Tuson, *Playing the Game: The Story of Western Women in Arabia* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003), pp. 149-50.

2010, British Minister Caroline Spelman, the environment secretary and second most powerful woman in the cabinet, described the burqa as “empowering.” She said, “I don’t, living in this country as a woman, want to be told what I can and can’t wear. One of the things we pride ourselves on ... is being free to choose what you wear ... so banning the burka is absolutely contrary to what this country is about.”⁶⁶

On July 2, 2009, as Muslims demonstrated in Antwerp to oppose the banning of headscarves in two schools⁶⁷—then-Swedish head of the European Union, Justice Minister Beatrice Ask, stated that the “twenty-seven-member European Union must not dictate an Islamic dress code ... the European Union is a union of freedom.”⁶⁸

THE GROUNDS FOR A BURQA BAN

There are a multitude of specific problems associated with the burqa and niqab. To begin, full-body and face-covering attire hides the wearer’s gender. In October 1937, Hajj Amin Husseini, mufti of Jerusalem and Adolf Hitler’s future ally, fled Palestine donning a niqab as did one of the July 2005 London bombers.⁶⁹ From a security point of view, face and body covering can facilitate various acts of violence and lawlessness from petty crime and cheating to terrorism. This danger, which has been highlighted by a number of experts, notably Daniel Pipes,⁷⁰ has been taken very seriously by Muslim authorities, who have banned the burqa on precisely these grounds.

In Bangladesh, the largest state-run hospital banned staff from wearing full-face burqas after an increase in thefts of mobile phones and

wallets from hospital wards.⁷¹ In a number of Egyptian universities, women were barred from covering their faces during midterm exams and were prohibited from wearing niqabs in female dormitories after it transpired that men had snuck in disguised as women.⁷² Abu Dhabi, meanwhile, has banned the niqab in all public offices to fight “unrestricted absenteeism.”⁷³

There are also numerous cases of bans for security. In Kuwait, for example, female drivers are barred from wearing the niqab for “security reasons.” The regulation came into effect about ten years ago when the authorities were pursuing sleeper terrorist cells and feared that individual cell members could use the niqab to slip through checkpoints unnoticed.⁷⁴ Saudi Arabia’s antiterrorism forces have begun a battle against the niqab after discovering that many “Islamic terrorists have used it to hide in order to commit terror attacks.”⁷⁵ These concerns are not difficult to understand given the widespread use of the burqa and niqab for weapons smuggling and terror attacks, including suicide bombings in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Palestinian territories, among other places.⁷⁶

Beyond these abiding security considerations are equally compelling humanitarian considerations. André Gerin, a French parliamentarian, has described the burqa as a “moving prison.”⁷⁷ This is an apt definition: In a burqa, the wearer has no peripheral and only limited forward vision; hearing and speech are muffled; facial expressions remain hidden; movement is severely constrained. Often, no eye contact is

A burqa wearer is being conditioned to endure isolation and sensory deprivation.

66 *The Daily Telegraph*, July 18, 2010.

67 *Islam in Europe Blog*, July 2, 2010.

68 *The Jerusalem Post*, June 20, 2009.

69 *BBC News*, Feb. 20, 2007.

70 Daniel Pipes, “Niqabs and Burqas as Security Threats,” *Lion’s Den: Daniel Pipes Blog*, Nov. 4, 2006.

71 *The Daily Times* (Lahore), Mar. 22, 2010.

72 *The Daily News Egypt* (Giza), June 7, July 27, 2010.

73 Colombo, “Europe: Behind the Burqa Debate.”

74 *Kuwait Times* (Kuwait City), Oct. 9, 2009.

75 Colombo, “Europe: Behind the Burqa Debate.”

76 Pipes, “Niqabs and Burqas as Security Threats.”

77 *The Daily Telegraph*, June 22, 2009.

possible; niqab wearers sometimes wear dark glasses, so that their eyes cannot be seen.

A burqa wearer may feel that she cannot breathe, that she might slowly be suffocating. She may feel buried alive and may become anx-

ious or claustrophobic.⁷⁸

Just imagine the consequences of getting used to this as a way of life. But perhaps one never gets used to it. Many Saudi and Afghan women toss their coverings the moment they leave the country or enter

their own courtyards.⁷⁹ For example, an unnamed Saudi princess describes her experience of the Saudi abaya as follows:

When we walked out of the cool *souq* area into the blazing hot sun, I gasped for breath and sucked furiously through the sheer black fabric. The air tasted stale and dry as it filtered through the thin gauzy cloth. I had purchased the sheerest veil available, yet I felt I was seeing life through a thick screen. How could women see through veils made of a thicker fabric? The sky was no longer blue, the glow of the sun had dimmed; my heart plunged to my stomach when I realized that from that moment, outside my own home I would not experience life as it really is in all its color. The world suddenly seemed a dull place. And dangerous, too! I groped and stumbled along the pitted, cracked sidewalk, fearful of breaking an ankle or leg.⁸⁰

The burqa is harmful not only to the wearer but to others as well. The sight of women in burqas can be demoralizing and frightening to Westerners of all faiths, including Muslims, not to mention secularists. Their presence visually signals the subordination of women. Addition-

ally, the social isolation intrinsically imposed by the burqa may also be further magnified by the awkward responses of Westerners. Several Ivy League college students mentioned that classmates in burqas and dark, thick gloves make them feel “very sad,” “pushed away,” “uneasy about talking to them.” “When one woman is asked to read aloud, she does so but her heavy gloves make turning the pages slow and difficult.” The students feel sorry for her and do not know how to relate to her.⁸¹

A burqa wearer, who can be as young as ten years old, is being conditioned to endure isolation and sensory deprivation. Her five senses are blocked, muted. Sensory deprivation and isolation are considered forms of torture and are used to break prisoners. Such abuse can lead to low self-esteem, generalized fearfulness, dependence, suggestibility, depression, anxiety, rage, aggression toward other women and female children, or to a complete psychological breakdown.

Wearing the burqa is also hazardous to the health in other ways. Lifetime burqa wearers may suffer eye damage and may be prone to a host of diseases that are also related to vitamin D deficiency from sunlight deprivation, including osteoporosis, heart disease, hypertension, autoimmune diseases, certain cancers, depression, chronic fatigue, and chronic pain. It is ironic that women in the Middle East, one of the world’s sunniest regions, have been found in need of high levels of vitamin D supplementation owing to their total covering.⁸²

CONCLUSION

The same Islamists who subordinate women also publicly whip, cross-amputate, hang, stone, and behead human beings. Iran continues to execute women and men by stoning for adultery.⁸³ The burqa reminds us of such practices. Many Westerners, including Muslims, ex-Mus-

78 See, for example, Reuters, July 7, 2009.

79 Edward Hunter, *The Past Present: A Year in Afghanistan* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1959), chap. 4, 5.

80 Jean Sasson, *Princess: A True Story of Life behind the Veil in Saudi Arabia* (Georgia: Windsor-Brooke Books, 2010), pp. 94-5.

81 Author interview, New York, 2009.

82 Reuters, June 25, 2007.

83 *The Christian Science Monitor*, Aug. 13, 2010; “Iran: End Executions by Stoning,” Amnesty International, Jan. 15, 2008.

lms, and Christians, Jews, and Hindus who have fled Muslim lands, may feel haunted or followed when they see burqas on Western streets. Does their presence herald the arrival of Islamist supremacism?

Many Muslim governments know something that their Western counterparts are just learning. Covered women signify Islamist designs on state power and control of political, military, social, personal, and family life. Were these designs to be extended to the West, it will spell out the end of modernity, human rights, and the separation of state and church, among other things; in short, the end of liberal democracy and freedoms as now practiced.

Apart from being an Islamist act of assertion that involves clear security dangers and creating mental and physical health hazards, the burqa is a flagrant violation of women's most basic human rights. However, were the government to attempt to ban the burqa in the United States, a team of constitutional legal scholars would have to decide whether to follow the French ethnicity- and religion-neutral approach

of no "face coverings," "face masks," etc., or whether to ban outright the public disappearance of women's faces and their subordination in the name of Islam as a violation of their civil rights.

It is impossible for Western governments and international organizations to prevent the acid attacks or honor killings of women in Muslim countries who refuse to cover their faces, but why tie society's hands on Western soil? Why would Western countries prize the subordination of women and protect it as a religious right at a time when many Muslim states refuse to do so? When it is understood that the burqa is not a religious requirement but rather a political statement—at best merely an ethnic and misogynistic custom—there is no reason whatsoever for Western traditions of religious tolerance to misconstrue the covering of women as a religious duty at a time when the vast majority of Muslims do not see it as such.



Gazan Healer Murdered for Witchcraft

GAZA CITY—Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights condemned the murder of a 62-year-old woman, accused by locals of witchcraft, in Gaza City, Tuesday.

An investigation by the rights group confirmed earlier reports that unidentified men fired at Jabriyeh Abu Kanas as she sat in front of her house with her 75-year-old husband. She was pronounced dead on arrival at Ash-Shifa hospital.

In a sworn statement to Al Mezan, one of Abu Kanas' relatives said he witnessed the shooting. He told the rights group he was returning from buying Jabriyeh groceries and saw a silver Hyundai car, with blacked-out windows and no number plates, stop outside Jabriyeh's house. He heard what he believed to be muted gunfire, and then the car sped away, leaving his aunt bleeding from her chest.

Abu Kanas' relatives added that a fortnight ago two cars, a Mercedes and a Skoda, tried to approach Jabriyeh but fled when her family appeared.

Locals had accused the woman of practicing witchcraft and voodoo, officials said Tuesday. Her relatives told Al Mezan that she cured people using traditional methods.

Al Mezan called for a prompt, serious investigation into the murder.

Ma'an News Agency, Aug. 8, 2010

THE FINEST IN
**POLITICAL
AND
CULTURAL**
COMMENTARY



THE NEW REPUBLIC

SUBSCRIBE ONLINE NOW
TNR.COM

Ban the Burqa?

France Votes Yes

by Benjamin Ismail

On July 13, 2010, France's lower house of parliament, the National Assembly, approved a bill outlawing the wearing of "clothing intended to hide the face" in public spaces and slapping a fine and possible jail time on offenders;¹ on September 14, the bill was also approved by the French senate.² While the bill refrained from mentioning specific communities or religions, it was common knowledge that it was primarily aimed at the Muslim full body and face-concealing garments, the *niqab* and the *burqa*. Justice Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie, who presented the bill to parliament, had specifically argued that being forced to wear these Muslim garments "amounts to being cut off from society and rejecting the very spirit of the French republic that is founded on a desire to live together." President Nicolas Sarkozy was even more forthright, stating that "the burqa is not welcome in France because it is contrary to our values and contrary to the ideals we have of a woman's dignity."³

An increase in the number of immigrants and converts to Islam in France wearing the full-face cover had set off alarm bells about indigenous culture and traditions,⁴ and the prolonged parliamentary debates preceding the vote had centered on fears for the future of French values and the republic. How well founded were these fears? And why did the government decide to predicate the ban on a religiously and ethnically-neutral rationale rather than on the actual considerations underlying it?

RUN-UP TO THE VOTE

The 577-seat National Assembly approved the law with 335 votes to one out of a total of 339 votes. After having been amended, the bill set a maximum of a €150 fine per breach and penalties of up to €30,000 and a year in jail

(doubled if the victim is a minor) for anyone forcing a person to cover his or her face in public.⁵ "Democracy thrives when it is open-faced," enthused Alliot-Marie.⁶

Opponents of the bill quickly pointed to the small number of women wearing the burqa and the niqab; and indeed, a 2009 Ministry of the Interior study estimated the number of

Benjamin Ismail holds a degree in Chinese language and civilization and a master of arts in advanced international studies from Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales, Paris. He specializes in Sino-Central Asian relations, studying the role that Islam plays.

1 No. 675, Sénat, July 13, 2010.

2 Associated Press, Sept. 14, 2010.

3 *The New York Times*, July 14, 2010.

4 "Étude d'impact: interdisant la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public," Assemblée Nationale, Paris, May 2010.

5 No. 675, Sénat, July 13, 2010.

6 *BBC News*, July 13, 2010.

women wearing the burqa and the niqab at 1,900, including 270 living in French territories overseas.⁷ Yet it was not the phenomenon that alarmed both parliamentarians and the public at large—a Pew Research Center poll done in April and May 2010 found that 82 percent of French voters favored the ban⁸—but rather its underlying trends, notably that two-thirds of niqab and burqa wearing women were of French nationality, including many second and third generation immigrants.

THE SITUATION IN EUROPE

The bill put France at the forefront of proactive states within the European Union, alongside Belgium, which had passed a similar law on April 29, 2010.⁹ The Spanish government, after some local initiatives to ban full-face covers in public buildings, intends to present a law on the freedom of religion that will restrict their use in public places.¹⁰ In Germany, there is no general prohibition on concealing the face though the issue has been hotly debated for quite some time, and a few

Brussels prefers to leave its member states wiggle room to legislate on the matter of face-veiling.

local bans, especially in schools, have taken place. In Denmark, wearing the burqa and the niqab in public places has been restricted since January 2010 while in the Netherlands, several bills prohibiting the burqa and the niqab, notably in the education and public sectors, are under

preparation. In Britain, by contrast, the newly-formed Conservative-Liberal-Democrat coalition seems to have taken a rather contrarian ap-

proach; Immigration Minister Damian Green precluded such a move as “rather un-British” while Environment Secretary Caroline Spelman suggested that wearing the burqa could be seen as an “empowering” feminist statement.¹¹

This diversity of official attitudes and legislative approaches underlines the relative absence of an official EU position as Brussels prefers to leave its member states the wiggle room to legislate on the matter so long as they respect the European Convention on Human Rights. In this regard, the European Court of Human Rights had its say in 2005 in response to a writ by a Turkish student who objected to the burqa ban at the University of Istanbul. The court stipulated that freedom of conscience, protected by article 9 of the convention, “does not always guarantee the right to behave in a manner governed by a religious belief and does not confer on people who do so the right to disregard rules that have proved to be justified.”¹² A later attempt by Turkey’s Islamist prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, to pass a regulation allowing the headscarf in universities was struck down by the Turkish Constitutional Court.¹³

In France, a similar “law on secularity and conspicuous religious symbols in schools” was passed on March 15, 2004, banning the wearing of the hijab (traditional Muslim headscarf) in public primary and secondary schools, alongside other symbols including crosses and the Star of David, and other clothing denoting religious affiliation. But, since the wearing of the full-face cover was almost nonexistent in the early 2000s, no additional law on the matter was passed until July 2010.

To be sure, in June 2009, following violent protests at NATO’s sixtieth anniversary summit in Strasbourg, a decree relating to illicit concealment of the face during public demonstrations was passed but was, at the time, aimed primarily

7 “Étude d’impact,” May 2010.

8 “Widespread Support for Banning Full Islamic Veil in Western Europe,” Pew Global Attitudes Projects, Washington, D.C., July 8, 2010.

9 *Fox News*, Apr. 29, 2010.

10 *La Croix* (Paris), July 4, 2010.

11 *The Daily Telegraph* (London), July 17, 19, 2010.

12 *Leyla Şahin v. Turkey*, European Court of Human Rights, Strasbourg, Nov. 10, 2005.

13 *The New York Times*, Feb. 10, 2008; Pierre Tristam, “Turkey at Loggerheads with Itself over Veil Ban,” *About.com*, June 9, 2008.

at masked delinquents.¹⁴ It was only after a string of recent incidents involving women with full-face coverings—refusal of a wedding by a mayor,¹⁵ denial of French citizenship for wearing the burqa,¹⁶ the booking of the first woman driver for wearing the niqab—that the wearing of these attires became a hot public issue.

Appearances, however, are often deceiving. Rather than the hasty outcome of vigorous public debate, the government's bill was the result of much longer and more deliberative discussions on the legal, cultural, religious, political, and social aspects of legislating a ban, discussions which had begun in the French National Assembly two years earlier. These

deliberations convinced the government to change the legal basis used to ban the niqab and burqa from the principles of secularism, gender equality, and other principles of a liberal democracy to the more politically correct and less contentious justification of maintaining public order.

FIRST ATTEMPTS

The first bill dealing with niqab banning was the so-called proposal No. 1121 “to fight against attacks on women’s dignity from certain religious practices,” presented by Member of Parliament (MP) Jacques Myard on September 23, 2008.¹⁷ In the explanatory memorandum introducing the bill, Myard pointed to the March 2004 school

¹⁴ *Le Monde* (Paris), June 20, 2009.

¹⁵ *Le Figaro* (Paris), Oct. 12, 2007.

¹⁶ *L'Express* (Paris), July 11, 2008.

¹⁷ No. 1121, Assemblée Nationale, Sept. 23, 2008.

French justice minister Michele Alliot-Marie (left) is greeted by Lebanese interior minister Ziad Baroud (right) at Rafik Hariri International Airport, Beirut, April 19, 2009. Alliot-Marie, who presented the bill to the French parliament, had specifically argued that being forced to wear face-concealing Muslim garments “amounts to being cut off from society and rejecting the very spirit of the French republic.”

ban, noting that its application had not created any “major incident.” If the hijab was considered “a distinctive and proselytizing” sign, he reasoned, surely the niqab could not but be viewed in the same vein. While carefully refraining from targeting the full-body cover directly, he recalled the June 27, 2008 decision of the State Council validating a decree that had refused French citizenship to a Moroccan Muslim on the grounds that she was wearing the burqa. The decree had defined such dress as incompatible with the basic values of the French community, notably the principle of gender equality.

The proposed bill suggested a €15,000 fine and two months’ imprisonment for anyone on French territory concealing his or her face or encouraging others to do so, thus legislating two offenses punishable by the law. The bill stipulated the doubling of sentences for repeat offenders and allowed authorities to deport foreign offenders. It also noted that the prohibition referred to the “concealment of the face” and



In the run up to the full-face ban, President Nicolas Sarkozy made his position crystal clear: “The burqa is not welcome in France because it is contrary to our values and contrary to the ideals we have of a woman’s dignity.”

not to the wearing of any special garment. Though specifically referenced in the explanatory memorandum introducing the bill, neither the burqa nor the niqab, nor for that matter Islam, were mentioned in the bill itself.

Myard’s bill raised the question of restricting certain religious practices protected by French laws and the French constitution, the European Convention on Human Rights, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yet it provoked little public reaction,¹⁸ probably because of the global financial crisis, which consumed the public’s attention at the time. Not having been vetted previously by the Commission of Constitutional Laws, Legislation, Universal Suffrage, the Rules and General Administration (commonly called the Law Commission), the proposal was not reviewed by the National Assembly, which would eventually discuss only

¹⁸ Centpapers.com, Oct. 9, 2008.

the government bill.¹⁹ Yet it outlined the general gist of the debate in clear and unequivocal terms: The burqa and the niqab were clothes flaunting religious extremism that threatened the principle of laicism.

