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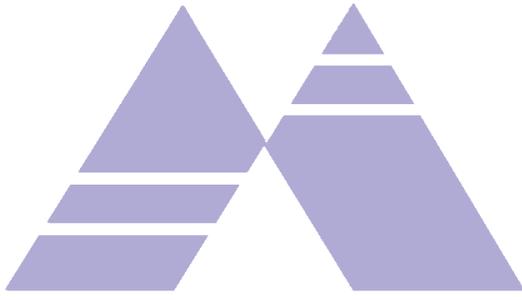
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The Afghanistan Conflict

Mission Creep

and Its Discontents

by Amitai Etzioni

Washington's persistent difficulties in Afghanistan are due to the Obama administration's mission creep. Within a matter of months, U.S. operations expanded from counterterrorism measures designed "to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan and to prevent their return to either country in the future"¹ to a counterinsurgency strategy viewing nation-building and democratization as prerequisites to military success—a highly unrealistic goal in a country that is as poor, illiterate, corrupt, and conflicted as Afghanistan.

The mission creep and confusion in Afghanistan has greatly hindered U.S. efforts to find a way to complete its campaign and to disengage. As the target keeps changing and enlarging, public support for the intervention both in the United States and in other nations is declining while the human and economic costs of the war are mounting. A return to the original goal and to some version of the "Biden approach"—advocating reliance on drones, Special Forces, and the CIA to ensure that Afghanistan will not again become a haven for terrorists after the U.S. departure—may provide an answer.

COUNTERTERRORISM TO COUNTERINSURGENCY

Having made the Afghan war the edifice of his struggle against violent extremism, President Obama has been struggling to shape a coherent strategy. His first strategic review of the situation in Afghanistan, completed in March 2009, was basically framed as a counterterrorism

mission to be carried out by military forces and the CIA. However, over the following year, the president endorsed Gen. David Petraeus's change of strategy from counterterrorism to counterinsurgency, which holds that in order to accomplish the security goal of eliminating terrorists and their havens, a considerable measure of nation-building must take place.

In discussions of counterinsurgency, the term "nation-building" is typically avoided, but the precept that to win the United States must build an "effective and legitimate government" and that counterinsurgency means not just destroying the enemy but also holding the territo-

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¹ Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan," Mar. 27, 2009.

ries and building the new polity, in effect amounts to nation-building. Moreover, the scope of nation-building has been steadily extended. Thus, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has stated that “we share an interest in helping build an Afghanistan that is stable and secure; that can provide prosperity and progress and peace for its citizens.”² Obama added the following day that he had “reaffirmed the commitment of the United States to an Afghanistan that is stable, strong,

Police, judges, jailors, customs officers, and civil servants in Afghanistan regularly accept bribes.

and prosperous.” He reiterated the 2009 goal to “disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda and its extremist allies in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent its capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future.” But he also underscored the need for “a civilian effort to promote

good governance and development ... In addition... [to] open the door to Taliban who cut their ties to al-Qaeda, abandon violence, and accept the Afghan constitution, including respect for human rights.”³

As the Hamid Karzai government started to negotiate with various factions of the Taliban about the conditions under which they might support the government, or join it, or lay down their weapons after the departure of U.S. and NATO forces, the nation-building goal was extended. It grew from an “effective and legitimate government” in the eyes of the Afghans to ensuring that democracy and human rights, especially women’s rights, as stated in the Afghan constitution (fashioned under U.S. influence and in line with the values Americans hold dear) are respected and that Shari’a or Islamic law does not become the law of the land.

Late in 2010, as it became clearer that na-

tion-building was progressing rather poorly, mission creep turned into mission confusion. At several points, the U.S. government opposed negotiations with the Taliban. At others, it endorsed and facilitated these talks.⁴ A more moderate goal was mentioned much more frequently: Weaken the Taliban to the point that they become truly interested in a peaceful settlement or in avoiding a civil war among the various ethnic groups after U.S. troops leave.

Most recently, a geopolitical goal has been added—namely to ensure that after the U.S. withdrawal, the Afghan government will not tilt toward Pakistan or come under its influence—especially not that of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)—because such a tilt could trouble India, which in turn might lead to a regional war or to India distancing itself from the United States, just as Washington is counting on New Delhi to countervail China.

The discussion proceeds by spelling out the reason why nation-building, a key element of counterinsurgency, is not working in Afghanistan, the need to draw much more on structures and leaders already in place rather than building new ones if Washington is to disengage successfully, and it closes by outlining what might be done and what lessons might be learned from this war, one of the longest in which the United States has ever engaged.