Almost a year later, on June 9, 2009, MP André Gerin and eighty members of all political persuasions (including Myard) proposed a resolution to the National Assembly “for the establishment of a commission of inquiry on the practice of wearing the burqa or the niqab on the national territory.”²⁰ The memorandum included the content of the September 2008 proposal but went a step further by explaining the present state of laicism in France and by commenting on current Islamic dress habits. The text spoke of “threatened . . . laicism” and evidenced the statements of a French imam in 2004 “in favor of corporal punishment for adulterous wives” as an example of where French Muslims could be heading. Regarding the niqab and the burqa, it said that they were “virtual, itinerant prisons” putting women who wore them “in a situation of imprisonment, and unbearable exclusion and humiliation.” The MPs further stressed: “We also know that to this dress is added a degrading submission to their husbands, the men of their family, and a denial of their own citizenship.” Finally, the proposed resolution recalled the September 15, 2008 decision of the High Authority against Discrimination and for Equality. This decision confirmed the requirement to remove the burqa during a language course given by the National Agency for Welcoming Foreigners and Migrations as part of a welcome and integration contract—an optional contract mainly consisting of a day’s civic training presentation and an individual meeting with a social assessor, which foreigners admitted to

¹⁹ This, however, is not an uncommon practice as a mere 10 percent of proposed bills become laws. They are important, however, in that they alert the government to the desires and concerns of the MPs, and in this respect Myard’s bill achieved its main objective.

²⁰ No. 1725, Assemblée Nationale, June 9, 2009.

reside on French territory and wishing to settle permanently can sign to show their willingness to integrate. On June 23, 2009, the requested commission of inquiry comprising thirty members was created to study the practice of wearing the “full veil.” Neither the burqa nor the niqab were mentioned in its mandate, as the expression “full veil” was considered more neutral and general.

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

On January 26, 2010, after six months of investigation, including the testimony of more than two hundred people in France’s major cities—of which about 10 percent were key figures of the Muslim community such as Dalil Boubakeur, rector of the Great Mosque of Paris, or international public figures such as Tariq Ramadan—the committee published its conclusions in the form of a 650-page report.²¹ After a lengthy exposition on the historical and cultural aspects of the dress code in Middle Eastern societies, as well as a psycho-sociological examination of these practices, and a comparative legal study of twelve countries—ten European countries plus the United States and Canada—the report concluded that wearing the full-face cover affected “basic [French] values as expressed in the motto—freedom, equality, fraternity—and poses a challenge to [the] republic.” Although the commission admitted internal divergences over details, the final conclusion underscored multiparty consensus among its members regarding the need for legislation.²²

Meanwhile, on July 27, 2009, fifty-four senators presented a proposal “to allow [for] the recognition and identification of persons.”²³ The proposed law prohibited an “item of clothing of someone in the public space that prevents their recognition and identification” and punished violations by one month’s imprisonment. Terms

like the niqab or the burqa, and even “full veil,” were visibly absent from the explanatory memorandum, yet upon closer examination, it was evident that these clothes had been taken into account in drafting the bill. Indeed, the preamble invoked article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which allows the restriction of religious freedoms to ensure public safety, indicating that the senators braced themselves for any religious opposition that could arise from this legislation. Basing itself on the legal concept of respect for public order, this bill clearly stood out from Myard’s September 2008 proposal, which had referenced religious and ethical rationales.

On February 5, 2010, MPs of the center-right Union for a Popular Movement proposed a bill “to prohibit the wearing of uniforms or accessories that have the effect of concealing the face in public places and on public roads.”²⁴ In its preamble, the bill referred to acts of masked delinquency and to the practice of wearing the niqab. The proposal’s main significance lay in its second article, which specified penalties on law violations. Unlike the two previously suggested bills, the latest proposal treated violations as misdemeanors, whose specific details were to be decided later by decree. This created a glaring contradiction between, on the one hand, the explanatory memorandum emphasizing the dangers posed by fully covered persons, such as the growing threat of terrorism, threats to public order, and sexual discrimination, and, on the other, the lightness of the proposed sentence, making wearing the full-face veil the least serious possible type of infraction in France.

Four days later, Senator Jean-Louis Masson underscored the evolution of the “law and order” basis for proposed legislation on the full-face cover by presenting his bill “to prohibit the

The ban used the justification of public order as its underlying rationale.

21 No. 2262, Assemblée Nationale, Jan. 26, 2010.

22 “Mission d’information sur la pratique du port du voile intégral sur le territoire national,” Assemblée Nationale, Jan. 26, 2010.

23 No. 593, Sénat, July 27, 2009.

24 No. 2283, Assemblée Nationale, Feb. 5, 2010.

wearing of uniforms hiding the face of persons in public places.”²⁵ In Masson’s opinion, it was impossible to legislate a ban on religious dress because of the principle of laicism which prohibited state interference in individual religious choices. However, public order could be invoked without “specifically targeting the full veil worn by Muslim women.” While using the justification of public order as its underlying rationale,

A National Assembly study described the wearing of the niqab as “symbolic violence.”

this proposal differed from the February 5 version by imposing one fine on women wearing the full-face cover for religious reasons and another for lawbreakers hiding their faces while perpetrating a crime. This differentiated penalty system stipulated a single €5,000 fine for the simple

concealment of the face (an offence that clearly applied to those wearing the niqab or the burqa), as opposed to a three-month imprisonment for masked criminals.

On April 27, 2010, the Union for a Popular Movement came up with a new proposal, this time for a resolution on “the commitment to respect republican values against growing radical practices that could undermine them.” By way of strengthening its case, the proposal relied on six pieces of landmark legislation: the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the preamble to the French 1946 constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of December 1948, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of November 1950, the 1979 U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of December 2000, as entered into force on December 1, 2009, and in particular article 20. Having concluded that the full-face cover was a radical and discriminatory practice

against women and that the principle of freedom of religion did not justify it, the French National Assembly reaffirmed its intention to implement all appropriate means “to ensure the effective protection of women who suffer violence or pressure, in particular women being forced to wear a full veil.”²⁶

THE ROAD TO THE BILL

Although the resolution’s single article was not legally binding, it underscored the clear discrepancy between the principles it reasserted and the rationale used in the previous bills. Indeed, in a report that had been ordered by the prime minister and handed to him on March 30, 2010, the Council of State, advising the government on legal affairs, including the preparation of bills, ordinances, and certain decrees, argued that a total ban of the full-face cover on French territory “could find no unassailable legal basis.”²⁷

This was not what most MPs thought. A study published in May by the National Assembly described the wearing of the full-face veil as “self-denial and a denial of others [that] forbids the establishment of a relationship between people. This practice carries in itself a symbolic violence which destabilizes the social pact.” Concealment of the face was not only an attack on the dignity of the human person that “attests to a fundamentally inequitable vision of relations between men and women,” the study added, but was also “a source of threats to public order.”²⁸

This parliamentary discussion was eventually followed by the submission of the government’s bill on May 19, 2010, for a total ban on the niqab in all public spaces and not just in places where public services were offered. The bill described the wearing of the niqab as

25 No. 275, Sénat, Feb. 9, 2010.

26 No. 2455, proposition, Assemblée Nationale, Apr. 27, 2010; No. 459, resolution adopted, Assemblée Nationale, May 11, 2010.

27 “Étude relative aux possibilités juridiques d’interdiction du port du voile intégral,” Conseil d’État, Mar. 30, 2010.

28 “Étude d’impact,” May 2010.

“symbolic violence” that ran counter to the “republican social contract” thus causing a disturbance to “the public order.”²⁹ Based on the jurisprudence of the Council of State, the bill stressed that “certain practices, even [if] lawful” might be “contrary to human dignity” and could therefore be prohibited.³⁰ As such, it provided for a total ban on wearing any clothing hiding the face.

The bill added the possibility of requiring offenders to serve a probationary period of citizenship. However, its uniqueness lay in its far stricter penalization of persons forcing women to cover their face than the female violators themselves, imposing a €15,000 fine and one year imprisonment on perpetrators. Previously, only the 2008 Myard proposal had targeted people other than those actually hiding their faces.

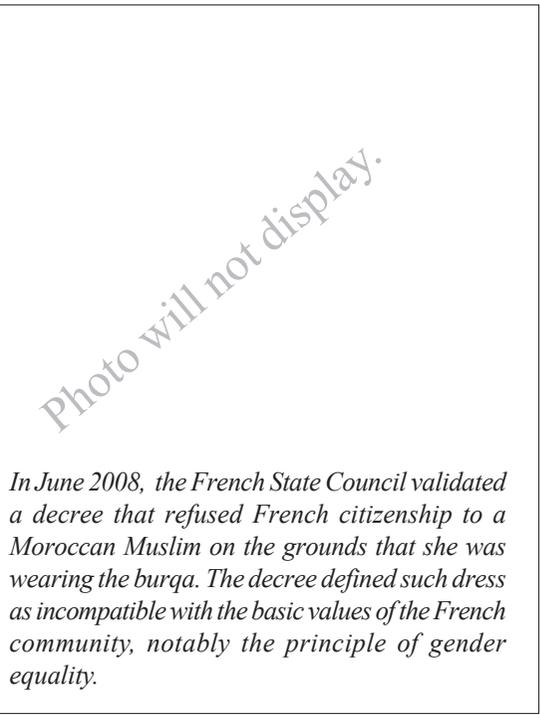
Socialist opposition parties responded by submitting their own bill³¹ the next day—the last proposed bill in the run-up to the July 2010 resolution. The opposition MPs argued against a “burqa ban” in all public spaces, citing the March 30, 2010 opinion of the Council of State which expressed doubts about the “possibilities of [a] legal ban on wearing the full veil.” They also referred to a February 2010 assertion by the European Court of Human Rights whereby “to condemn [people] for wearing these clothes falls under the ambit of Article 9 of the Convention, which protects, *inter alia*, freedom to manifest religious beliefs.”³² In the opposition’s proposal, only places of public service would be affected by the ban and only if the identification of the person in those places was deemed necessary. The difference was significant because public places (parks, shops, streets) were to be excluded except in cases where chiefs of police invoked public safety concerns as a justification for prohibiting face concealment.

29 No. 2520, Assemblée Nationale, May 19, 2010.

30 No. 136727, Conseil d’État, Oct. 27, 1995.

31 No. 2544, Assemblée Nationale, May, 20, 2010.

32 *Affaire Ahmet Arslan et autres c., Turquie*, European Court of Human Rights, Strasbourg, Feb. 23, 2010, sect. 2.



In June 2008, the French State Council validated a decree that refused French citizenship to a Moroccan Muslim on the grounds that she was wearing the burqa. The decree defined such dress as incompatible with the basic values of the French community, notably the principle of gender equality.

THE PUBLIC DEBATE

Despite the sweeping support for the ban in parliament where the burqa and the niqab were seen as contravening the principle of “vivre ensemble” (living together), some segments of the media, together with politicians from the opposition, sought to promote their own beliefs by deriding the ban as a political ploy aimed at creating a diversion.³³ After accusations by Interior Minister Brice Hortefeux that the husband of a woman driver booked for wearing the niqab was also guilty of polygamy and cheating on welfare, the case turned into a political squabble that exacerbated the already polemical “grand debate on national identity”³⁴ launched by the government in November 2009. Conducted on a national scale until

33 *Libération* (Paris), Jan. 21, 2010.

34 “Grand débat sur l’identité nationale,” French Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity, and United Development, Paris, accessed Aug. 26, 2010.

January 2010, the debate generated considerable controversy and drifted into other spheres not directly relevant to the issue such as “national identity” and “immigration.”³⁵

Indeed, the debate initially meant “to address the concerns raised by the resurgence of certain communitarianisms,” of which the case of the burqa was one example, and aimed at making all French citizens think carefully

about what it means in the early twenty-first century to be French.³⁶

An Internet website allowed anyone to contribute to the debate by consulting a textual database and glancing at the positions taken by leading figures as well as to respond to a questionnaire or to provide reflections. The debate was also conducted locally through meetings in each of the 96 depart-

ments and 342 districts in mainland France and in the departments and territories overseas. These meetings were chaired by local civil servants or by one or more national parliamentarians, MPs, or senators.³⁷

However, the debate on national identity was strongly denounced by various parties from the opposition. Even though “the government said that more than 58,000 people [had] participated in the debate on an Internet site,”³⁸ a poll conducted in January 2010 showed that only 22.2 percent of the French found the debate “constructive” while 53.4 percent thought it was an “electioneering move.”³⁹

35 *L'Union* (Reims), Feb. 4, 2010.

36 “Organisation du débat,” French Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity, and United Development, Paris, accessed Aug. 26, 2010.

37 *Ibid.*

38 *The New York Times*, Feb. 8, 2010.

39 *Le Point* (Paris), Feb. 1, 2010.

CONCLUSION

Does the vehemence of some media criticism imply that the banning of the niqab and the burqa is too sensitive and too complex an issue to be determined by law? Quite the reverse in fact. The question of whether France should legally ban the wearing of the full-face cover on its territory was answered in the affirmative, resoundingly and unequivocally, during parliamentary debates held over the past two years. The only remaining problems for its enactment are more a matter of form over substance, namely, what will be the best rationale for this legislation?

Nor should lingering doubts about the bill’s constitutionality be overstated. While the media rarely tires of reiterating the possibility of the French Constitutional Council or the European Court of Human Rights ruling against a ban—a ruling presented by opponents as a possible propaganda coup for religious extremists⁴⁰—this eventuality is highly unlikely. An EU decision to invalidate the French ban would have to be based on the unlawfulness of the government’s bill or some of its provisions. Yet this possibility has been fully anticipated by the government which, by changing the bill’s rationale from the principles of secularism or the dignity of women to public order, has greatly reduced the likelihood of invalidation. Moreover, and contrary to the received wisdom in the media and press,⁴¹ the extent of the prohibition specified in article 2 of the government’s bill is not fully challenged by the Council of State’s ruling. Although the council found no “unsailable legal basis” for a total ban, it does not automatically follow that such a ban would be unconstitutional. Furthermore, Belgium’s April 2010 ban on face-concealing attire in public spaces created a powerful precedent and made it easier for other EU states to follow suit.⁴²

40 No. 2544, Assemblée Nationale, May 20, 2010; *Le Nouvel Observateur* (Paris), Mar. 30, 2010; Reuters, Jan. 15, 2010.

41 *L'Télégramme* (Paris), May 21, 2010.

42 *Le Monde*, Apr. 29, 2010.

Thus far the French bill has triggered no reaction from the European Court of Human Rights or the European Commission, which is loathe to legislate on the subject.⁴³ Years of parliamentary debates preceding the ban may not have provided a definitive answer regarding the validity of a total ban. Nonetheless, they helped delineate the substantial contradictions between the republican principles of secularism, human, and female dignity and those of Islam and its radical drifts. Additionally, the discussions have helped sharpen the legal options available to implement the values that various parliamentarians have sought to affirm so forcefully.

It is precisely these tensions between long-held French notions of religious freedom and

governmental disinclination to interfere in the religious sphere that explain why one of the most avowedly secular Western societies has found it so problematic to legislate against dress codes that contradict its ideological ethos, despite overwhelming public support for such measures. Meanwhile, countries where Islam is the state religion, such as Tunisia or Syria, have had few qualms about banning the public donning of the niqab, basing their decisions on a desire to combat what Damascus termed an “ideological invasion”⁴⁴ and what Tunis called a “sectarian form of dress which had come into Tunisia uninvited.”⁴⁵



43 *Le Figaro*, June 28, 2010.

44 *ABC News*, July 20, 2010.

45 Noha Mohammed, “A Triple Whammy,” *Egypt Today*, Jan. 2007.

Of Men and Turkish Mustaches

ISTANBUL—Facial hair is not just about fashion in Turkey where a large, thick walrus-style mustache can mark a man as a leftist, and a neatly trimmed almond-shaped one can mark him a conservative.

The mustache issue most recently became a source of debate July 16, when Hüseyin Çelik, deputy leader of the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, brought the topic up during a discussion about the cadre of professional soldiers being formed to patrol the country’s borders in the southeast. In a television interview, Çelik referred to an anti-terror unit employed in southeastern Turkey in the 1990s and accused of many human-rights violations as an example of what the new forces would not be like.

“There were people who were so wrong in the Special Operations Teams. There were men whose mustaches were hanging down with the typical MHP [Nationalist Movement Party] militant look, driving around in private cars with long-barreled weapons,” Çelik said. The “MHP mustache” is characterized by its two ends extending downwards like the two sides of a horseshoe.

Çelik’s remarks angered MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli, who responded the next day, calling the AKP deputy leader an “enemy of Turkishness” and accusing Çelik of knowing nothing about the “holy struggle” the special teams were engaged in for years in southeastern Turkey.

“He is saying they are from the MHP because their mustaches were hanging downward,” Bahçeli said. “What will we do now? They [the AKP] are founding a private army. Will this be an army of people with ‘badem’ mustaches?”

Some conservative men in Turkey favor the “badem” (almond) style, a small and neatly trimmed mustache. Members of the religious Gülen community, meanwhile, are generally clean-shaved, especially the youth, the source added.

In many Muslim countries and communities, a full beard is seen as a symbol of piety. Radical Islamist groups, such as the Taliban in Afghanistan and Hizbul Islam in Somalia, have ordered men to grow their beards and trim their mustaches in keeping with strict Shariah mandates.

Hürriyet, Aug. 6, 2010

To access international literature as diverse as the study of sociology, start here.

ProQuest Sociological Abstracts offers a world of relevant, comprehensive, and timely bibliographic coverage. Over 890,000 easily searchable abstracts enhance discovery of full-text articles in thousands of key journals from 35 countries, along with books, conference papers, and dissertations, as well as citations to reviews of books and other media. This continuously growing collection is updated monthly, and offers backfiles to 1952—plus scholar profiles, browsable indexes, and a searchable thesaurus through the ProQuest Illumina™ interface.



The ProQuest Sociological Abstracts Discovery Prize.

Tell us how ProQuest Sociological Abstracts has advanced teaching and learning at your institution, and you may win the ProQuest Sociological Abstracts Discovery Prize.

Visit: info.csa.com/sociologicaldiscovery

ProQuest Sociological Abstracts

For a free trial, contact pqsales@proquest.com
or log onto www.proquest.com/go/csasoc today.



How the “Sons of Iraq” Stabilized Iraq

by Mark Wilbanks and Efraim Karsh

Testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee on April 8, 2008, Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top U.S. and coalition forces commander in Iraq, reported a dramatic reduction in violence levels and civilian deaths from fifteen months before when Iraq seemed on the brink of civil war.¹ Petraeus attributed this turning point to the increased numbers of coalition and Iraqi forces, part of the surge declared by President George W. Bush in January 2007, but he gave equal credit to the predominantly Sunni popular movement known as the Sons of Iraq (SOI). “These volunteers have contributed significantly in various areas,” he said. “With their assistance and with relentless pursuit of al-Qaeda-Iraq, the threat posed by AQI, while still lethal and substantial, has been reduced significantly.”²

Initially known as al-Anbar Awakening (Sahwat al-Anbar), the movement made its appearance in the summer of 2006 when local sheikhs, disillusioned with the insurgency that had ravaged the province during the past two-and-a-half years, offered their support to the coalition forces. While pundits and commentators have varyingly acknowledged the significance of the movement, less is known about the motives and the thoughts of its key participants, including those members of the coalition forces with whom the Awakening worked.

What motivated these Sunni tribesmen to sign loyalty oaths to fight for an Iraqi government with whom they had only recently battled viciously? What were U.S. officers thinking when they provided military training and money for arms and equipment to men who, more often than not, had been their enemies just a short time before?

While the program was successful in reducing violence and quickly spread throughout Iraq, it did not prevent the ruling Shiite elites from viewing the Sons of Iraq with suspicion. Nor have the achievements of the recent past guaranteed that a true reconciliation between feuding sides has been reached. Through a fascinating series of interviews held in late 2008 and 2009—as the program was being unwound—the

Mark Wilbanks is an Air Force lieutenant colonel. He served as a staff officer with the Multi-national Forces Iraq headquarters in Baghdad from May through December 2009. **Efraim Karsh** is editor of the *Middle East Quarterly*.