THE LIMITS OF NATION-BUILDING

Champions of nation-building, which often entails pouring large amounts of money on the nations to be reconstructed, ignore the bitter lessons of foreign aid in general. An extensive 2006 report on the billions of dollars invested by the World Bank since the mid-1990s in economic development shows that despite the bank’s best efforts, the “achievement of sustained increases in per capita income, essential for poverty reduction, continues to elude a considerable number of

2 Hillary Clinton, “Remarks at Reception in Honor of Afghan President Hamid Karzai,” May 11, 2010.

3 Barack Obama, “Remarks by President Obama and President Karzai of Afghanistan in Joint Press Availability,” May 12, 2010.

4 *The Guardian* (London), July 19, 2010.

countries.”⁵ Out of twenty-five aid-recipient countries covered by the report, more than half (14) had the same or worsening rates of per capita income from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. Moreover, the nations that received most of the aid, especially in Africa, developed least while the nations that received very little aid grew very fast (notably China, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan).⁶ Other nations found foreign aid a “poisoned gift” because it promoted dependency on foreigners, undermined indigenous endeavors, and disproportionately benefited those gifted at proposal writing and courting foundation and foreign aid representatives, rather than local entrepreneurs and businessmen.

In addition, the World Bank and other students of development have learned that large parts of the funds provided are wasted because of widespread and high-level corruption. In *The White Man’s Burden*,⁷ American economist William Easterly systematically debunked the idea that increased aid expenditures in and of themselves can alleviate poverty or modernize failed or failing states and pointed to the key roles that bad government and corruption play in these debacles. Steve Knack of the World Bank showed that huge aid revenues may even spur further bureaucratization and worsen corruption.⁸ Others found that mismanagement, sheer

5 “Annual Review of Development Effectiveness 2006: Getting Results,” World Bank Independent Evaluation Group, Washington, D.C., 2006.

6 Ibid.

7 New York: Penguin, 2006.

8 Stephen Knack, “Aid Dependence and the Quality of Governance: Cross-Country Empirical Tests,” *Southern Economic Journal*, 2 (2001): 310-29.



Photo by Michael Sparks, CJTF-101

Having made the Afghan war the edifice of his battle against violent extremism, President Obama, here with U.S. troops in Afghanistan, December 3, 2010, has been struggling to shape a coherent strategy. His frequent juggling of goals and his lack of clarity on what they are has reduced public support for the war and hindered U.S. efforts to disengage.

incompetence, and weak government were almost as debilitating.

Afghanistan was ranked by Transparency International as the third most corrupt nation in the world in 2010.⁹ Its government lost much of whatever legitimacy it had following fraudulent elections. It does not govern large parts of the country. It surely qualifies as a failing state—eight years after reconstruction began with few signs of improvement. A 2008 study by *The Economist* found that several of the main reasons that Afghanistan’s development is proceeding so poorly are the widespread corruption, cronyism and tribalism, lack of accountability, and gross mismanagement. *The Economist* recommended that the West pressure President Karzai to introduce reforms.¹⁰ But how

9 “2010 Corruption Perceptions Index,” Transparency International, Berlin, accessed Jan. 12, 2011.

10 “A War of Money as Well as Bullets,” *The Economist*, May 24, 2008.

should Karzai proceed? Should he call in all the ministers and ask them to cease taking bribes and stop allocating public funds to their favorites? Fire them and replace them—with whom? And if he did, what about their staffs? Many of the police, judges, jailors, customs officers, and civil servants in Afghanistan regularly accept bribes and grant strong preference to members of their family, clan, and tribal group.¹¹ Most are poorly trained and have no professional traditions to fall back on. How is a president, even one backed by foreign powers, to change these deeply ingrained habits and culture?

One may argue that such reforms occurred in other countries, including in the West. Indeed, social scientists could do a great service to developing nations if they conducted a thorough study of how those nations succeeded in curbing corruption and gross mismanagement.¹² The study would probably show that the process took decades, if not generations, and that it entailed a major change in social forces (such as the rise of a sizable middle class) and major alterations in the education system—among other major societal changes. Such changes cannot be rushed and must be largely endemic.