1 Associated Press, Apr. 8, 2008.

2 Ibid.

outlines of this unlikely social and military development can be glimpsed.

THE SUNNI INSURGENCY

The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and the collapse of Saddam Hussein's repressive regime unleashed sectarian and religious enmities that

Sunnis feared their possible domination by the despised Shiites and wished to regain lost power and influence.

had been kept in check by the tyrant. As early as April 2003, while coalition forces were still mopping up the last traces of Baath resistance, a prominent Shiite leader, Abdul Majid al-Khoei, who had just returned from exile, was murdered in the holy town of Najaf.³ Four months later, on August 29, 2003,

a car bomb exploded outside that very mosque, killing more than 100 people, including Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, leader of the Iranian-sponsored Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI).⁴ On February 1, 2004, another 100 people were killed in two suicide bombings in the Kurdish town of Erbil.⁵

While some of this sectarian violence was perpetrated by Islamist Shiite militias that sprang up in southern Iraq in the immediate wake of the invasion, the main instigator was the minority Arab Sunni community, about 20 percent of the total population, which had dominated Iraqi politics for centuries and which resented its exclusion from the new state structures established by the victorious powers.⁶ In no time, the "Sunni Triangle"—the vast area between Baghdad in the south, Mosul in the north, and Rutba in the east where most of Iraq's Sunni population resides and consisting of the four governorates

of Baghdad, al-Anbar, Salah ad-Din and Ninawa—was in flames.

For some insurgents, notably members of Saddam's regime and tribe, the overriding motivation was loyalty to the fallen tyrant. For others, such as the tens of thousands of soldiers and officers who had lost their jobs when the predominantly Sunni army was dissolved in May 2003, it was a desire for revenge. There was also a deep sense of humiliation felt by those who had long considered themselves the only people capable of running the affairs of the Iraqi state. All feared and resented their possible domination by the despised Shiites and their perceived paymaster—Iran's militant Islamist regime—and all wished to regain lost power and influence.

These grievances were further reinforced by tribal interests, values, and norms. The Sunni Triangle is a diverse mosaic of hundreds of small and medium-sized tribes, as well as a dozen large tribal federations, notably the Dulyam and the Shammar Jarba, each comprising more than a million members. Under Saddam, many of these tribes, especially the Dulyam, had been incorporated into the regime's patronage system. With such material benefits and political prestige curtailed after the U.S.-led invasion, many tribesmen joined the insurrection.

Such was the tenacity of the insurrection that in September 2006, Lt. Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli, commander of U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq, questioned the U.S. ability to defeat it. "It is our job to win," he said. "But it is not the kind of fight that is going to be won by military kinetic action alone . . . I think the real heart of [the matter] is that there are economic and political conditions that have to improve out at al-Anbar, as they do everywhere in Iraq, for us to be successful."⁷

THE ANBAR AWAKENING

To make matters worse, the Sunni Triangle's location near the Jordanian, Syrian, and Saudi

3 *Time*, Apr. 10, 2003.

4 CNN, Aug. 30, 2003.

5 "TIMELINE: Major Bombings in Iraq since 2003," Reuters, Aug. 22, 2007.

6 Although the Kurds of northern Iraq are also predominantly Sunni, they had never been part of the country's ruling classes and have consistently been oppressed by their Arab co-religionists.

7 Lt. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, teleconference news briefing, Iraq, U.S. Department of Defense, Washington, D.C., Sept. 15, 2006.

borders made it the first port of call for al-Qaeda terrorists and other foreign elements. The overall number of these infiltrators was insignificant compared to the many thousands of Iraqi insurgents—some estimates put the number of al-Qaeda terrorists in Iraq at less than 1,300⁸—but they exerted a disproportionate impact on the course of the fighting by recruiting significant numbers of Iraqi jihadists, providing invaluable military and logistical expertise, and mounting most of the mass-casualty suicide bombings.⁹ At the same time, al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) expected compensation for the security they helped provide to their local allies, often

crossing the line from payment to extortion. Muscling in on time-honored smuggling routes and trying to forcibly wed women in order to build tribal ties exacerbated tensions. But AQI began to overreach in their efforts to control the area. A U.S. Marine colonel cited this example:

Fallujah ... I remember the day [March 2007] that I got there. I think it was the secretary of the city council, his nephew ... a 12-year old boy [who] was hit by AQI right on the main street in Fallujah. Ran him over with a vehicle several times. Broke several, maybe all his bones. Then threw him on the door step of the secretary of the council's house and shot him in front of everybody. ... We couldn't get there. Everybody got there too late. The populace knew who did it. They knew why



Wilbanks photo

Camp Blue Diamond in Ramadi is the location where an Iraqi sheikh, a high value target, made first contact with an offer to help Iraqi and coalition forces fight al-Qaeda. Said a U.S. Army captain, "It was really an exercise in good faith." The camp is now an Iraqi base.

they did it. ... They had had it. That was it. They stopped. They stopped listening to AQI. They turned.¹⁰

Al-Qaeda's overreaching was coupled with a growing awareness that the Americans, who did not interfere with traditional sources of revenue or seek to change tribal custom, would eventually leave. AQI, on the other hand, was determined to impose its version of Shari'a (Islamic law) on the entire population as a stepping stone to the creation of the worldwide Muslim community (*umma*).

It was this realization that led to the advent of the Sahwa or Awakening movement. With the coalition anxious for local allies who would help defeat the insurgency and prevent its retrenchment, and a growing number of ordinary Sunnis and tribal leaders increasingly disillusioned with the mayhem and dislocation occasioned by the

8 See, for example, James A. Baker, et. al., *The Iraq Study Group Report* (New York: Vintage, 2006), p. 4.

9 Mahan Abedin, "Anbar Province and Emerging Trends in the Iraqi Insurgency," *Terrorism Monitor* (Washington, D.C.: Jamestown Foundation), July 15, 2005.

10 Wilbanks interview with U.S. Marine Col. Jeff Satterfield, Multinational Force West, Camp Ramadi, Fallujah, Nov. 12, 2009.

Photo will not display.

Being “concerned local citizens” (as they were initially called by the coalition) rather than professional soldiers, the Sons of Iraq were not allowed to carry out offensive operations and were tasked to perform defensive missions such as manning checkpoints and providing intelligence on insurgent activities and locations.

fighting, a meeting of minds was only a question of time. The acting national security advisor to the Iraqi government Safa Hussein al-Sheikh explained:

Most people don't know that the first time we thought about the Sons of Iraq was ... in 2005 ... Things were getting worse from a security point of view ... This was opposed directly and strictly by the leadership of the MNF [Multinational Forces] at that time because they thought this was the creation of militias ... Then at the end of 2005—at that time al-Qaeda had almost full control of Anbar province and other areas—something happened on the border with Syria. It was the Albu Mahan tribe and another tribe, al-Karabla, big tribes on the border. They live mostly on smuggling ... And one of these tribes made some kind of an agreement of understanding with al-Qaeda ... So both tribes there were fighting between themselves ... My colleagues and I advised that we should support the tribes against the tribe [that was allied] with al-Qaeda.¹¹

On most occasions, however, the tribes made the first offers to cooperate. A U.S. Army captain related his experience with a first contact:

We had gotten a call in the TOC [Tactical Operations Center], and we were located in Camp Blue Diamond. North of the river was our task force headquarters. And there was a report that one of our task force level HVTs, high value targets enemy personnel, was at the gate and asking to come in and talk with our task force commander ... Hindsight being twenty-twenty and seeing how it played out, it doesn't seem as alarming, but at this time, he was a high value target, was known or had allegedly ... been involved with attacks against coalition forces, had been successful, had been a leader ... How do you react? There had not been a precedent set for something like this. We had never seen anything like this. So it was really an exercise in good faith and you know those were some tense times.¹²

A former insurgent-turned-Sahwa fighter gave his side of the story:

No one supported me in my work but the American forces. They did that because I brought a backhoe, and I bermed all the roads in my area. I left only one road [open] with a checkpoint on it, so I can control my neighborhood since I have only thirteen people working for me. My house is high, so I can monitor the entire area. Even the Americans, they couldn't drive through these [berms] with their tanks and Humvees, but I told them: “There's no need, this is a safe area.” The area is about ten kilometers by ten, maybe less. It was closed for all but me. No one can come through this area without being noticed. I was in constant contact with the American

11 Wilbanks interview with Safa Hussein al-Sheikh, former Iraqi deputy national security advisor, International Zone, Baghdad, Oct. 28, 2008.

12 Wilbanks interview with Capt. Christopher P. Dean, Task Force 237, 1st Armored Div., Camp Echo, Diwaniyah, Sept. 28, 2009.

soldiers in the area, and we agreed that they will come to my area dismounted. My area is very close to Blue Diamond, which was an American base. The distance between us was three kilometers, so the Americans would stop with their tanks at a distance and would then come to us on foot.¹³

By mid-August 2006, such low level contacts had led to a formal meeting between Col. Sean MacFarland, the newly appointed commander of U.S. forces in Ramadi, and Sheikh Abd as-Sattar Abu Risha, a prominent tribal leader, who had just issued a manifesto denouncing al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and pledging support to U.S. forces. MacFarland described the scene at Abd as-Sattar's home: "The walls were just lined with guys in sheikh robes. ... I go down and see the governor about once a week, and it's just me and the governor. I go into Sheikh Sattar's house, and the place is packed."

Soon an agreement was struck, and by November, an estimated 1,500 recruits sent by the sheikh had joined the revamped police training program for Ramadi. In comparison, a mere forty men had previously signed on to the Ramadi police force, then numbering only 150 officers in total.¹⁴

This collaborative pattern spread rapidly throughout the province, and before long coalition forces were providing training opportunities, first in Jordan then in Anbar, to the growing number of volunteers, who often had previous army or police experience although not to Western standards. A senior marine officer described the recruitment and training process:

You had to kind of read and write. You had to have, I think, twenty-two teeth. ... They had mixed standards, and we would vet them and, of course, BAT [Biometrics Automated Toolset System] them ... And so this is all good stuff. But we would build the police and the army by recruiting. And they would

recruit and basically use the sheikhs. The next day six hundred or seven hundred guys would show up, and we would put them through the process. Who was eligible, who met the criteria to join the army or the police. So we built the first and seventh Iraqi army divisions, and we increased the police from about 5,000 to almost 28,000 in that year. And that was the Sons of Anbar.¹⁵

After a probationary period, the volunteers were allowed to carry their own weapons, which many of them bought with money provided by the coalition. There was also an effort to train Iraqi women—the "Daughters of Iraq"—to replace female Marines responsible for female body searches at checkpoints.

Being "concerned local citizens" (CLC, as they were initially called by the coalition), rather than professional soldiers, the Sahwa volunteers were not allowed to carry out offensive operations. Instead, they were tasked to perform defensive missions such as manning checkpoints and providing intelligence on insurgent activities and locations. The dividing line between these activities and actual participation in fighting was, however, more often than not, blurred. A junior U.S. officer recalled:

The Sunnis knew where al-Qaeda fighters lived and worked because they had harbored them.

Although the CLCs were not supposed to be used offensively, there was no stopping them this day because they were pretty amped up about losing some of their friends.

I was on a roof, and I'm talking to F-16s that are flying around, and we've got air weapons teams, and there is a lot of activity ... we're getting ready to move out. Maybe four or five CLCs, a couple of IPs [Iraqi police], a couple of SWATs [Special Weapons and Tactics], ISF [Iraqi Security

13 Wilbanks interview with Gen. Tariq al-Asal, police chief of Anbar province, Ramadi government official and former Sons of Iraq leader, Nov. 12, 2009.

14 *Time*, Dec. 26, 2006.

15 Wilbanks interview with Satterfield, Nov. 12, 2009.

Forces]. It is just this big mix of dudes.

I talked to the [Sahwa leader] ... who spoke English: "I'm going to be bounding up this way, and we're going to get there. You'll provide over watch, we'll go in and take it. When we say it's clear, then we'll pull you guys in and then we'll leave you guys up there to control the area."

And he maneuvered his guys up there. And it was just an amazing day.¹⁶

The new recruits proved particularly efficient in the fight against the al-Qaeda jihadists and their local allies. The Sunnis knew where al-Qaeda fighters lived and worked because they had harbored them initially, and they had no qualms about using the same brutal methods in fighting back. This resulted in a swift routing of al-Qaeda in a revenge-based frenzy: "They hunted al-Qaeda down with a vengeance. They dragged al-Qaeda guys through streets behind cars ... they had videos of feet on the altars in

mosques ... It was pretty much just a ruthless slaughter."¹⁷ An Iraqi official recalled how a tribal sheikh gleefully told him how he had a certain al-Qaeda operative beheaded: "And then he smiled and said, 'I want to show you something you will like.' One of the [al-Qaeda] people who

tried to assassinate him, and he showed me on the telephone a picture of a head."¹⁸

At times the savage war against al-Qaeda pitted members of the same tribe against each other. A U.S. colonel recounted this example:

The Zobai tribe came under a lot of friction. They literally told us to stay out of the

Habanniya Zoba village-Khandari area for seventy-two hours because Zobai against Zobai were going to fight. Al-Qaeda against the tribe ... al-Qaeda would come into the village, and they would sit down and have a meeting. It is tribal, and they would negotiate, and if they couldn't solve the negotiations, then there was going to be a fight. After twenty-four hours of fighting, they couldn't handle it, and they asked us to come in and support them. So for about the last week of March, we had a fairly significant fight, and for the Zobais, that was the first example and demonstration from the U.S. side that, yes, we will fight against al-Qaeda, and we won't arrest you.¹⁹

HELPING THE SURGE

Within a year of its advent, the Awakening movement had dramatically changed the security situation in Anbar with monthly attacks dropping from some 1,350 in October 2006 to just over 200 in August 2007.²⁰ By now, the movement had been established on a national basis as the coalition sought to replicate its success in other parts of Iraq. It played a particularly prominent role in improving the security situation in Baghdad as part of the troop surge, helping to slash murders by 90 percent and attacks on civilians by 80 percent, as well as destroying numerous insurgent networks. Its contribution in other provinces was no less substantial: By the end of the year, al-Qaeda leaders admitted that their forces throughout Iraq had been decimated by over 70 percent, from 12,000 to 3,500.²¹

No less importantly, the Sahwa eventually became a tool for promoting sectarian reconcili-

The Iraqi government was slow to acknowledge the merits of the Awakening movement.

16 Wilbanks interview with U.S. captain, former platoon leader, 2-23 Infantry from 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Div., Muqadadiya, at Camp Victory near Baghdad Airport, Aug. 14, 2009.

17 Wilbanks interview with anthropologist David Matsuda, Baghdad, Sept. 14, 2009.

18 Wilbanks interview with S. H. al-Sheikh, Oct. 28, 2008.

19 Wilbanks interview with Col. Kurt Pinkerton, former lt. col. and commander, 2-5 Cavalry Aviation Brigade, Abu Ghraib, Nov. 9, 2009.

20 Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander, Multinational Force-Iraq, "Report to Congress on the Situation in Iraq," Sept. 10-11, 2007.

21 Farooq Ahmed, "Backgrounder #23: Sons of Iraq and Awakening Forces," Institute for the Study of War, Washington, D.C., Feb. 21, 2008, pp. 2-5.

ation and weaning fighters away from sectarian militias. This process began in fall 2007 in the Baghdad suburb of al-Jihad, a Shiite neighborhood aligned with the radical militia leader Muqtada al-Sadr, where the government sought to elicit mass participation in the Awakening program. Working with these Shiites was difficult because Sadr forbade anyone from dealing with the Americans. Yet, he would broker a cease-fire and enforce it by passing the names of Mahdi Army leaders whom he could not control to the Iraqi government for arrest or elimination with the knowledge that this information would be shared with coalition forces. An Iraqi official recalled:

It was a really ambitious project. There were some successes in al-Jihad in which we brought people from the Sadrists and included them in the Sahwas with close cooperation from Colonel Franks who was the local commander there, and he is an excellent man. His mind is very well-oriented to these kinds of activities. And we first had to talk to the Sadrists in the areas. The environment there is better than any place else to include the Sadrists into the Sahwas because these Sadrists were surrounded by areas of Sunnis.

There was a funny discussion with the leaders there of the Sadrists when I told them. [Usually with] Shiite people, I try to appease their fears and their concerns. [But] I did the opposite there. Increased their fears.

They are not the majority, and they do not have the upper hand. So this is one point. The other point is that the Sadrists, in general, do not have good financial support. And the payment in the Sahwas is pretty good for them. But they have a problem [in] that their leadership will denounce any person who talks to the Americans.

The general concern was that the balance of Sunni-Shiites would change. So I said to them: "It is in your hands. If you don't get your people to join, it will change, and you can do

Photo will not display.

In his April 2008 testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top U.S. and coalition forces commander in Iraq, largely attributed the dramatic reduction in violence levels and civilian deaths to SOI's military activities.

nothing about it." And it was a very hard time for them because they couldn't say, yes, because of Muqtada al-Sadr. So they tried to give me a message that "If we don't know and something is arranged, it is okay." [Laughter]

Once the Jihad area went, the rest of the Sadr areas wanted the money, and they followed suit. But other things happened, and this project wouldn't continue as we wished. When al-Basra operation came, in their minds, the process [ended. Still] al-Jihad was maintained as a quiet area.²²

This example was, however, more of an exception to the rule as the Iraqi government was slow to acknowledge the merits of the Awakening movement. In fact, as the coalition accelerated recruitment and institutionalized regular salaries to its members, the government remained wary of this large and predominantly Sunni force—which had grown to some 80,000 members by early 2008—and its future political intentions. A senior Iraqi advisor to the coa-

22 Wilbanks interview with anonymous Iraqi ministry secretary, International Zone, Baghdad, late 2009.

Photo will not display.

In 2008, the Iraqi government began taking responsibility for the Sons of Iraq from the U.S. Army. Here, SOI members line up at a Baghdad security station to receive their monthly salary from the government.

lition forces recalled the situation:

The Shiites thought, it is a conspiracy. That is: al-Qaeda cannot be tolerated, so now they came in other clothes [*sic*], and they are trying to surround Baghdad. And maybe the Americans, because of the violence, are desperate, and they want to bring the Sunnis back and that is why they support them. So this theory of conspiracy controlled the minds of the Shiites inside the government and popularly.²³

After much haggling, the Americans managed to persuade Nuri al-Maliki's government to take over the Awakening program and to incorporate it into the newly established security and state structures. In the words of a political advisor to Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, second ranking officer in Iraq at the time and source of much of this behind-the-scenes wrangling:

[What was] very interesting was the cultural difference. The Americans would come every day and say: "Look at how fantastic the Sahwa are and what they are doing," and the Iraqi government just didn't believe it. So the

Americans brought more power points—and bigger ones—and paraded them about pointing to all the great things the Sahwa have done. And then with Safa [Hussein al-Sheikh's] advice, we started talking about the bad things that some Sahwa had done. And once we started to admit that some of them were involved in violence and involved in bad things ... then the government felt at last that we were more trustworthy. So that was the famous meeting in December [2007] where General Odierno stood up and said, "Here are the bad things; these are the good things. We want the government really to take control of this program, and

this is what we suggest." And the prime minister said, "I agree with everything that General Odierno suggests."²⁴

FORGING RELATIONSHIPS

On the ground, young officers and soldiers knew little of the higher level maneuvering that went on between the coalition and the Iraqi government. For them, the Sahwas were not abstract programs but human beings who formed close relationships with their coalition colleagues. They suffered casualties alongside the coalition forces; their wounded shared rides in medical helicopters, and they formed the kinds of bonds of mutual trust and respect that can only happen in combat. A U.S. Army platoon leader explains:

We showed up to the JCC [Joint Command Center] to pick up the first round of CLCs we were going to institute across the city. It

23 Wilbanks interview with S. H. al-Sheikh, Oct. 28, 2008.

24 Wilbanks interview with Emma Sky, political advisor to Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, International Zone, Baghdad, Oct. 28, 2009.

was just very comical because I've got about half of my platoon with me, and my other half is holding a patrol base where I am getting ready to take some of these guys. We're sitting around the JCC outside the mayor's office and all of the sudden, they come walking in. And they're proud, they're happy, they're like, "I'm part of this thing, and we are going to go do this, and it's going to be great."

There ... were three groups. One we called the classic camouflage because they were all in the same uniform. They all had T-shirts with ... a regular woodland camouflage print on it, and it also had the text that read "Classic Camouflage." ...

The next group that comes in we called them the Headlamp Platoon because, for some reason, every single one of those guys had a headlamp. So they had no uniform, but they had headlamps. And the last group we called the AQI group because they came in, and ... they looked just like jihadists. There was one guy Hassam ... He was a natural leader. ... he looked American ... He spoke English pretty well, and he was [a] teacher.

I don't know what [their agenda] was ... But for a period of time, their agenda and our agenda were perfectly aligned, and we all worked together pretty well to secure that place. And we formed pretty tight relationships and we earned their trust ... they earned our trust.²⁵

Respect was mutual. Officers who attempted to speak Arabic and who attended Iraqi events and participated in tribal customs were respected. As an Iraqi general and former Sons of Iraq member recalled:

Lt. Col. Silverman is an extraordinary officer. He is special. He worked in the al-Jazeera area ... So he has been able to establish an excellent relationship with these tribes. The relationship that they had between the U.S. Army and the tribes was abnormal ... extraordinary ... awesome. If they have a fu-

neral, he will go to the funeral reception.

This is our tradition. This is our culture, and he was doing the same thing. He would go into the funeral, and he would say *salam aleikum*. And he would recite *al-Fatiha*. I'm sure he doesn't know what it means, *al-Fatiha*, or he cannot read, but after he finishes, he would do this [wipes his hand over his face]. Exactly how the normal Iraqi people do it. And he would also pay and contribute [to] the funeral reception. The people, the sheikhs, the tribes, they liked him. They were impressed. He was Lawrence of Arabia, Silverman. If we had tribal conflicts, he would sit, and he would judge. ... The tribes liked the hookah [water pipe]. He would sit with them, and he would have his hookah with them. You would say this guy, he is an Eastern man. He is Iraqi, but in an American uniform.²⁶

The Iraqi general continued:

I would like to tell you the story of an American officer. His name was Patrick [Capt. Travis Patriquin, 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division]. He was a friend of Sheikh Sattar. Sheikh Sattar used to call him Hisham, not Patrick, because he had a mustache. He would always sit with Sheikh Sattar's kids. He was very close to the police.

He was an extraordinary person ... He got hit with an IED [Improvised Explosive Device]—got killed.

We named one of our police stations after him. We called it Hisham Police Station because all the policemen knew him by the name Hisham, not Patrick. Until nowadays Sheikh Sattar insists that we call the police station Hisham, so until now we call it "Martyr

The Sahwas formed close relationships with their coalition colleagues.

25 Wilbanks interview with former U.S. platoon leader, Camp Victory, Aug. 14, 2009.

26 Wilbanks interview with Gen. Tariq Yusuf Muhammad Hussein al-Thiyabi, chief of police, Anbar province, former Sahwa leader, Provincial Government Center, Ramadi, Nov. 12, 2009.

Hisham's Police Station." Hisham, who is Patrick.²⁷

Col. Richard Welch, an Army reserve officer with counterinsurgency training and a Special Forces background, did not stand out in a crowd, but that belied his intensity and tenacity. He took a pay cut from his job as a prosecutor in Ohio and missed his grandchildren's birth-

days and had been in Baghdad for four of the five years from 2004 to 2009. This put him in a unique position to develop relationships that kept people alive. One such relationship was with Sheikh Ali Hatem of the Dulaym tribe, whose grandfather had allegedly ridden with T.E.

By 2009, Washington had invested more than \$400 million in the Awakening program.

Lawrence against the Turks. Welch recounted his experience:

Working with the tribes and working with a lot of these religious leaders actually facilitated me getting connected with insurgent leaders on the Sunni side and ... militia leaders on the Shiite side. So I began talking with them about what we now call reconciliation ... talking to them about how to stop fighting, to try and join the political process ...

Most of the other groups out of Baghdad came out of these meetings with the tribal leaders and the community leaders ... getting them connected with the brigade commanders and battalion commanders. And they began to work with them ... [Those sheikhs interested in reconciliation] would call and say: "Colonel Welch, al-Qaeda is attacking us and we need help. We need supplies." [During] many of those phone calls you could hear gun shots in the background. You could hear the fighting going on. ...

I was out at Camp Liberty [near Baghdad airport] walking to the dining facility with my deputy and my cell phone rang. I noticed

that it was Sheikh Ali Hatem so I answered it immediately. He said, "Colonel Welch, I need your help ... Al-Qaeda overran Sheikh Hamed Village up in the Taji area, north Taji. And our tribe is getting ready to counterattack and take back the village. But we need you to contact the unit up there because we've seen helicopters flying around, and we don't want them to engage [attack] us ... So we need to let you know which ones." So I said, "Okay, we will take care of it." So I kept Ali Hatem on the line and sent [my deputy] back. I said, "You've got to get the G3 [operational commander on duty] you know." ... Because I couldn't move. I had to get the coverage for my cell phone where it was out at Liberty. So we finally were able to contact the unit, and literally, the helicopter pilot was ready to pull the trigger on them ... The commander told us that later. They were ready to engage these guys. But then instead they flew over watch and supported them taking that village back."²⁸

SHOW ME THE MONEY

Though there was initially no money involved for the Awakening movement, this issue quickly came to the fore. Just as tribal support for the "Great Arab Revolt" against the Ottoman Empire had been motivated by the glitter of British gold and the promise of booty (nearly half-a-century later Lawrence of Arabia would still be remembered by Bedouins as "the man with the gold"),²⁹ so the Anbar sheikhs were not immune to the allure of American money. Brigade level commanders doled out millions of Iraqi dinars and, in some places, U.S. dollars, every month, and by the summer of 2007 the movement was fully subsidized by the coalition. This was one of the reasons the coalition, rather than the Iraqi government, took the lead in the Sahwa program. As a senior Iraqi official explained:

28 Wilbanks interview with Col. Richard Welch, Forward Operating Base Prosperity, International Zone, Baghdad, Oct. 1, 2009.

29 Efraim Karsh and Inari Karsh, "Myth in the Desert, or Not the Great Arab Revolt," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Apr. 1997, p. 296.

27 Ibid.

Some people in some areas came to us and wanted to work with the government because they thought for some reason that it was not good for their reputation to work with the Americans to fight al-Qaeda. And our main problem at that time was that the government didn't have the means to completely help them. So at times we felt really embarrassed.³⁰

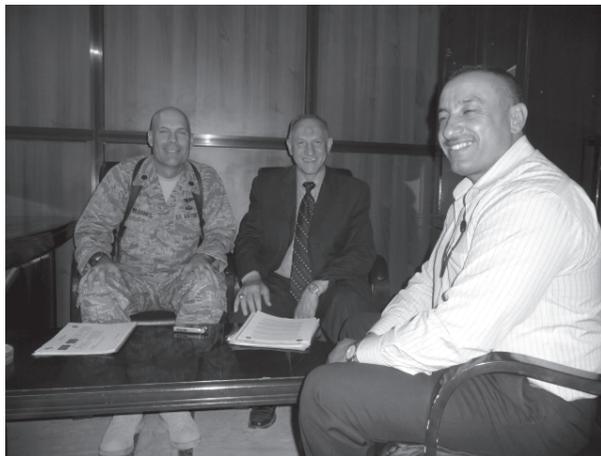
In addition to monthly salaries, the coalition also paid for results. One Sons of Iraq member reported:

Yes, we did that with the support of the coalition forces when we captured some gangsters. After missions, the coalition forces used to issue letters of appreciation for us and gave us a reward. And that was good. I got \$700 from the coalition forces: \$300 for salary and a \$400 reward for a total of \$700 in one month—U.S. dollars.

I saw gangsters trying to kidnap a girl. She was driving her vehicle, and I was watching them. I started to shoot and shot one of them. I released her and that is why I got the reward and letter of appreciation.³¹

Such letters of appreciation, on tattered pieces of paper and blurry from being copies of copies with the previous recipients names blanked out, were more valuable than money. A signed letter by the coalition, regardless of whether the words were level on the page, was a sought after status symbol.

In other places, where the security situation was relatively good, coalition funding of Sahwa activities was effectively little more than a jobs program. In the words of a local sheikh:



Wilbanks photo

Lt. Col. Mark Wilbanks (left), Maj. Gen. Muthar al-Mawla (center), and Abu Haidar meet at the offices of the Implementation and Follow-up Committee for National Reconciliation, the International Zone, Baghdad, September 15, 2009. Mawla was appointed to oversee efforts to incorporate Sahwa members into the Iraqi state apparatus.

Let's be honest. They established the Sahwa in our city after all the doors had been shut in our face because there was no chance to hold jobs. The first reason for establishing the Sahwa was because there were no jobs; the second reason—to provide money for the families; and the third reason—to protect the civilian people.

When we joined the Sahwa, we had to remind each other why most of us were insurgents ... Either get us a job or Iraq will go back to the way it used to be.³²

By January 2009, the U.S. government had invested more than \$400 million in the Awakening program with a median monthly cost of more than \$21 million, peaking at nearly \$39 million in March 2008.³³ For Petraeus, this was

30 Wilbanks interview with S. H. al-Sheikh, Oct. 28, 2008.

31 Wilbanks interview with Sons of Iraq member from Rusafa district, Baghdad, Forward Operating Base Prosperity, International Zone, Baghdad, Sept. 3, 2009.

32 Wilbanks interview with Sheikh Wathak Ozet Latif of al-Daqr area, Salah ad-Din province, Camp Dagger, Tikrit, Oct. 6, 2009.

33 "Information on Government of Iraq Contributions to Reconstruction Costs," SIGIR 09-018, Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, Apr. 29, 2009, p. 6.

a worthwhile investment that not only saved lives in Iraq but also U.S. taxpayers' money. As he told the Senate Armed Services Committee:

These volunteers have contributed significantly in various areas, and the savings in vehicles not lost because of reduced violence, not to mention the priceless lives saved have far outweighed the cost of their monthly contracts.³⁴

As with other fields of U.S. activity in Iraq, the overriding preoccupation with security and stability often resulted in mismanagement and waste. Being totally result-oriented, the coalition forces were primarily interested in having all checkpoints manned, arms caches uncovered, and the violence decreased, leaving the methods for achieving these goals at the sheikhs' discretion. This in turn resulted in serious accountability problems, such as ghost employees and poor control over the distribution of cash payments as the sheikhs habitually rotated people around and took a cut for managing the program.

The program was also vulnerable to corruption and embezzlement on the American side, as demonstrated in December 2009 when a U.S. officer was convicted of stealing approximately \$690,000 from funds al-

located to the Sahwa program and local relief and reconstruction.³⁵ The Implementation and Follow up Committee for National Reconciliation (IFCNR) cleaned up the program when they took over payments in late 2009 by paying the Sahwa directly. However, this did not prevent the sheikhs from taking their share ten feet from the payment point.

The disbanding of the Sons of Iraq has left a dangerous security vacuum.

34 Associated Press, Apr. 8, 2008.

35 Stuart W. Bowen, Jr., Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, "Subcontracting in Combat Zones: Who Are Our Subcontractors?" testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives, Washington, D.C., June 29, 2010, p. 6.

PATRIOTS AT LAST

On September 4, 2008, the Awakening movement's massive contribution to Iraq's national security received a long overdue official recognition when an executive order issued by Prime Minister Maliki officially named its members Sons of Iraq and called for the incorporation of its members into the Iraqi state structures.

The practical implications of this change, however, were far more elusive. Although the Iraqi government undertook to integrate approximately 94,000 SOI personnel (from the 100,000-plus membership list provided by the Americans) into the Iraqi security forces (ISF) or other Iraqi ministries by the end of 2009, by April 2010, only 9,000 had been absorbed by the ISF, and another 30,000 had been hired by non-security ministries.³⁶ These delays were partly due to the fact that many SOI possessed rudimentary educational credentials (in Baghdad, 81 percent of SOI members had only elementary or middle-school educations) and were, therefore, unfit for many government positions. But this also reflected the government's residual suspicion of the group—as well as other former militias—alongside lingering disagreements with Washington regarding the movement's size and the attendant funds required for its absorption.

While ordinary Sahwa members were slowly incorporated into the state apparatus, the movement's leaders, whose sense of honor prevented them from taking menial government jobs, were looking forward to political careers as part of the national reconciliation process. Their hopes were bolstered by the fact that the Maliki government, knowing that its treatment of the SOI would be viewed by many Sunnis as a litmus test for their future integration into the country's sociopolitical system, assigned the process to the IFCNR.

In what turned out to be a stroke of genius, the head of the committee quickly appointed one

36 "Quarterly Report to the United States Congress," Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, Apr. 30, 2010, p. 11.

of its members, Maj. Gen. Muther al-Mawla, to oversee the transition. An open and affable person, who wore tailored Western suits and readily shared pictures of his grandchildren, Mawla brought a paternal sense of security and calm to the process that put everyone at ease. He would bring in pastries that his wife had baked or share a feast with his coalition colleagues late into the night. At the same time, as former commander of the National Guard and the Iraqi Special Forces for the new government, he was more than capable of holding his own in the bare-knuckle world of Iraqi politics and conducting negotiations with those who, on many occasions, had been on his Special Forces' most wanted list.³⁷

The statements of Abu Azzam al-Tamimi, a former Sahwa leader in the Abu-Ghraib area, are most instructive on the issues surrounding on-going efforts at reconciliation. Sounding hopeful and relaxed at the al-Rashid hotel in Baghdad's International Zone, he expounded on the integration of the neighborhood's SOI in government jobs, his personal safety, and the forthcoming March 2010 elections:

Some of them are still Sahwas till this moment. I got a chance to join them to the Iraqi Security Forces back in 2007. In the middle of 2007, I had coordination with them but not control.

I have no relationship with [Brig. Gen.] Nasser [al-Hitti, commander of the Muthanna 3rd Brigade, Abu Ghraib]. He knew that he had no capability to arrest me, but he was trying to do that.

We are trying to create or establish our own political entity. And that is why we are going to set up a meeting tomorrow here in this hotel to discuss this issue with all the Sahwa leaders.

We have a joint committee now and are negotiating with [Prime Minister] Maliki. Yesterday [Sept. 4, 2009], we met with the main people from the Da'wa party ... Maybe we

are going to establish the one front together, or we will have other options.³⁸

Some former Sahwa leaders, such as Sa'ad Uraibi Ghafuri (aka Abu Abed), a major and intelligence officer in Saddam's armed forces, are not able to run for office or form political alliances for fear of being arrested. He is in Jordan waiting to get a visa, based on glowing recommendations from American officers who knew him, and seeks a new life in the United States. Some in the Iraqi government, however, see him differently as he wanted to control an area that the government also sought to control. Abu Abed, while in Jordan, discussed his past as sheikh of the Adamiya area in Baghdad:

Al-Qaeda in Iraq continues to pose a clear danger to the nascent Iraqi democracy.

After a while we defeated al-Qaeda from al-Fadil to Muadam, Palestine Street to Adhamiya [a Baghdad neighborhood]. It was just like one line, one road, we cleared all the area. And I used to ... set up meetings with all the leaders from al-Fadil and this Rusafa side weekly. People got to listen to them and to report about that. So all the Iraqi government was watching, and they were surprised how we defeated al-Qaeda in those areas, freed the people, and maintained stability and security in this area.

After that ... the Iranian ambassador in Iraq gave an announcement. And he said [that] all those Sahwas were like gangsters. They are bad people, and we need to get rid of them. ... I told him, "If the ambassador has an issue in Iran, let him go and solve his issues in Iran. He is not supposed to be involved in Iraqi matters. He has no right to do that." And after that I got the result. I paid for that because I got a phone call from the colonel [Welch], and he told me, "You need to leave your home because there is an arrest warrant against you for your disagreements with the

37 Wilbanks interview with Maj. Gen. Muther al-Mawla, International Zone, Baghdad, Oct. 15, 2009.

38 Wilbanks interview with Abu Azzam al-Tamimi, International Zone, Baghdad, Sept. 5, 2009.

Iraqi government.” So I asked him why? ... I have been fighting al-Qaeda, and we defeated al-Qaeda, and the Iraqi government they just gained everything, the benefits of that.

[Gen. Eric E.] Fiel, [Brig.] Gen. [Donald M.] Campbell, and even Gen. David Petraeus, and Gen. Odierno, he visited me in my office too.

During a reconciliation meeting, however, someone tried to kill Abu Abed.

I left my office with eight vehicles, and I used to use my own vehicle. It was a Toyota Land Cruiser armored vehicle, very, very strong. And when I went to Amel al-Shabby Street, I saw those seven hummers there, and the Iraqi soldiers they [had] been walking in the street.

[My security chief] said maybe the guard ... went to drink some chai. I told him no, this is unusual ... They [detonated] a big IED, and the sound of the explosion covered all [of] Baghdad ... I was flying, and I hit one of the vehicles, and I can still remember when I was covered by the rocks and the dust.³⁹

CONCLUSION

Just as the peremptory dissolution of Saddam’s army in May 2003 without the existence of an adequate substitute opened the door to insurgencies of all hues, so the disbanding of the social movement that had been instrumental in turning the tide against al-Qaeda in Iraq during 2007-08, and the decision to incorporate its members into ministries rather than the Iraqi security forces has left a dangerous security vacuum. Most SOI in Anbar were incorporated into the Iraqi police and army, but not so in Baghdad.

The 100-plus violent attacks during the March 7, 2010 elections serve as a stark reminder

that extremist elements—most notably AQI—continue to pose a clear and real danger to the nascent Iraqi democracy. Across the country, up to 367 people, including 216 civilians, were killed during March, and the pace of killing accelerated in April when more than a hundred people were killed during the first week of the month.⁴⁰

Some senior Iraqi officials are still unable to see the writing on the wall. Gen. Abud Kanbar Hashem Khayun al-Maliki, the Baghdad Operations Center commander, refused to allow the tidal wave of kidnappings, assassinations, and bombings that rocked the capital in the last quarter of 2009 deflect his determination to dissolve the SOI. On November 27, 2009, he stated:

By the time the year is up, we will fulfill the obligation of the order and employ all of them. ... Those people have sacrificed a lot, and there were a lot of lost lives and a lot of martyrs. Some of them were martyred for their country, and some were injured, and some were damaged in some way. This is a central plan for the Iraqi government. The Iraqi government was serious about this plan. And they wanted to make sure that this plan is successful and is implemented ... In short, the Sons of Iraq was an experimental plan to implement laws and enforce the rule of law [whose time has come and passed].⁴¹

Whether General Abud’s forecast is accurate, and more importantly, whether the results of the Sons of Iraq’s dissolution bode well for Iraq’s future remains to be seen. It behooves Washington, which, after all, has sacrificed much blood and riches to secure and stabilize this nascent experiment in democracy within the Arab Middle East, to reflect on these developments as it seeks to remove its military presence from the Land between the Rivers.