Many conditions that are unlikely to be reproduced elsewhere led to successful reconstruction in Germany and Japan after World War II. First, both nations had surrendered after defeat in a war and fully submitted to occupation. Sec-

ond, many facilitating factors were much more established than they are in countries in which social engineering is now being attempted. There was no danger that Japan or Germany would break up due to a civil war among ethnic groups as is the case in Afghanistan and Iraq. No effort had to be expended on building national unity. On the contrary, strong national unity was a

major reason change could be introduced with relative ease. Other favorable factors included competent government personnel and a low level of corruption. Political scientist Robert Packenham cites as core factors the presence of “technical and financial expertise, relatively highly institutionalized political parties, skillful and visionary politicians, well-educated populations, [and] strong national identifications.”¹³ And, crucially, there was a strong culture of self-restraint present in both Japan and Germany that favored hard work and high levels of saving, essential for building up local assets and keeping costs down.

Conditions in the donor countries were different as well. In 1948, the first year of the Marshall Plan, aid to the sixteen European countries involved 13 percent of the U.S. budget. In comparison, the United States currently spends less than 1 percent of its budget on foreign aid, and not all of it is dedicated to economic development.¹⁴ Other nations are giving relatively more, but the total funds dedicated to foreign aid are still much smaller than those committed to reconstruction at the end of World War II. In short, the current tasks are much more onerous, and the resources available are meager in comparison.

Sociologist Max Weber established the importance of culture or values when he demonstrated that Protestants were more imbued than Catholics with the values that lead to hard work and high levels of saving, essential for the rise of modern capitalist economies.¹⁵ For decades, developments in Catholic countries (such as those in southern Europe and Latin America) lagged behind the Protestant Anglo-Saxon nations and those in northeast Europe. These differences declined only when Catholics became more like Protestants.

Culture is also a major factor that explains

Counterinsurgency efforts are very unlikely to succeed in the foreseeable future.

11 CNN, Dec. 2, 2010.

12 See, for example, Susan Rose-Ackerman, *Corruption and Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

13 Robert A. Packenham, *Liberal America and the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 34-5.

14 Curt Tarnoff and Larry Nowels, “Foreign Aid: An Introductory Overview of U.S. Programs and Policy,” Congressional Research Service, Washington, D.C., Apr. 15, 2004.

15 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 2 ed. (Abingdon, N.Y.: Routledge Classics, 2001).

Photo will not display.

Rather than use the massive international aid to rebuild Afghanistan, President Hamid Karzai established a political system rife with corruption, cronyism, lack of accountability, and gross mismanagement. In 2010, Afghanistan was ranked by Transparency International as the third most corrupt nation in the world.

the striking differences between various rates of development, especially between the South-east Asian “tigers” (which received little aid) and African and Arab states that received a great deal. It is not that these latter states cannot be developed because of some genetically innate characteristics of the people living there, but because their cultures stress other values, especially traditional religious values and communal and tribal bonds. These cultures can change, but, as the record shows, only slowly, and the changes involved cannot be foisted upon them by outsiders.

When all is said and done, one must expect that development of countries such as Afghanistan will be very slow and highly taxing on all involved, which is exactly what has happened there. Corruption continues to be endemic at all levels of the Afghan government. Efforts to sup-

press the growth of opiates and the illegal drug trade have failed. Warlords continue to play a major role in large parts of the country. The government is not considered legitimate, following fraudulent elections. The majority of citizens feel that the judiciary is bought, law and order is lacking, and a considerable number are yearning for the days when the Taliban were in charge. Indeed, the Taliban influence is growing in parts of the country, including in the north, where it was weak in earlier years.¹⁶

All this indicates that counterinsurgency efforts are very unlikely to succeed in the foreseeable future. This is quite openly acknowledged by General Petraeus, who called for pa-

¹⁶ *The Washington Post*, Dec. 6, 2010.

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Vice president Joe Biden's counterterrorist approach—advocating reliance on drones, Special Forces, and the CIA to prevent Afghanistan's transformation into a haven for terrorists after the U.S. departure—may prove the best exit strategy. He is pictured here on a January 2011 visit to Afghanistan.

tience in a 2007 BBC interview because “the average counterinsurgency is somewhere around a nine or a 10 year endeavor,” and the British counterinsurgency in Northern Ireland took “decades.”¹⁷ But Americans and the citizens of other involved nations are very unlikely to support such a long-run project at such high cost, which is estimated to already have cost the U.S. government \$336 billion by the end of 2010, and with the addition of \$119 billion requested for 2011, will cost \$455 billion by the end of 2011.¹⁸ In short, the nation-building goals are too ambitious and must be abandoned.