39 Wilbanks interview with Sa’ad Uraibi Ghafari, via Skype to Jordan, International Zone, Baghdad, Oct. 2, 2009.

40 “Quarterly Report to the United States Congress,” Apr. 30, 2010, pp. 47-8.

41 Wilbanks interview with Gen. Abud Kanbar Hashim Khayun al-Maliki, Baghdad Operations Center, Nov. 27, 2009.

Ali Allawi: “Iraq Got the Worst of All Worlds”

Ali Allawi, Iraq’s first post-Saddam civilian minister of defense, was born in Baghdad in 1947. He was educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the London School of Economics, and Harvard University. On top of a long and successful career as a merchant banker, he has held visiting posts in a number of academic institutions, including the International Institute for Islamic Thought and Civilization in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, founded by the Islamic philosopher Syed Naquib al-Attas, and the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies at Oxford University.

During the 1980s and the 1990s, Allawi was a prominent member of the London-based Iraqi opposition to Saddam Hussein’s regime, and in 2002, was one of the drafters of a declaration of Iraqi Shiites,¹ a statement that helped lay the groundwork for Saddam’s ouster.

Allawi returned to Iraq in September 2003 after forty-five years of exile and was made minister of trade in the Interim Iraq Governing Council, followed by a year’s stint as minister of defense. In January 2005, he was elected to Iraq’s Transitional National Assembly, and three months later, was appointed minister of finance in the Transitional Government headed by Ibrahim al-Jaafari. He held this post until May 2006 when he returned to private life.

Author of two prize winning books—The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace² and The Crisis of Islamic Civilization³—Allawi is currently a senior visiting fellow at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Efraim Karsh interviewed him in London by telephone on July 26, 2010.

A JUSTIFIED WAR?

Middle East Quarterly: With the benefit of hindsight, was the 2003 Iraq war justified?

Ali Allawi: The answer, I am afraid, is equivocal. It depends on what term you use to justify the invasion. If you launch a war that is driven by mainly moral or ethical considerations with a specific purpose of removing a terrible dictatorship and replacing it with something else, then yes, you can make a case for that. But the war was

never claimed to be a just war. It was waged in order to uncover weapons of mass destruction [WMD], so it’s like a *post factum* justification. On balance, the answer is yes—we removed the dictatorship; no—because the mismanagement and subsequent disaster that befell the country could have been and should have been avoided and, therefore, perhaps overshadowed the removal of the dictatorship.

1 “Declaration of the Shia of Iraq,” London, July 2002.

2 New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.

3 New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

**“What struck me most
was the incoherence of
American policy.”**

MEQ: Apropos weapons of mass destruction. As Iraq’s first minister of defense after the invasion, could you illuminate us as to what happened to them?

Allawi: It seems to be clear now that there was no serious Iraqi nuclear program in the wake of the U.N. inspections and that whatever had existed was either successfully dismantled or was just a bluff. The main issue is whether Iraq had the capability of developing weapons of mass destruction after the 1991 Kuwait war. It may have had that in 1989, and it probably came very close to it, maybe a few months or a few years at the most. But the removal of the key elements of the weapons program, together with the sheer difficulty of getting supplies and appropriate equipment, might have made the effort useless, and it was used primarily as a bargaining or threatening tool by Saddam. Whether or not this was known to the Bush administration, we will have to wait for some time before the smoking gun evidence emerges.

MEQ: Did the Iraqi government find any evidence of the existence of WMD or their possible removal out of the country?

Allawi: There is perhaps a general overestimation of Iraq’s ability to organize such a complex operation without access to the resources that Saddam had in the 1980s. The amount of money that came into Iraq then, some of which was used to fund this program, was simply not available in the 1990s. . . . I personally never thought back in the 1990s that there was a serious program. I thought it was a red herring.

MEQ: But then, how do you explain Saddam’s decision to risk total war? Given his all-consuming paranoia and utter conviction that the Americans, among others, were out to get him, why didn’t he simply let the inspectors into Iraq and let the whole world see that he had nothing to hide?

Allawi: There are a lot of inexplicable decisions

on Saddam’s part. I still cannot understand why he sent his air force to Iran during the 1991 Kuwait

war, why he didn’t withdraw from Kuwait when it became clear that the coalition was going to attack, or why he persisted in goading the Americans [in 2003] into an irreversible decision. These decisions could have been made by a paranoiac. But they could also have been made by a man who never understood the strategic or the geostrategic circumstances in which he operated, and there were not enough people around him who had the courage to explain to him otherwise. So, there was an element of paranoia but also an element of ignorance of how Western policymakers, especially in America, make decisions and stick to them. He saw things mainly in terms of the crude conclusions about human nature he derived from his upbringing and life experience. It’s like a street fighter’s version of how events play out on the international scale. He was basically a brute, a very intelligent brute.

MEQ: Still, this brutish worldview kept him in power for longer than any other ruler in Iraq’s modern history and made war the only viable option to remove him.

Allawi: The war came as a direct consequence of 9/11. Had there been no 9/11, American foreign policy was unlikely to have shifted this way. Could sanctions have brought this regime down? The answer is no, clearly not. Could the Iraqi opposition have achieved anything against Saddam? The answer is also no. Could a war triggered by supporting insurgents in Kurdistan spread to the rest of the country? The answer is clearly no. So from the Iraqi opposition’s point of view, it was really an extraordinary event that overthrew Saddam. Looking back, I think it was rather futile to try to do it after the 1980s.

MEQ: So perhaps the war’s “accidental” origin explains its catastrophic aftermath.

Allawi: What struck me most was the incoherence of American policy. It just doesn’t make sense

to undertake action of this size and scope—in some ways, very outlandish in terms of post-World War II international relations—only to allow that massive effort to deteriorate, like water slipping through your hand. The Americans really had only two choices: either to take responsibility for the consequences of the invasion and, therefore, manage the country until they changed its political culture, or to say, “We came here for this specific purpose; we have done this job. There are no weapons of mass destruction. The ideal of changing Iraq’s political culture has never been on the agenda. It’s time for us to get out.”



Ali Allawi

MEQ: How do you assess what took place?

Allawi: I know that Iraq is not Panama or Grenada, but it really got the worst of all worlds: the destruction of whatever dysfunctional state had existed, without anything replacing it that is coherently meaningful; with massive expenditure of resources in an unplanned and uncoordinated way that could have, in a more determined way, played a fundamental part in changing the country’s political culture. It’s not that the Americans didn’t spend money; they spent more money on a per capita basis than they probably spent on the Marshall Plan. But it was just so misguided and so ill-directed and not pulled together in a coherent strategy, with people who were indifferent to the long-term evolution of the country’s institutions. That just doesn’t make sense.

MEQ: When did you come to this realization?

Allawi: These issues became clear to me in September-October 2003 when I first went back. I kept a diary, and I made some of these observations back then. I argued that it was all going to end up in tears since there was no real effort to transform the country’s institutions and political culture. Rather there was an attempt to build on a political culture that had not been thoroughly reformed at the root and branch with a pseudo-democratic

superstructure attached to it without having a real chance of developing into a genuine, democratic culture. This, in turn, was bound to end up in a hybrid situation—a hybrid, authoritarian-democratic system with warped democratic institutions or supposedly representative institutions.

But the counterargument is that one was operating in a barren landscape. There were very few choices available to either the U.S., or the coalition, or the Iraqi exiles who came back into power, apart from the Kurds who had their long-standing, quasi-national organizations that rooted them in the country. Everything else had to be imported.

A DECENTRALIZED IRAQ

MEQ: Let’s take the counterargument a step further. In *The Occupation of Iraq*, you cite King Faisal I, founding monarch of Iraq, as saying (in 1932) that “there is no Iraqi people inside Iraq. There are only diverse groups with no national sentiments.” Likewise, you have recently argued that Iraq “is not a nation, at least not in terms of the commonly understood definitions of a nation.”⁴

⁴ Ali A. Allawi, “The Iraqi Crisis and the Future of the Middle East Order,” Nov. 4, 2009.



King Faisal I, founding monarch of Iraq, had no illusions about his new creation, opining shortly before his death in 1933 that “there is no Iraqi people inside Iraq. There are only diverse groups with no national sentiments.”

Has nothing changed during this 90-year period?

Allawi: There is obviously a sense of “Iraqiness.” The Arabs do have a sense that they are together in a kind of a long-term marriage, so to speak, in the context of the boundaries of modern Iraq. But there is nothing reflecting this communality at the level of loyalty to shared institutions or laws or to an identity that all parties adhere to and consider important. All view this identity as a corollary of its association to their own exercise of power. Take the Islamist parties, for example: In 2005, they were pushing for a decentralized, federal region, but once they began to exercise undivided power, the emphasis changed to the old Iraqi centralized state. There really is no common vision on the part of the various groups that constitute Iraq as to where the country should go and what kind of identity and role it should have at the end.

MEQ: What you are pointing to has been an issue for a long time.

Allawi: Yes, this problem has existed since the creation of Iraq in 1921, and nothing seems to have changed in a significant way. Regimes come and go, and they emphasize this or that aspect of the country, but there is no continuity in building national institutions that are free of sectarian considerations and are fair to the general population. The Baathists have perhaps been the worst of the lot, and their legacy is possibly the most detrimental, not least since it is etched even on the minds of their bitterest opponents. Thus, those who came into power used the levers of the Baathist state to their advantage rather than to reform and dismantle them (though at the superficial level they were democratized). The only difference is that now people are using the central state’s huge powers for their own purposes rather than for Baath purposes or Saddam’s purposes. If you wanted to get a job in Saddam’s days you had to be a Baathist; now you have to be close to the group that controls the relevant ministry. For the ordinary person on the street, nothing much has changed.

MEQ: You have recently argued that “there is nothing sacrosanct or inevitable about the survival of the Second Iraq State [i.e., post-Saddam Iraq]” and that “Iraqis must understand that this time around, the house may very well fall down on their heads if they don’t find a way of living together and enjoying being together.”⁵ Could you elaborate?

Allawi: This is the last fling of the Second Iraq State. If the political caste doesn’t come up with something that takes into account the huge changes and opportunities that arose as a result of the destruction of the old dictatorial state, their hold on power will drastically diminish and dissolve, and the state may not last beyond the next cycle. Something else may come up.

MEQ: Are you saying that Iraq may disintegrate

5 Ibid.

“Iraq as a centralized state cannot function in the long run unless there is political maturity or a dictatorship.”

into a number of smaller states?

Allawi: I don’t think so. It remains to be seen how Iraq will be configured—as a centralized state, as a binational state, a confederation, or as something in between. The jury is still out on that.

MEQ: What’s your preference?

Allawi: I would build the state along the lines of a decentralized, federal system where a great deal of responsibility is put on the provincial and local authorities, who are in many ways closer to the people than the distant ministry in Baghdad, rather than repeat the buildup of the central state whose forms were basically outlined in the 1920s. This is because Iraq as a centralized state cannot really function in the long run unless there is high degree of political maturity or a dictatorship. There is just no way around it.

MEQ: Why not?

Allawi: What exists now is, again, the worst of all worlds. There are central ministries trying to enforce their dysfunctional authority on provincial powers that haven’t built up any institutional depth, with a Kurdish region that for all intents and purposes is on its own. And if you superimpose on this state of affairs electoral cycles of four or five years, manipulated by rulers seeking to perpetuate their power, then the state will disintegrate were it not for the oil revenues. If you take oil out of the equation, Iraq is one of the poorest states in the world. But with oil coming in, there will be a lot of expansion. This kind of ramshackle system might continue, but it is like a car or a machine operating at a much lower level than it is designed for.

A FEDERAL MIDDLE EAST?

MEQ: This rationale seems to run counter to the conventional, pan-Arab criticism of the West,

whereby the great powers broke the unity of the “Arab Nation” by carving a string of artificial nation-states out of the defunct

Ottoman Empire. By contrast, you seem to suggest that they over-unified the region rather than divided it.

Allawi: The Middle East can only function through large, confederal arrangements. It’s not only a question of whether a state is centralized or decentralized, but also how you are going to relate to your neighbors. One of the reasons that empires were such a dominant form of government in the Middle East is because of the variety of nations and peoples. And when the format of empire began to be seriously questioned in the early twentieth century, there was no alternative on the ground apart from the ethnically-based nation-state. For a person like King Faisal, in these early days, to come up with a formula that would decentralize power—given that the British thought that the only thing that would keep Iraq intact was military force, whether theirs or somebody else’s—would have required an abiding historical sense or political foresight that didn’t really exist at that point.

MEQ: Did the Europeans do a better job elsewhere in the region?

Allawi: No other Middle Eastern state was organized on a decentralized basis. The French tried it in Syria, but it was seen as a way of weakening any resistance to them. Decentralization became a code word for acquiescence in colonial rule and for weakening the state, which was seen as the only agent of change, development, and empowerment. It was outside the zeitgeist as it were. The world has changed since then, and to use the same arguments to reject the ideas of decentralization, or federalism, and so on, is very disingenuous. There is no reason why you should use the arguments of the 1920s nowadays.

MEQ: But wasn’t the situation in the Middle East far more acute? Europe at least had the nation-

“Islam expressed ideally is not a religion of empire, though in practice it often took this route.”

state as a substitute for the fallen empires, but Middle Easterners were wholly unfamiliar with the idea of national self-determination.

Their local loyalties were superseded only by submission to the Ottoman sultan-caliph in his capacity as the head of the Muslim community. Hence, when the Ottoman Empire collapsed, the gap was simply too wide to bridge.

Allawi: Because of the West’s overwhelming force—political, military, technological, and so on—it became associated with everything that was good and new. But there are certain formulae that could have evolved or worked better than the nation-state paradigm given the context of the area.

MEQ: Such as?

Allawi: Until very late in the day, there was no great desire among Arabs to leave the Ottoman Empire and to create ethnically-based states, so there was always the possibility that a kind of non-national principle could be applied to the evolution or modernization of this empire. This opportunity fell for a variety of reasons in the post-World War I order and was replaced by a forced march into the nation-state without the necessary ingredients for the existence of such an entity beyond common ethnicity. So when I speak about empires as being kind of a natural state of affairs in the area, it’s basically that the national principle doesn’t work, except in ethnically homogenous states (with very few exceptions like the United States).

Even beyond the Middle East, in places where the national ideal has been far more firmly rooted, there are very few multiethnic countries that are functioning democracies. There is always a tension in such societies that frequently leads to breakup, which is what happened in Czechoslovakia and nearly happened in Canada.

MEQ: Can pan-Arabism substitute for the nation-state in the Middle East?

Allawi: Today you hear the argument that one of the effects of the war has been to isolate or quarantine Iraq from its Arab con-

nections. The idea of being an Arab and being a part of a larger unity or grouping has been current since the 1920s at the expense of any local identity. But it is precisely the dead-end way in which pan-Arabism was formulated, that excluded any local considerations, local divisions, and local sensibilities, that led to its demise well before the Iraq war.

Now, to accommodate this tension in a new political framework, outside an imperial structure or a confederal structure, you have to be centralized. So we go back full circle to the forms of government that successfully operated in the Islamic world, which were either empires or highly localized dynasties, which didn’t operate like modern states but were based on local factors and considerations. The Ottoman world could have easily survived as a kind of Turkish-Arab or maybe some Balkan Muslim confederation, held together by allegiance to a broader identity with highly decentralized, local authorities. But then, this always takes place at the expense of the centralized state and the military aspect of it, and in those days there were enough military threats for the Ottomans not to take this option too seriously.

MEQ: Does this mean the best solution to Iraq’s domestic instability is a strong dynasty or a leader?

Allawi: Either that or you must create a certain equilibrium at a much lower basis than the centralized state, so that issues of contention are not negotiated and resolved at the national level but become local questions. So, for example, the Shiites can have their own educational curriculum, and each province can define its own issues within a loose understanding of what Iraqi citizenship means. Attempting to build a central state now by cobbling together a coalition based on ethno-sectarian balances will only create a very strong political class that dominates the

state but not a real national identity.

MEQ: In other words, transforming Iraq into a mini Ottoman Empire.

Allawi: Yes. Perhaps it is too small a unit to have that kind of thing, but if you take this model and expand it, it can work for the Arab world.

MEQ: This is of course the opposite of the concept of pan-Arabism or *qawmiya*.

Allawi: Yes, but then it is more modern because it is more appropriate. With it will come a great deal of stability and, therefore, economic development that will increase the resources generated for the common good, which will hopefully not be wasted on military power. You can do a lot of good with this kind of system.

MEQ: A decentralized Arab world?

Allawi: A decentralized Arab world welded together by very strong agreements and contracts with institutions of a super-national nature that manage aspects of common interest. You can start that at a national level, the Iraqi level, and move from there. It's not reinventing the wheel. The U.S. has the same relationship with its constituent states. So you can weave coordinated institutions on top of a decentralized political order that is held together by a communality of purpose.

MEQ: Something like the European Union?

Allawi: Maybe the EU after the decentralization that is taking place. The EU still has a long way to go before it gets the right balance. Its member states are undergoing dramatic changes, and it will become basically a mosaic of interests held together by a strong bond, by a set of common principles, and a strong constitutional structure, one that is properly negotiated and implemented, around which every element of the state can be reconfigured rather than a slapped together affair.

Photo will not display.

Laborers work at a construction site in Baghdad's Sadr City, September 8, 2008. According to Allawi, the mismanagement and subsequent disaster that befell Iraq following the 2003 war "could have been and should have been avoided and, therefore, perhaps overshadowed the removal of the dictatorship."

THE IDEAL ISLAMIC STATE

MEQ: But how does this scheme conform to the Islamic order of things? Islam is about unification, not decentralization, isn't it?

Allawi: It is unification at one level. I am speaking now obviously as a person who believes in the tenets of Islam. To me Islam operates at the level of the other world, the spiritual level, the level of the unseen. But there are certain ethical virtues and principles that should be reflected at the level of a political order. Islam expressed ideally is not a religion of empire, though in practice it often took this route.

In an ideal form, Islam is an urban civilization, a civilization based on cities, on localities. It was most successful when it was a confederation of cities and dynasties not necessarily held to-

“Islamic history has the tendency toward chaos and disorder if there is no central power on top.”

gether by imperial force. These things wax and wane, have a certain dynamic. To me, an ethical basis of a government that responds to the

Qur’anic principles of justice is where you have as low a barrier as possible between rulers and ruled—the greater the proximity the better, the greater the interaction and engagement the better. Ideally this can presumably take place only in a medieval community of 10,000 people, but in the absence of this, we are talking about decentralized forms. The ideal forms of Islamic government are confederations of cities and regions held together by a certain common allegiance rather than an imperial power operating out of highly centralized, bureaucratic structures. The way that Muslim forms of government evolved over time, and the way that they subjected the ideal to the imperial standard is, in many ways, antithetical to the ideal of Islam and also antithetical to the post-modern options that we have. So, not so much a Dubai-type system but probably not too dissimilar from it.

MEQ: What changes would be necessary in Iraq to bring such a system into existence?

Allawi: If you look at it in terms of Iraq, I would spend a great deal of effort rebuilding the urban cultures of the country. Take Basra, which has the potential to live out its geographical destiny and to become a magnet to the [Persian] Gulf. This kind of networking of urban states and regions—maybe even in a post-nation-state formula—is something that would be not only desirable but would also push us to living the sort of life that reflects the ethical requirements of religion rather than thinking of Islam only in the context of political power, army, resources, etc. If you had, say, twenty units of this kind, probably the sum total of their contribution, both quantitatively and qualitatively, will be greater than one state, or super-state, based on these units. So, it requires basically a re-imagination of the future that is not confined by the dimensions of the past.