WORKING WITH LOCAL FORCES

The nation-building project has been a top-down one. Washington and its allies sought to

rely on the national government headed by President Karzai and on a constitution that centralizes more power in the national government than any democratic society and in a society in which local, ethnic bonds and commitments are far stronger than in any democratic society. The national government appoints provincial and district governors and city mayors. Although district councils are supposed to be elected, elections have not yet taken place. At the same time, the Afghan sense of nationhood is weak, and the primary loyalty of most Afghans is to their ethnic group—the Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmen, etc. Moreover, the national army has a disproportionately high number of officers from non-Pashtun groups, especially the Tajiks,¹⁹ while the Taliban's closest affinity is with the Pashtun and further divides society along ethnic lines. Attempts to reduce the tension between the political structure and the societal one have run into

difficulties because of the close alliance between the coalition forces and the national government. To disengage, much more attention will have to be paid to local powers and local institutions and leaders that are in place.

Alexander Thier, the director for Afghanistan and Pakistan at the U.S. Institute of Peace, and Jarat Chopra, a former professor at Brown University, write that in Afghanistan, “family and tribal affiliations outweigh all others” and that tribal elders “are not willing to place a united Afghanistan over advancement of their particular tribe.”²⁰

The Taliban were defeated in Afghanistan in 2001 with very few U.S. casualties; only twelve U.S. service members were killed. This has obscured the fact that the war was won by a U.S.-supported coalition of ethnic groups, mainly

17 BBC News, July 9, 2007.

18 Amy Belasco, “The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations since 9/11,” Congressional Research Service, Washington, D.C., Sept. 2, 2010.

19 Antonio Giustozzi, “Afghanistan's National Army: The Ambiguous Prospects of Afghanization,” *Terrorism Monitor*, Jamestown Foundation, Washington, D.C., May 1, 2008.

20 Alexander Thier and Jarat Chopra, “Considerations for Political and Institutional Reconstruction in Afghanistan,” U.N. Public Administration Network, New York, Jan. 2002.

Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara, known as the Northern Alliance.

U.S. officials tend to favor national forces although even in the United States, much police work is locally and not nationally controlled. Even the U.S. National Guard can be called up only by the governors of the various states, and each unit primarily serves its own state. Yet in Iraq, after U.S.-led coalition forces removed the Saddam regime, Washington and its allies tried to create a national force by insisting that Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish units either disarm or be integrated into a national force. Moreover, initially the Bush administration positioned Shiite forces in Sunni areas and Sunni forces in Shiite areas in the hope that they would cease to view themselves as tribal forces and start acting like “Iraqis.” The result was often increased bloodshed.

A similar development took place in Afghanistan. In the aftermath of the defeat of the Taliban in 2001, the new Afghan government sought to disarm the tribal forces that had ousted the Taliban—what the government referred to as the AMF (Afghan Militia Forces)—in favor of fashioning a new national army. As a result of this disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, about 63,000 militiamen were disarmed by 2005. However, there are still a great number of unofficial ethnic forces and other private armies. Estimates of their size run between 65,000 and 180,000. Recently several attempts have been made to work with local forces. NATO forces have contracted with private security companies to secure dangerous stretches of highway while the Local Police Force Program was established in July 2010 as part of a larger “village stability platform” to supplement the Afghan National Army and provide regional security.²¹ In Wardak province, the Afghan Public Protection Program has helped to establish security in what was a Taliban stronghold.²² To further disengage, Washington and its allies will have to

shift more weight and resources to these local forces and rely less on the Karzai government.

An essential feature of a stable political system, and one able to adjust as changes occur, is the availability of institutions that can be used to settle differences without resorting to violence. Westerners tend to assume that these political institutions will be democratic and that various particularistic interests will be represented by elected officials. In this way, ballots will replace bullets. In Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. government and its allies invested considerable effort in introducing free and fair elections, in part to serve the purpose of absorbing ethnic and regional conflicts into political institutions.

Given, however, that the format of the introduced political institutions was greatly influenced by U.S. guidelines, they often do not reflect the preferences of the majority of the Afghan people. For instance, Washington insisted that the Afghan constitution be drafted and approved by consensus before the election of the National Assembly and national officials, and it promoted Karzai as the national leader. None of these moves helped lend legitimacy to political institutions that were imported and alien to begin with.