And you can start in Iraq because that’s where the challenges are very big. Perhaps 90 percent of the problems will go. A new dynamism

will emerge. Assuming, of course, that the fear of chaos, always under the surface, does not break out, which is something

that has bedeviled history, certainly Islamic history: the tendency toward chaos and disorder if there is no central power on top. But again, one has to rethink these things in modern times. One reason why small units did not become a viable alternative is probably because of this fear, because whenever one unit became more powerful and more forceful and had better military talent at its disposal, it turned itself into an empire. This kind of paradigm can’t hold anymore. There is a natural sort of limit to the ambition of small units when they get out of their bounds. One can’t just go out and invade the world anymore.

MEQ: In many ways this runs counter to human nature ...

Allawi: Persons claiming to be guided by the principles of Islam cannot but go except in this direction. You have to overcome the defense mechanisms that push you into taking this retrograde course. You have to transcend them. Obviously, it’s not possible to do this overnight, but you can do that in the context of well articulated policies that take into account all the risks of building these kind of structures, so that at the end, you’ll have a constellation of regions and states, and it will work well, including solving the larger problems in the area.

MEQ: I am afraid you’ll need a different kind of leadership for this vision.

Allawi: You are right.

MEQ: Is it one of the reasons you are not there?

Allawi: I am actually going there next week. I am now on the margins, but I try to do whatever I can to help develop Iraqi civil society, however imperfect the term is.



Egypt after Mubarak

by Lee Smith

The Middle East Quarterly is pleased to inaugurate a new section dedicated to the region's current affairs. Written by scholars, journalists, and practitioners, Dateline offers succinct analyses of recent trends. Its main focus will be capitals and flashpoints, but it will offer regular reporting from the United States where many of the Middle East's political issues are played out, and from Europe where Muslim communities have an increasingly prominent role. This feature begins with an article by Lee Smith on the imminent succession problem in Egypt as seen from Washington.—The Editors

As the Obama administration crosses its fingers in the hope that an Iraq currently without a government will somehow stabilize and justify the American blood and money spent over the last seven years, Washington has started to turn its attention to what has historically been one of Baghdad's rival centers of Arab power—Cairo.

A DEMOCRATIC HEREDITARY SUCCESSION?

Things are changing in Egypt as well, for barring any last-minute surprises, the ailing 82-year-old president, Husni Mubarak, is reportedly on the verge of enjoying the highest privilege afforded Arab rulers—to die in bed of natural causes. It seems almost certain that he will be succeeded by his second son, Gamal, the 46-year-old, one-time London financier.¹ The speculation inside the Beltway is that either Gamal will replace his father on the ruling National Demo-

cratic Party's (NDP) ticket for next September's presidential elections, or that Husni Mubarak will not last that long and the constitutional process will kick in, paving the way for Gamal's nomination and election.

Another Mubarak would spell continuity of a sort even if it meant an end to nearly six decades of military rule by the "Free Officers" regime. While it is true that Gamal has relationships with the military establishment not only through his father but also by way of intersecting business interests—some Egyptian industries are essentially military-run concessions—the fact remains that he is not a military man. "To be part of the military establishment is not just about your connections or family," says Muhammad Elmenshawy, Washington bureau chief

Lee Smith is a senior editor at *The Weekly Standard* and the author of *The Strong Horse: Power, Politics and the Clash of Arab Civilizations* (Doubleday, 2010).

¹ Daniel Sobelman, "Gamal Mubarak, President of Egypt?" *Middle East Quarterly*, Spring 2001, pp. 31-40; "Gamal Mubarak: 'We Need Audacious Leaders,'" *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2009, pp. 67-73.



Gamal Mubarak may not be entirely interested in following his father Husni as Egypt's president. His background is in finance and economics, and some analysts suggest that politics leave him cold.

for the independently owned Egyptian daily newspaper *Al-Shorouk*. “It means that you’ve worn a uniform, or you’ve fought in a war. Gamal is a complete outsider.”

This perhaps raises a historical analogy: The Mamluk sultans (1260-1517) tried to get their non-slave sons to succeed them and sometimes managed it, but they were not from the military slave caste and eventually petered out, to be replaced by a proper Mamluk. The bulk of Gamal’s task, at least early on, may be to ensure that history does not repeat itself.

Most Washington officials are comfortable with Gamal and see no fundamental change in the U.S.-Egyptian relationship on the horizon or adverse effects on the Egyptian-Israeli peace accord that is the foundation of the U.S. position in the eastern Mediterranean. Indeed, the fact that Gamal accompanied his father to the pre-Labor Day peace summit in Washington² that

also included Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas along with Jordan’s King Abdullah II, was read as a signal that the succession issue had been resolved.

Until now, Mubarak has not only declined to appoint a successor, or even name a vice president who would assume the presidency in the event of an emergency, but has also avoided discussing the political prospects of his second son. According to officials from the Bush administration, whenever the president asked after Gamal, the Egyptian ruler would quickly change the subject. It is widely believed that the Egyptian president is less eager to have his son inherit the post than is his mother, the first lady Suzanne Mubarak.

DOES GAMAL EVEN WANT THE JOB?

Other U.S. policymakers are not sure that Gamal himself is entirely interested in the job. His background is in finance and economics, subjects that seem to elicit his passion. And indeed, thanks largely to Gamal and his cadre of technocrats in the NDP, the Egyptian economy has enjoyed a period of growth for half a decade or more. Even as little of the wealth has trickled down to improve the lot of the poor—20 percent of Egyptians live in abject poverty, and 60 percent live on \$2 a day—the thriving economy has changed middle-class perceptions. Egyptian parents, Elmenshawy explains, are less impressed these days when their daughters are courted by members of the military and security establishment and more apt to be swayed by young men who have made careers in banking, telecommunications, or the big real estate deals taking place in New Cairo.

If Gamal cares about the economy, this seems to come at the expense of his interest in politics, a topic that leaves him cold or, in the words of someone who has been in the room with him, brain dead. This is a dangerous liability for a man required to keep in check competing centers of do-

2 *Ha’artez* (Tel Aviv), Aug. 31, 2010.

**The Muslim Brotherhood
is unlikely to mobilize
an opposition to
Gamal's succession.**

mestic power—including the Muslim Brotherhood, the Egyptian military, and the intelligence services (*mukhabarat*)—and regional actors while also accommodating his U.S. benefactors without aggravating an Egyptian population that has always been, at best, wary of U.S. influence in the Middle East. On the other hand, it is possible he has just learned well from his father, the stone-faced former Air Force commander who has steered the Free Officers' regime on a steady course for almost thirty years between the radicalism that devastated Nasser's Egypt and the then-startling accommodations with the United States and Israel that got Sadat killed. And so the question in Washington is, what will this transitional Egypt look like?

"The physical decline of Husni Mubarak coincides with the decline of Egypt as a regional actor," says David Schenker of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Never mind the fact that Iran sets the region's political tempo while Qatar and Dubai's satellite TV networks have eclipsed Cairo's as the region's media capital. "Egypt can't even get a veto on upstream Nile development projects anymore from upstream African riparian states, like Ethiopia."

Michele Dunne of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace agrees that the Cairo regime is not what it once was. "Domestic affairs take up so much time that Egypt is far less able to play an effective role in regional affairs. Even the succession issue itself preoccupies them and absorbs energy. Egyptian influence is much less than it was even twenty years ago though part of that is because other Arab states have caught up in terms of education and communication and moved past Egypt in terms of development. But Egypt just can't present a compelling model, a compelling argument, or philosophy that other Arabs want to imitate."

The Egyptian opposition, says Dunne, is another matter. "Look at Kifaya, which started in 2004, and then the way Facebook took off

and rallied people. These things inspired imitators around the region. Egypt is still an important country that other Arabs look up to, but its energies ensue not from the government but from those that are opposed to government."

**COMPETITION FROM
MOHAMED ELBARADEI**

To be sure, one of the biggest stories surrounding the succession issue is Mohamed ElBaradei's decision to challenge the regime with his unofficial campaign. Even as the Nobel Peace Prize winner and former International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief is not—not yet anyway—a member of a political party and thus not eligible to run in next fall's elections, his presence has generated attention both inside and outside Egypt.

"There's a weird infatuation with Baradei," says Steven Cook at the Council on Foreign Relations, referring to fawning notices in U.S. press outlets including *The Washington Post* and *The New Yorker*. "But in a fairly bleak political environment lacking charisma, Baradei shakes things up. He says, 'I am not going to run unless I can be assured of free and fair elections,' and this really throws a monkey wrench into the system and shakes up Gamal's claims to legitimacy."

"I like the idea of Baradei," says Schenker. "I like the idea of an ostensible liberal. Baradei came along and said things openly, and no one could touch him. He seems to be in the vanguard of a political culture that is less fearful of the government." Nonetheless, explains the former Bush administration Pentagon official, ElBaradei wouldn't be particularly palatable in Washington. "He politicized the IAEA, oversaw the nuclearization of Iran, and maintains that Israel is the most dangerous state in the Middle East," says Schenker.

Given that ElBaradei was comfortable working with the Islamists who govern Iran, it is

Photo will not display.

Supporters of Mohamed ElBaradei, former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, await his arrival at Cairo International Airport, February 2010. ElBaradei is challenging the regime with a possible candidacy for the presidency. He has joined forces with Egyptian Islamists—the Muslim Brotherhood—and other groups to form the “National Coalition for Change.”

hardly surprising that he has joined forces with Egypt’s own Islamists, the Muslim Brotherhood, in order to focus on political reform.³ Presumably the Brotherhood is happy to let ElBaradei take the lead since his previous employment and profile afford him international political protection not extended to the Islamists. The Brotherhood, says Joshua Stacher, an assistant professor at Kent State, is not going to make a big deal out of the succession.

“I have talked about it with them exhaustively, including senior leadership,” says Stacher, who has done extensive research on the movement. “All oppose an inherited succession in principle, but they will not mobilize in an organized way, and there will be no overt signs of discontent. Presidential succession is extremely important to the elites in Egypt, and the Muslim Brotherhood doesn’t want to challenge them on something they hold this close to their hearts. They all think it’s unjust but, as one told me, ‘at

the moment of the transfer of power, the Brothers will be silent.’”

In exchange, says Stacher, the Brotherhood is not exactly expecting a quid pro quo. “The MB is not going to be handed the keys to the parliament, but they’re not going to be shut out completely either,” he explains. “Gamal or whoever becomes president will have to renegotiate with a large array of interests and social forces, which includes the Muslim Brotherhood.”

CONSOLIDATING POWER AND SHIFTING ALLIES

Indeed, Washington policymakers and analysts concur that the real campaigning will take place after Gamal becomes president rather than before. “Arab leaders are always most vulnerable just when they take office,” says Stacher. “They are busy consolidating power and eliminating enemies.”

The two most obvious, and recent, examples are Syrian president Bashar al-Assad and Jordan’s King Abdullah II, both of whom also followed their fathers. According to press accounts and contemporary scholarship, both Abdullah and Bashar spent a considerable amount of energy during their early years at the helm building their power bases and eliminating the so-called “old guard” remnants from their fathers’ *diwans*. However, the fact is that both Bashar’s and Abdullah’s paths to power passed directly through regime strongholds. Abdullah was the commander of the Hashemite Kingdom’s special forces, an elite unit that ensures the regime’s survival; and Bashar was handed the extremely sensitive Lebanon portfolio, which during the years of the Syrian occupation was essentially Damascus’ ATM, feathering the nests of the country’s numerous security chiefs.

Unlike those two soon-to-be peers, Gamal

³ Ilan Berman, “The Islamist Flirtation,” *Foreign Policy*, Apr. 2, 2010.

Iran is dangerous to Egypt through its allies and assets, Syria, Hezbollah, and Hamas.

has no such foundations in regime management, which is why so many believe that Omar Suleiman, chief of Egypt's General Intelligence, is the man to watch. While it had been rumored that Suleiman was another presidential possibility, and still may be, he is ineligible, right now anyway, since he is without membership in a political party. At any rate, the key issue is where Suleiman stands on Gamal, and whether or not he will stick his neck out for a novice with no military or security credentials tasked to run what is still a military regime. Certainly the \$1.3 billion in U.S. military assistance to Egypt is evidence that Washington, however happy with the country's recent economic performance, still sees Cairo as such.

Perhaps a more useful question is, how does Cairo see itself? In a sense, Mubarak was only continuing Sadat's work of extricating Egypt from troublesome regional issues, especially the Arab-Israeli conflict, as it went from frontline combatant to peacemaker and mediator. Gamal is likely to wish for more of the same inward turn and to focus on the economy, but the Middle East has its own energies and forces to which an untested leader, one at the helm of the largest Arab state, may be especially vulnerable.

The main issue right now is Iran, which has effectively patterned itself after Nasser's Egypt in its struggle to build a regional hegemony and challenge the U.S.-backed order, which presently includes Egypt and the other "moderate" Arab states along with Israel. The Egyptian masses might be infatuated with Iran, says Elmenshawy, "but the elites see it as anti-Western and isolated from the rest of the world. It is not an appealing model for them." Still, Cairo has decided to restart its own nuclear program but understands that the prospect of an Iranian bomb is only one aspect of Tehran's regional strategy. Even without a nuclear weapon, Iran is danger-

ous to Egypt through its allies and assets, from Syria to Hezbollah, and especially Hamas, sitting on Egypt's border.

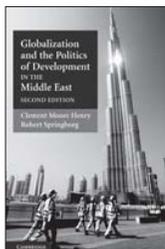
"If I were part of the Egyptian elite," says Stacher, "I'd be most worried about Gaza. If that spills over the border, it can derail everything."

One way to defend against Hamas is to seek to co-opt them as the Turks have tried. And indeed one possibility considered throughout Washington is what might happen if Cairo follows Ankara's lead. If U.S. power is perceived to be on the decline, what if Egypt, like Turkey and Iran, questions some of the assumptions of the U.S. order? Egypt could force the issue with the Israeli nuclear program and could even question demilitarizing the Sinai. It is highly unlikely that the Egyptians would take it as far as making war on Israel, but they could make themselves more obstreperous, just as the Turks have done, such as when they dispatched the "humanitarian flotilla" to Gaza. Now that the Turks are bending to the new regional winds, it is hardly clear that Washington has exacted a price for their behavior or even warned them. That it is acceptable to cross Washington is not a message the United States wants to send its regional allies, especially Egypt, one of the foundations of its Middle East strategy.

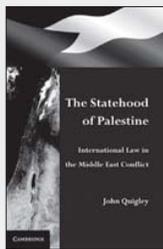
From Nasser through the pre-October 1973 Sadat, Washington was accustomed to Egypt being the primary regional power that questioned the U.S. order. Sadat's strategic shift made Egypt one of the pillars of the U.S. camp, which Washington has taken for granted just as it had done with regard to Turkey's strategic orientation. The passing of Mubarak and the rise of his successor, presumably his son, means that the largest Arab state's future orientation can no longer be taken for granted.



Outstanding Titles from Cambridge

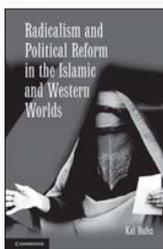


SECOND EDITION
Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East
 CLEMENT M. HENRY
 and ROBERT SPRINGBORG
The Contemporary Middle East
 \$90.00: Hb: 978-0-521-51939-7: 382 pp.
 \$29.99: Pb: 978-0-521-73744-9

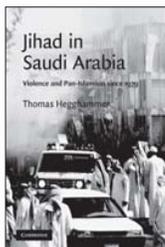
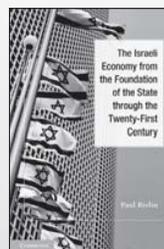


The Statehood of Palestine
 International Law in the Middle East Conflict
 JOHN QUIGLEY
 \$95.00: Hb: 978-0-521-76811-5: 320 pp.
 \$27.99: Pb: 978-0-521-15165-8

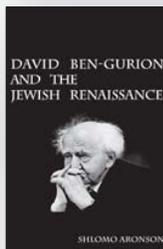
Radicalism and Political Reform in the Islamic and Western Worlds
 KAI HAFEZ
 \$95.00: Hb: 978-0-521-76320-2: 260 pp.
 \$28.99: Pb: 978-0-521-13711-9



The Israeli Economy from the Foundation of the State through the Twenty-First Century
 PAUL RIVLIN
 \$90.00: Hb: 978-0-521-19037-4: 312 pp.
 \$31.99: Pb: 978-0-521-15020-0

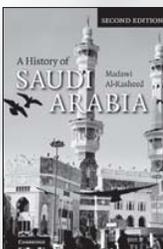


Jihad in Saudi Arabia
 Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979
 THOMAS HEGGHAMMER
Cambridge Middle East Studies
 \$99.00: Hb: 978-0-521-51858-1: 302 pp.
 \$29.99: Pb: 978-0-521-73236-9

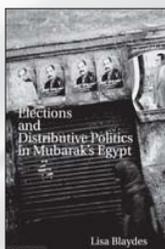
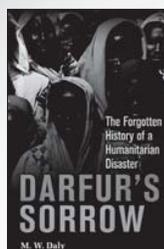


David Ben-Gurion and the Jewish Renaissance
 SHLOMO ARONSON
 \$35.00: Hb: 978-0-521-19748-9: 448 pp.

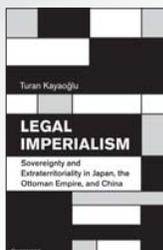
SECOND EDITION
A History of Saudi Arabia
 MADAWI AL-RASHEED
 \$90.00: Hb: 978-0-521-76128-4: 342 pp.
 \$29.99: Pb: 978-0-521-74754-7



SECOND EDITION
Darfur's Sorrow
 The Forgotten History of a Humanitarian Disaster
 M. W. DALY
 \$85.00: Hb: 978-0-521-19174-6: 398 pp.
 \$24.99: Pb: 978-0-521-13187-2



Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt
 LISA BLAYDES
 \$90.00: Hb: 978-1-107-00055-1: 296 pp.



Legal Imperialism
 Sovereignty and Extraterritoriality in Japan, the Ottoman Empire, and China
 TURAN KAYAOĞLU
 \$90.00: Hb: 978-0-521-76591-6: 248 pp.

Prices subject to change.



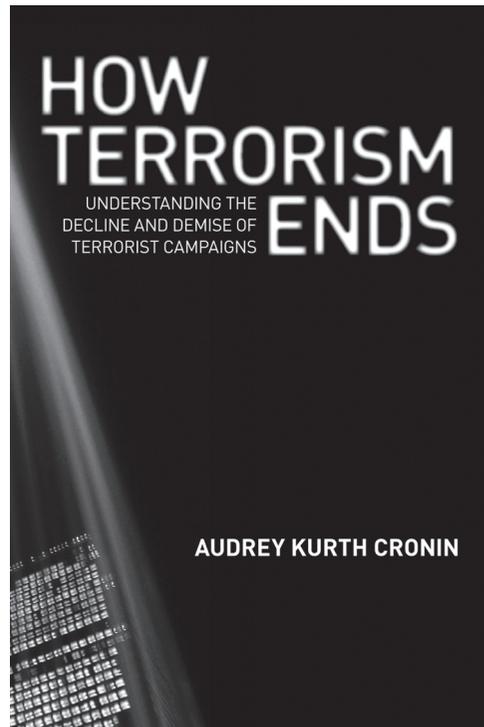
What Makes Terrorists Tick?

by Max Abrahms

How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns. By Audrey Kurth Cronin. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009. 330 pp. \$29.95.

A battle is raging in terrorism studies. Proponents of the “strategic model” claim that rational people participate in terrorist groups mainly for the political return. Proponents of the “natural systems model” claim that rational people participate in terrorist groups mainly for some form of social gain. The first model argues that terrorists attack civilians for the collective benefit of coercing political concessions, whereas the natural systems model claims that individuals engage in terrorism for the personal, selective benefit of participating in an exciting, tight-knit, social group. Although this debate is spearheaded by academics, it is hardly academic: The question of terrorist motives is fundamental to counterterrorism because one cannot expect to cure a malady without understanding its underlying cause.¹

Cronin, professor of strategy at the U.S. National War College, does not explicitly align herself with either school of thought, but *How Terrorism Ends* suggests that social calculations are more determinative than political ones. Her analysis of how terrorism ends indicates that it is seldom due to rational, political considerations. Cronin finds, for example, that negotiating with terrorists “very rarely” works since most



“terrorist groups choose not to negotiate at all.” This aversion to compromise results because “organizational survival overshadows the [stated] cause.” The logic is clear but sadly familiar: “If violence is part of the identity or livelihood of participants themselves, then the likelihood of negotiations resolving a conflict is miniscule.” The Oslo accords are illustrative: By embracing them, Palestinian terrorists of all persuasions would have unquestionably advanced

Max Abrahms is a postdoctoral fellow in the Dickey Center for International Understanding at Dartmouth College, a postdoctoral fellow on the Empirical Studies of Conflict project sponsored by Princeton University, and lectures on terrorism at Johns Hopkins University.

1 On the debate in terrorism studies between the strategic model and the natural systems model, see Max Abrahms, “What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy,” *International Security*, Spring 2008, pp. 78-105.

Terrorist groups rarely abandon the armed struggle due to achieving their official political goals.

their stated territorial aims. But groups such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad instead ramped up their violence, helping to derail the peace process in order to ensure their organizational survival.

In fact, Cronin notes that what usually brings terrorists to the negotiating table are generally threats to the organization itself rather than to its putative political purpose. She finds that terrorist groups rarely abandon the armed struggle due to achieving their official political goals. This conclusion is expected given the fact that terrorist groups virtually never attain their given political aims, a point underscored in this reviewer's 2006 study in *International Security*, which compared the abysmal success rate of terrorist campaigns to other forms of protest.² Her case studies do, however, bolster the thesis that terrorism is inherently politically counterproductive by hardening governments and discouraging them from making concessions. She sensibly focuses on the handful of terrorist groups in modern history that achieved their policy demands such as the African National Congress and shows that they did so "despite the use of violence against innocent civilians [rather] than because of it." The author is quick to point out that this does not mean terrorism accomplishes nothing at all; as previous studies have shown, terrorist acts can undercut the organization's professed political agenda while simultaneously boosting membership, morale, and cohesion.³

So how then does terrorism end? By provoking government repression, its perpetrators have occasionally been stamped out. In fact,

Cronin observes that "it is difficult to find cases" where governments did not use repressive measures, digging in their political

heels. This does not mean that she endorses a policy of outright repression, however, since this response risks backfiring by turning the local population against the government and ultimately invigorating the terrorist group. A more frequent way for terrorism to end is by alienating potential supporters. She provides numerous examples of terrorist groups that "imploded" due to their lack of appeal to fresh recruits, infighting between organization members, and especially, backlash against the gory violence itself, which she believes is "the most common" way for these organizations to go out of the terrorism business. One example occurred in August 1998 when the Real Irish Republican Army splinter-group spurred a local backlash against it by killing twenty-nine noncombatants in Omagh, Northern Ireland. Similarly, the November 2005 Islamist terror attacks in Amman, Jordan, killed sixty innocent people but dramatically eroded local support for al-Qaeda and its affiliates throughout the country. Finally, Cronin finds that terrorist groups sometimes abandon the armed struggle but remain intact for patently apolitical reasons. A typical reorienting pathway is the transition to purely criminal behavior exemplified in the Abu Sayyaf Group, a Philippines-based al-Qaeda affiliate.

Cronin has written an important book on how terrorism ends. Her analysis is equally illuminating for its insights into why people engage in terrorism in the first place. The evidence is growing that these two areas of study may actually lead to the same conclusions. If so, serious implications for counterterrorism policy should flow from the recognition that social factors tend to trump political ones in the making and unmaking of terrorists.

2 Max Abrahms, "Why Terrorism Does Not Work," *International Security*, Fall 2006, pp. 42-78.

3 Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Columbia, 2005); Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).



Brief Reviews

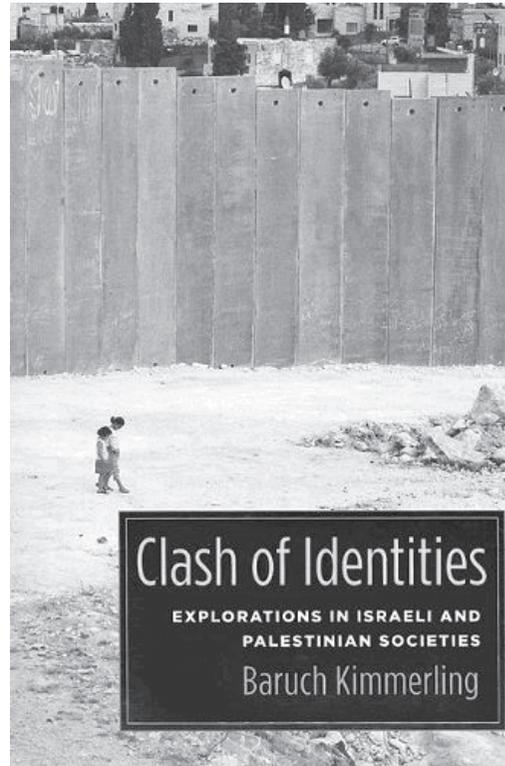
Clash of Identities: Explorations in Israeli and Palestinian Societies. By Baruch Kimmerling. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008. 429 pp. \$55 (\$27.50, paper).

If you are looking for a numbingly unreadable book of anti-Israel diatribes written by a deceased sociologist with Marxist tendencies, you can do no better (or worse?) than *Clash of Identities*. Kimmerling, who died in 2007, devoted his long career as a sociologist to doing little sociology while preening as a New Historian. *Clash of Identities* is the reprint of twelve previously published articles venting against Israel and Zionism.

Just about everything that was wrong with Kimmerling's work as an academic is on display in this new book, which is long on diatribe but short on evidence. Data and numbers are almost completely missing. Other than a few tables from a questionable public opinion survey, nothing is measured quantitatively in this supposed investigation of identity.

Kimmerling seems to have had little interest in measurement and analysis and seemed more interested in preaching and advocating. He saw himself as a historian of the Palestinian people, seeing shades of Palestinian identity decades, even centuries, before the U.N. partition vote of 1947. Ironically, when he actually stumbled across evidence of importance, he tended to ignore what it actually showed. Thus, in describing the birth of Palestinian national identity, he mentions petitions sent to British authorities in the 1920s by thousands of Palestinian intellectuals and professionals, demanding to be made Syrian citizens.

This book may be eye-opening for people who have never read a book before about the Middle East. They will learn that both Jewish and Arab identities have something to do with religion, that both nationalist movements have flirted with socialism, and that many Israeli resources go into its military. However, Kimmerling chooses to ignore or hide the fact that the bulk of Palestin-



ians in 1948 were recent migrants or temporary workers who came to the area from other Arab countries attracted by the increase in economic opportunities brought about by Jewish enterprise and British rule of law. The reader will also fail to learn that, until 1967, there was little Palestinian nationalism beyond Arab nationalism or beyond the Arab desire to see the Jews driven into the sea.

The most interesting part of the book is its long preface. There we learn that when Kimmerling first approached the dean of Israeli sociology, Shmuel Eisenstadt, to be his dissertation advisor, Eisenstadt turned him down cold because Kimmerling was planning on writing a pro-Arab diatribe as his thesis. Other senior professors at Hebrew University also showed him the door.

Eventually he managed to twist the arm of a junior faculty member, Moshe Lissak, to serve as his supervisor. Lissak, who became one of Hebrew University's most distinguished professors also became one of Kimmerling's harshest critics.

Steven Plaut
University of Haifa

Crossing Mandelbaum Gate: Coming of Age between the Arabs and Israelis, 1956-1978. By Kai Bird. New York: Scribner, 2010. 448 pp. \$30 (\$10, paper).

Bird, a Pulitzer-prize winning biographer, has written a semi-autobiographical and semi-historical account of the Middle East that is likely to disappoint many who have enjoyed some of his earlier, much-applauded works. *Crossing Mandelbaum Gate* reads as a rudderless narrative in search of a clear purpose.

Bird spent his high school years in Cairo, son of a U.S. diplomat. Had he limited his account to his personal experiences—a young Westerner describing the passions and idiosyncrasies of the Arab street—his book might have been a good read. A fine writer, he could have captured human dynamics through the prism of a coming-of-age American bystander. Instead, he uses his adolescent reminiscences as a platform to make sweeping and often unsubstantiated statements about national strategies, international law, and political maneuvering.

There is, for example, the almost gushing portrayal of Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Egyptian dictator who, despite some sharp political instincts, brought systemic corruption and cronyism to the civil service and led his country to spectacular military failure. In Bird's telling, Nasser is the victim drawn into war by a cabal of Israeli militarists while conceding that blockading the Straits of Tiran could be seen as an act of war or that Nasser's expulsion of U.N. peacekeepers could present challenges to Israeli security. Nonetheless, he places the onus largely on Israel because the war was one of "choice" and not "necessity," terms that he does not define and that he uses arbitrarily and repeatedly in the book.

Arab culture, to which he was privy, is criticized sparingly and often apologetically. Saudis

are taken to task for not allowing women to drive and, yes, there should be more democratic reforms in Middle Eastern autocracies, but there are no tears for girls and young women murdered in honor killings or outrage at the often-practiced mutilation of female genitals. The minds of Palestinian children, indoctrinated to aspire to homicide bombings as the highest glory possible, are passed over in silence. Claiming to be concerned about his Christian friends in Egypt, he glosses over once-thriving Coptic communities in Egypt, now in decline. His treatment of the mass expulsions of Jews from Middle Eastern Islamic lands is especially perverse and vicious. While detailing the ill-conceived scheme of Israeli defense minister Pinhas Lavon to blow up targets in Egypt and blame the Muslim Brotherhood—an incident that essentially brought down an Israeli government—Bird shamefully uses the affair to vindicate the Egyptian cleansing of its Jews.

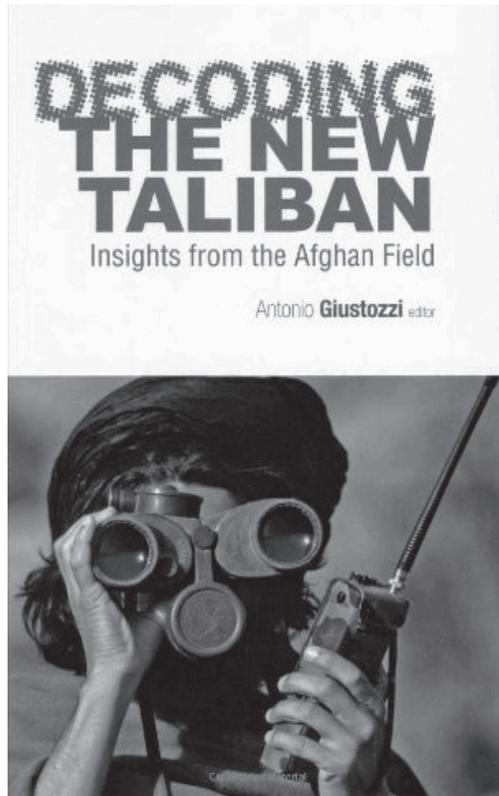
Crossing Mandelbaum Gate could have been a good book. It held the promises of fine writing and an interesting subject. But the author, previously so skilled with words, never satisfactorily clarifies the purpose of the book. As history, it should have been objective, which it was not. As personal narrative, it should not have masqueraded as political and military history. The reader is left disappointed with the book's shoddy scholarship and polemical tone.

Mark Silinsky
U.S. Department of the Army

Decoding the New Taliban, Insights from the Afghan Field. Edited by Antonio Giustozzi. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. 420 pp. \$32.

In his edited volume, Giustozzi, a fellow at the London School of Economics, has put together a timely and relevant collection of essays that advances the ongoing debate over what he terms the "main war of the early twenty-first century."

Based on the firsthand experiences of many of its contributors, which include scholars, journalists, political consultants, and military strategists, Giustozzi provides a broad and varied perspective of Afghanistan and the Neo-Taliban, the next generation Taliban, who have resurged as a



result of a prolonged U.S. and Western presence. The majority of the essays address the various provinces in Afghanistan and the complex nature of the relationship between the Neo-Taliban, the regional government, and the local population. Each essay provides a historical perspective on the emergence of the Taliban after the Soviet occupation and a nuanced picture of the nature of the insurgency as it currently exists.

As a collection, the essays paint a comprehensive picture of the Neo-Taliban, not as a unified organization but as a combination of disparate groups, which form a loosely coordinated network of criminals and ideologues. Further, by emphasizing command and control, Giustozzi underscores the importance of organizational dynamics and the necessity of understanding the spheres of power and influence in this very traditional society. This is where this book *Decoding the New Taliban* shines, not necessarily as a prescription for success in the conflict but rather as a collection of essays providing insights into the

tribal history, structure, and ongoing dynamics of Afghanistan.

Decoding the New Taliban will not be the stuff of neighborhood book clubs: The authors assume the readers have a considerable premise of knowledge about the Neo-Taliban and the geography of Afghanistan. Nevertheless, the volume is instructive. The historical context provided by many of the authors underscores the nature and scope of the threat posed by the Neo-Taliban. More broadly, they explain how contemporary threats are a hybridization of traditional and conventional capabilities.

Decoding the New Taliban is a serious and comprehensive collection of essays written by authorities on their subject matter that will directly benefit those who find themselves on the ground with the Afghan people and among the still evolving Neo-Taliban.

John Williams
U.S. Naval Academy

Images of Muhammad: Narratives of the Prophet in Islam across the Centuries. By Tarif Khalidi. New York: Doubleday, 2009. 327 pp. \$26.

True to its title, this study by a professor of Islamic studies at the American University of Beirut chronicles the myriad images of Muhammad throughout the ages from the eighth-century biography by Ibn Ishaq to twentieth-century polemics and apologetics. Unfortunately, the book omits the more troubling images, the ones echoed in the behaviors of today's more troubling Muslims. Such an approach has an ancient pedigree: Writing some 1,200 years ago, Ibn Hisham, editor of the earliest biography of Muhammad, admitted honestly that he omitted "things which it is disgraceful to discuss; matters which would distress certain people." Khalidi follows the same pattern—though without Hisham's candid disclaimer.

It is not that Khalidi does not acknowledge that negative images exist; he just shies from recounting the most notorious. Thus, while the reader will encounter Muhammad the commander, the lawgiver, the ethicist, even the Sufi mystic, images of Muhammad as warmonger, highway-bandit, misogynist, and assassin are lacking.

For example, the worst image Khalidi presents of Muhammad involves his killing an enemy combatant even though the latter begged for clemency. One would have thought Muhammad's assassination of poets by deceit and other means—including one old woman, Umm Qirfa, whose body was rent in half¹—calls for equal mention. Objectively speaking, such less than inspiring images deserve more prominence. After all, when pious believers pass down anecdotes that may reflect negatively on their prophet, it seems only reasonable to treat these, especially in comparison to the numerous praise-worthy images, as important factors of the Muhammad persona.

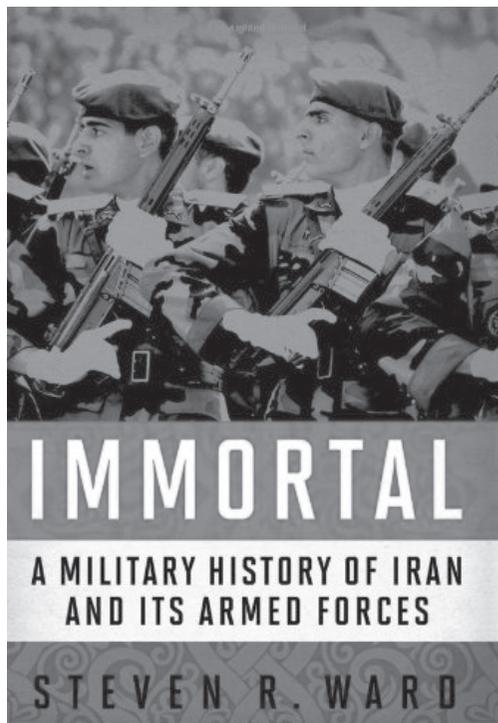
Ultimately, however, the book is useful in that it implicitly demonstrates how the concept of *sunna* (a model of Muslim behavior based on the sayings, customs, and actions of Muhammad) is impractical. For when one compares the many pictures of the prophet, discrepancies abound: Muhammad loves peace except when he wages war; he hates poetry but also enjoys it; he bans the killing of women and children except when they get in the way; he condemns foul speech but tells people to “bite their father's penis.”

Sunna, then, becomes a divine sanction for any given Muslim to follow his proclivities—provided an applicable image of Muhammad can be found. And, as Khalidi's book shows, images of the prophet appear endless.

Raymond Ibrahim

Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces. By Steven R. Ward. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009. 361 pp. \$27.95.

Iran has had more than its share of wars; its history can, to a large extent, be understood by studying the military operations on its soil. With only brief interludes, Iranian leaders during the last century have seen the military as the centerpiece of their rule. That was as true of Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1921-41) and his son as of the Islamic



Republic, which uses its Pasdaran, or Revolutionary Guard, to maintain its iron grip on the country.

CIA analyst Ward provides detailed accounts of the grand martial dreams envisaged by these regimes—dreams that came crashing down in costly failure. When Iraqi forces unilaterally withdrew from Iranian soil in 1982, for example, the Islamic Republic could have ended the war with Iraq on terms no worse—arguably better—than what it was offered in 1988. By fighting on, the Islamic Republic lost about 200,000 citizens and exhausted its people, who no longer were prepared to sacrifice for the revolutionary cause.

Ward skillfully illustrates how the Islamic Republic in many important ways continues the millennia-long trends of its forebears. He recalls historian Sir Percy Sykes's comment that the ancient Sassanians, the last pre-Islamic Persian empire, “consider[ed] the altar and throne as inseparable,” pointing to its continuing relevance to many Iranian regimes, especially today's mullocracy. Another theme is the eventual intervention of the military in political affairs, seen

1 I. Ishaq and A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 665.

once more in the Revolutionary Guard's assertion of greater control at the expense of clerics and elected leaders.

Finally, he observes that few Iranian regimes have done well in incorporating state-of-the-art technology in an effective manner, noting the dangers for the Islamic Republic in its reliance on a small inventory of uncertain missiles and weapons of mass destruction, which among other things, invite preemptive attack. Most striking is the same pattern displayed in the 1980-88 war with Iraq: Dedicated, self-sacrificing Iranian soldiers undercut by poor leadership, stingy support, and outright maltreatment at the hands of rulers who took a cavalier attitude toward their soldiers' sacrifices. It would behoove today's military planners to absorb these important lessons from the past as they prepare for current contingencies.

If the lessons of the past hold, the ordinary Iranian soldier will perform valiantly and the Iranian commanders will be not especially competent or caring about their men.

Patrick Clawson

Inside Egypt: The Land of the Pharaohs on the Brink of a Revolution. John R. Bradley. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 256 pp. \$24.95 (\$16.95, paper).

To the general reader, *Inside Egypt* is a good introduction to some of the problems rife in the most populous, Arabic-speaking country. From regime corruption and oppression, to widespread poverty and discontent, to human rights abuses and the plight of Egypt's minorities, most of the important issues are here. Bradley, formerly a Middle-East-based foreign correspondent, also provides useful insights, such as how the current regime exploits the West's fear of the Muslim Brotherhood to its advantage.

Unfortunately, there is a myopic tendency to view nearly every problem in Egypt as a byproduct of Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's president since 1981, and in Bradley's view, the "most corrupt offender of them all." Even things one might have supposed were products of time or chance—from the condition of Egypt's Bedouin, who have led the same desperate lifestyle for centuries, to the radicalization of Muslims, a worldwide phenom-

enon—are somehow traced back to Mubarak.

While the Mubarak regime is responsible for many of Egypt's woes, blaming all of the nation's problems on it is misleading. By minimizing the Islamization of society and the influence of the Brotherhood, which the author claims "has made only limited inroads into the mainstream" since Egypt's Muslims are "intolerant of extremist Sunni doctrine," Bradley moves from fact-based evidence to conjecture and, perhaps, wishful thinking.

Indeed, this is the book's chief problem. Bradley is convinced that, given a chance, through the elimination of Mubarak, Egyptians would create a liberal, egalitarian, and gender-neutral society. This tendency to project things that are important to the author (though often not to Egyptians) is highlighted by his fixation on homosexuality in Egypt. The topic permeates the entire book, including a rather out-of-place section recounting the in-and-outs of Western gay tourism in Luxor.

In short, while the book is a good primer for novices to Egypt's culture and politics, the author's own proclivities mar his objectivity. While he is convinced that Egypt is a byproduct of Mubarak, one is left wondering instead whether Mubarak is a byproduct of Egypt.

Raymond Ibrahim

Iran with Nuclear Weapons: Anticipating the Consequences for U.S. Policy. By Jacquelyn K. Davis and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. Cambridge: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 2008. 111 pp. Free download.

Iran with Nuclear Weapons is an indispensable contribution to the discussion that should be taking place about Tehran's nuclear program and its logical endpoint: What might happen following the acquisition of an offensive nuclear capability by Iran, and how is the Iranian regime likely to behave as a result?

Through the use of three distinct behavioral models, Davis and Pfaltzgraff—respectively the executive vice president and president of the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis—analyze how an Iran with nuclear weapons is likely to behave under adverse internal conditions (such as those that have

prevailed since the country's fraudulent elections in June 2009); how a consolidated regime in Tehran might wield its nuclear deterrent; and how such an entity would weather external challenges to its regional position. What emerges is a sophisticated analysis predicated upon the idea of "alternative futures"—the understanding that Iran's behavior can and will be shaped in a number of different directions by the confluence of domestic and international drivers.

Through their meticulous, well researched, and logically reasoned analysis, Davis and Pfaltzgraff methodically map out a range of conceivable scenarios involving a nuclear, or nuclear-ready, Iran. Thus, they note that a "defensive" Iran, unsure of its international status, is likely to use its nascent nuclear capability to deter the United States from attempting regime change and Israel from employing military action against its nuclear facilities. An "aggressive Iran," by contrast, would employ its atomic arsenal to expand its regional influence, empower terrorist proxies, and decisively alter the regional correlation of strategic forces. Finally, in the event of an unstable Iran—one buffeted by protracted regime instability—control of Iran's nuclear capabilities is likely to emerge as a key domestic contest between competing political factions.

Such analysis has been sorely needed. By focusing overwhelmingly on Iran's effort to acquire a nuclear capability, scholars and academics alike have consciously chosen not to think about the unthinkable—that the Islamic Republic might actually succeed in getting the bomb. Davis and Pfaltzgraff have, and their assessment of potential Iranian behavior is likely to prove invaluable to U.S. national security decision-makers who should be thinking about the "day after" Iran goes nuclear, and what it will mean for U.S. policy. That day, after all, appears to be fast approaching.

Ilan Berman
American Foreign Policy Council

The Mind of Jihad. By Laurent Murawiec. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 342 pp. \$83.99 (\$25.99, paper).

Murawiec (1951-2009), who at his death was a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, was

praised by his colleagues as a "big thinker." *The Mind of Jihad*, commissioned by the Office of Net Assessment of the U.S. Defense Department, represents an effort at a general, historical theory of present-day jihadism. Murawiec was not alone in seeing the influence of the Western radical left on contemporary jihadism. In addition, he found parallels between the current radical Islamist challenge and the millenarian extremism that erupted in Christian Europe during the late medieval and early Reformation periods.

"Sectarian eschatological movements tend to breed behaviors of a similar nature," he argued, and habits of war in Islam have "morphed in modern times into a compound of Gnostic cult, tribal outlook, Islamic jihad, and Bolshevik terror." But although Murawiec read widely, his catalogue of parallels between today's jihadists and past perpetrators of ideological violence seems tenuous in its linkages and emphases. For example, Raymond Ibrahim correctly asked in his review in *The Weekly Standard*,² "why does Murawiec insist on examining jihad[ists] through Christian paradigms and precedents when Islam itself affords plenty of both?" Ibrahim specifically mentioned the Kharijites, an early extremist branch of Islam who terrorized fellow Muslims; Muslim moderates, in fact, often equate al-Qaeda and similar groups with the Kharijites. But the Kharijites merit only passing notice in *The Mind of Jihad*.

Murawiec argued for a link between the various Gnostic groups of antiquity, with their beliefs in esoteric doctrines revealed solely to an enlightened elite, with the modern Marxist movement. This line, between nearly all the revolutionary movements in the histories of Christendom, Islam, and modern Europe, smacks more of popular conspiratorial volumes, such as *The DaVinci Code*, than a serious treatment of jihad.

The Mind of Jihad brings together many complex strands of history but in an excessively synthetic manner that provokes more questions than answers. It is a tribute to its author's dedication and depth of research, but his focus on so-

² Jan. 26, 2009.

cial radicalism as a universal problem, rather than on Islamist ideology as a particular element of Muslim life today, makes this book more a curiosity than a reliable contribution. In his fascination with the Gnostics, Murawiec appears to have been carried away with a “secret” interpretation of recent history, much of which, even when it appears obscured, lies in plain sight.

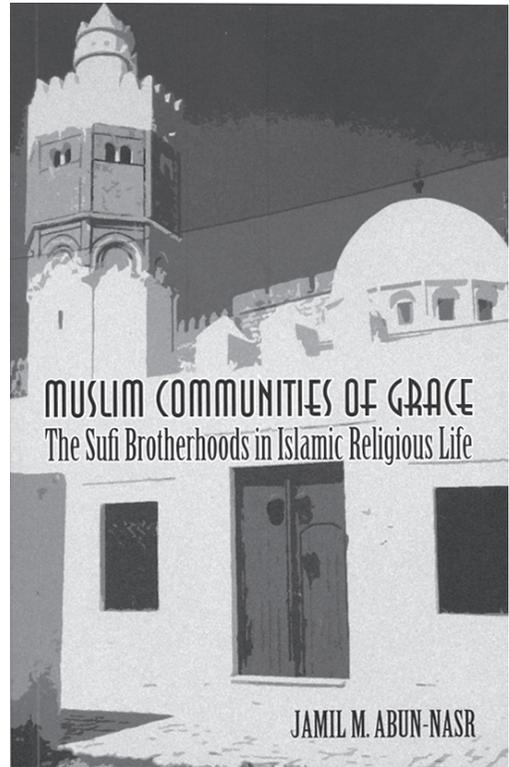
Stephen Schwartz
Center for Islamic Pluralism

Muslim Communities of Grace: The Sufi Brotherhoods in Islamic Religious Life. By Jamil M. Abun-Nasr. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. 280 pp. \$30.

Abun-Nasr, emeritus professor of Islamic studies at the University of Bayreuth, Germany, has produced a substantial body of work on the history of the Maghreb including a previous volume on the Tijaniya, a powerful Sufi spiritual community in that region. Regrettably, the author allows his prejudices and predilections to undermine what could have been an important work on Sufi brotherhoods. Additionally, he gives little attention to Shiite Sufism and passes somewhat coolly over the Sufi *tariqat* (spiritual community), named for Jalal-ad-Din Rumi (d. 1273), a particularly strange omission given that Rumi is now perhaps the most famous Sufi in the world, among non-Muslims no less than Muslims.

In his analysis, Abun-Nasr makes three main points. First, Sufi “communities of grace” owe their religious authority and authenticity to the *baraka* or divine blessings of the sheikh (teacher). Second, the original understanding of the *tariqa* (path) of the individual spiritual seeker came by the thirteenth century to be identified with the specific direction of a particular sheikh. Finally, he contends that by the eighteenth century, the *tariqats* were transformed into more exclusive “brotherhoods” in which membership was made dependent on a pledge to the sheikh. This view of the development of Sufism embodies a process by which spiritual authority is increasingly centralized in the sheikh and which conforms to conservative Islamic norms, an evolution that the author takes no pains to conceal he supports.

Abun-Nasr’s analysis of Sufi brotherhoods



is bolstered by the presentation of many essential aspects of Sufism but much is also absent and, worse, spoiled by his biases. Thus, in discussing the dissident manners and utterances of the early, and among Sufis, beloved figure of Abu Mansur Hussein al-Hallaj, Abun-Nasr identifies himself with the sheikh’s critics, stating that he “blatantly breached the doctrinal limits of Islamic orthodoxy.” Hallaj, a Baghdadi Sufi, was executed for alleged apostasy in 922, a deeply traumatic event in Islamic history. Most Sufis condemn the execution as unjust as they believe his “heretical” self-identification with divine truth was evidence of an ecstatic state rather than a rational denial of the uniqueness of God. To revive an orthodox condemnation of Hallaj, in such harsh terms, appears as a gratuitous reiteration of doctrinal intolerance.

Muslim Communities of Grace comprises historical sketches of Sufi orders the author describes as the “*Tariqas* of the Islamic heartland” but which really means those affirming a narrow view of Islamic practice. As a result, Abun-Nasr

effectively dismisses the significance of the ecstatic Sufi schools, such as the Mawlawiya inspired by Rumi, and the Rifa'iyah originating in southern Iraq, despite their being widespread today.

The book provides a detailed and provocative counterpoint to many other works on Sufism. Nevertheless, those acquainted with the broader history of Sufism will recognize in this work a polemic intended to draw Muslims followers of the powerful Sufi tradition back along the path of narrowly regulated authority and practice.

Stephen Schwartz

Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics. By Yehudit Ronen. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008. 243 pp. \$55.

Ronen of the Moshe Dayan Center has produced an ambitious though incomplete review of Mu'ammār al-Qadhafi and the Libya government's conduct in international affairs. She begins with a history of Qadhafi's attempts to position himself as a Nasserite, pan-Arab, anti-imperialist through his rhetoric against the United States and its chief ally in the Middle East, Israel. His success at securing the withdrawal of U.S. forces from an air base near Tripoli and his nationalization of the oil sector (and other formerly foreign-owned concerns) made Qadhafi a household name in the Arab world.

However, his attempts at pan-Arab discourse resulted in two ill-fated unions, first with Sudan and then with Egypt and Syria. Libya's support for the POLISARIO Front in the Western Sahara conflict strained its relations with Morocco. Qadhafi also sharply criticized his fellow Arab leaders over their stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the emerging Iraqi crisis. Increasingly marginalized because of his outspoken opinions and under the strain of economic sanctions, Qadhafi sought a new platform for his regional aspirations, abandoning pan-Arabism and embracing a pan-African approach to Libyan foreign policy.

Ronen engages the reader in a thorough analysis of Libya's costly and failed military interventions in Uganda and Chad, arguing that Libya's approach in both theaters highlighted the limits of its military power. Qadhafi has recently

signaled a shift to a more conciliatory approach by hosting African summits and peacemaking initiatives to end fighting in Congo and Sierra Leone.

The strength of Ronen's *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics* lies in its rich analysis of Qadhafi's shifting foreign policy initiatives and its highlighting of the various domestic factors behind his political longevity. However, gaps lie in a scant analysis of inter-Maghreb politics or of Libya's relations with Europe. Equally disappointing is her neglect of a sustained look into the future trajectory of the Libyan regime's foreign policy. Despite these shortcomings, Ronen's *Qaddafi's Libya in World Politics* is recommended for courses on the Middle East and North Africa.

Mohamed Daadaoui
Oklahoma City University

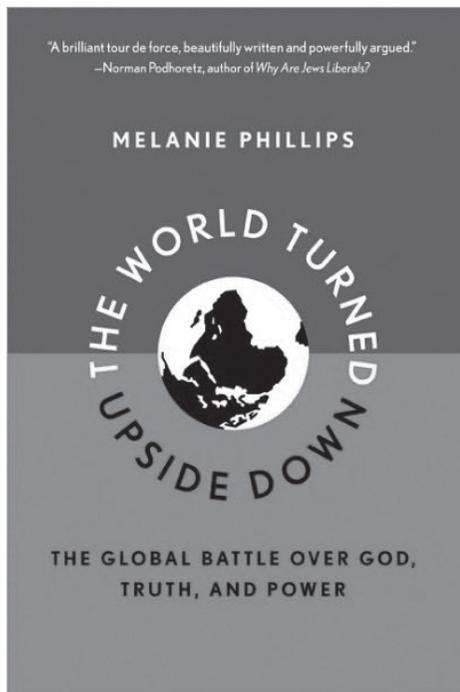
The World Turned Upside Down: The Global Battle over God, Truth, and Power. By Melanie Phillips. New York: Encounter Books, 2010. 280 pp. \$23.95.

Phillips, author of *Londonistan*,³ has produced another book that underscores the threat that aggressive, political Islam poses to Western civilization, to the security of Israel, and to non-Muslims in Islamic lands. The scope of *The World Turned Upside Down* is ambitious, tackling Western pacifism and fatalism, political Islam, anti-Semitism, the dimming of the Enlightenment, Marxism, and even creationism.

Phillips is outspoken about the naiveté of Western intellectuals toward the ascent of Islamism in Europe. Her book explores the battle of ideas between advocates for Islam and their secular opponents, the international criminalization of Israel, and the leftist-Islamic alliance in building a Muslim proletariat. It also touches on the decimation of the few remaining pockets of Christianity in the Middle East.

Phillips sometimes trains her sights erratically, taking aim at relatively harmless targets.

³ See "Brief Reviews, *Londonistan*," *Middle East Quarterly*, Fall 2007, p. 83.



ing, if only superficially, the secrets of Jewish mysticism, but what harm has Madonna, a well meaning though not overly educated chanteuse, done to Judaism, or to the West, or to anything else? There is also something schoolmarmish about passages in which she takes the West to task for its insufficient religious piety, gratuitously alienating secular readers.

The World Turned Upside Down is informative but a slower read than *Londonistan*, perhaps because of its broader focus, perhaps because the author clearly did her homework: Each of the chapters is fully footnoted with an average of forty-five to fifty citations. These shortcomings aside, Phillips's book shines with her intellectual integrity. A conservative who left the trendy leftism of her 1960s youth, she is an English Jew who refuses to take refuge in anti-Zionism to prove her independent credentials. For these and other reasons, Phillips is largely an outsider in European intellectual circles.

Mark Silinsky

The author has sarcastic fun with the handful of Hollywood celebrities who have been explor-



Bunni

Continued from page 96

rights training funded by the European Union and established by a Belgian nongovernmental organization; part of his arrest and conviction stemmed from his collaborating with an international institution. The center has since been shut down before it could begin its activities.

Shortly after Bashar al-Assad became president of Syria in 2000, Syrians freely gathered together in forums to engage in intense political and social debate, known as the "Damascus Spring," and to demand democracy and an end to corruption.⁷ The government subsequently cracked down on these forums, and many activ-

ists were suppressed or imprisoned. Bunni has advocated freedom of nonviolent expression and has spent his legal career defending those who have faced persecution for such rights, including activists from the Damascus Spring.⁸ He has also been a proponent and defender of the rights of Kurds, the largest minority group in Syria.

In a 2008 visit to Damascus, French president Nicolas Sarkozy pleaded with his hosts for Bunni's immediate release to no avail. Bunni has insisted that he did not violate the Syrian constitution and is being held solely for his opinions. "I didn't commit any crime," he said. "This sentence is to shut me up and to stop the effort to expose human rights violations in Syria."⁹



⁷ *The Washington Post*, Jan. 19, 2006.

⁸ "Call for the Release of Jailed Syrian Human Rights Lawyer."⁸

⁹ *BBC News*, Apr. 24, 2007.



Anwar al-Bunni

by Simcha Katsnelson

In April 2007, Anwar al-Bunni, a top Syrian human rights activist and attorney, was sentenced to five years imprisonment for “disseminating false information likely to undermine the morale of the nation ... slander- ing and insulting state institutions,” and “joining an international group without the government’s authorization.” Though his first sentencing, it followed years of constant harassment from the Syrian authorities, including threats against family members, smear campaigns aimed at dissuading potential clients from seeking his services, and around-the-clock surveillance.¹ Instead of taking any action on Bunni’s behalf, the bar association in Damascus suspended him from numerous cases he litigated and threatened him with disbarment.²

Bunni’s arrest in 2006 followed the signing of the “Beirut-Damascus, Damascus-Beirut” declaration urging the improvement of Syrian-Lebanese relations. Relations between the two countries have been strained for decades but reached an all-time low following the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik al-Hariri. The Lebanese blamed the Syrians, who responded with strenuous denials and a subsequent and long-awaited withdrawal from Lebanon under heavy international pressure. In 2008, Damascus established diplomatic relations with

Lebanon after decades of evasion reflecting its perception of that country as a natural part of “Greater Syria.”³

Bunni has been detained under harsh conditions and has faced torture and beatings from prison guards.⁴ In 2006, the Syrian regime placed increased travel restrictions on other human rights defenders including Bunni’s brother, Akram, who was prevented from flying to Brussels to discuss the human rights situation in Syria. Bunni estimates that members of his family have spent an aggregate of sixty years in prison.⁵ While Bunni is currently serving his prison sentence, his brother, who also signed the Dam-



Anwar al-Bunni

ascus declaration, was recently released along with two other dissidents after serving a 30-month prison sentence.

Bunni is a founding member of the Syrian Human Rights Association and the Freedoms Center for the Defense of Journalists and Journalism in Syria. He has denounced human rights violations including the use of torture and has advocated for democratic practices and reform in Syria.⁶ He also formed a center for human

Bunni, continued on page 95

Simcha Katsnelson is a student at the University of Pennsylvania and a former intern at the Middle East Forum.

1 “Call for the Release of Jailed Syrian Human Rights Lawyer,” Human Rights First, New York and Washington, D.C., Feb. 14, 2007.

2 Ibid.

3 “Timeline: Syria,” *BBC News*, accessed Sept. 14, 2010.

4 “Call for the Release of Jailed Syrian Human Rights Lawyer.”

5 Joe Pace, “Anwar al-Bunni: Interview with Syria’s Leading Human Rights Lawyer,” *Syria Comment*, Aug. 7, 2005.

6 “Call for the Release of Jailed Syrian Human Rights Lawyer.”