In Afghanistan, as in other countries in similar states of societal development, native people have their own institutions and their own ways of selecting leaders and resolving conflicts. These include tribal councils, community elders, and religious authorities. That is, the people often rely on natural leaders—those who rose to power due to their charisma, persuasive powers, lineage or religious status, but who were not elected in the Western way. Initially, it is best to try to work with them, rather than expect that they could be replaced by elected officials in short order. The same holds for various councils and inter-tribal bodies.

Seth Jones of the RAND Corporation argues that a strategy that seeks to build a strong

It is best to work with native leaders rather than expect that they could be replaced by elected officials.

21 *The New York Times*, June 5, 2010; Seth G. Jones and Arturo Munoz, *Afghanistan's Local War: Building Local Defense Forces* (Santa Monica: National Defense Research Institute, RAND Corporation, 2010), p. 57.

22 *Time*, Oct. 27, 2010.

central government and to hold territory with foreign forces is unlikely to work in Afghanistan.²³ He reports that the national presidential elections in 2004 and parliamentary elections in 2005 did little to diminish the power of regional warlords and tribal militias. Even efforts that were made to relocate such leaders and wrest them from their regional power bases were unsuccessful. Instead of attempting—and failing—to break these solid ties, strategists should draw upon them to promote security in Afghanistan. Jones

Pakistan's historical alliances with the Afghan Taliban extend from the 1990s.

points out that a successful bottom-up strategy must strengthen the local tribal and religious leaders who understand their communities best, so that they may provide security and services. Indeed, he writes that “the most effective bottom-up strategy in Af-

ghanistan is likely to be one that already taps into existing local institutions ... Local tribal and religious leaders best understand their community needs.”²⁴

To illustrate the influence of local natural leaders, one only needs to look at Ismail Khan. After the defeat of the Taliban, Khan, a warlord in Herat, became governor of the area. Despite his ability to maintain security, Khan's support of Iran and his refusal to send the tax revenues he collected to the central government in Kabul, coupled with a wish to strengthen Karzai, led Washington to urge his removal. Khan was removed from his local post in 2004, a move that resulted in violent protests,²⁵ sectarian violence, increased crime, and the Taliban making inroads into Herat. Similarly, Governor Gul Agha Shirzai of the Nangarhar province was removed from a

previous gubernatorial position because of his autocratic, warlord style but is now viewed as necessary to stabilize the province. Atta Muhammad Noor, the governor of Balkh province, has been credited with bringing security to his province and eradicating the poppy trade there.²⁶ This is not to suggest that all these tribal chiefs can or should be made into local partners. Each must be examined in his own right. However, one can work with many to improve their records. The more Washington and its allies work with local leaders, including religious ones, the sooner it will be able to disengage.

There remains a danger that if the U.S. forces disengage, having increasingly drawn on local forces to provide security and stability in their area of the country, a civil war might break out among various groups, especially among the Pashtun and other ethnic groups, or among various warlords. The best way to minimize this risk is not to presume that one can fashion an effective national government to which various local power centers will yield but to work out inter-local coalitions, treaties, and agreements.

THE GEOPOLITICAL MISSION CREEP

Recently, an argument surfaced that the United States cannot withdraw from Afghanistan until that country is well-stabilized because such a withdrawal would cause Pakistan—especially the ISI—to greatly extend its support for violent Islamist groups in Afghanistan and use it as a base for terrorist attacks against India. This could result in a new battleground for Indo-Pakistani rivalry, bring other powers into a confrontation, and even risk a nuclear war.²⁷

Although Pakistan is a U.S. ally in fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan, various observers believe Islamabad is playing both sides. Pakistan's historical alliances with the Afghan

23 See, also, Andrew M. Roe, “What Waziristan Means for Afghanistan,” *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2011, pp. 37-46.

24 Seth G. Jones, “U.S. Strategy in Afghanistan,” RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia, Washington, D.C., Apr. 2, 2009.

25 *The Washington Post*, Feb. 21, 2006.

26 Environment News Service (Washington, D.C. and Seattle), June 6, 2007.

27 *The Economic Times* (Mumbai), Nov. 10, 2010.

Taliban and the Islamist Haqqani network extend from the 1990s when the country supported the rise of the Taliban government. Moreover, the ISI, which appears anti-American and pro-Taliban, is following a different course than the Pakistani military. Journalist Helene Cooper observes in *The New York Times*,

What Pakistan wants most in Afghanistan is an assurance that India cannot use it to threaten Pakistan. For that, a radical Islamic movement like the Taliban, with strong ties to kin in Pakistan, fits the bill.²⁸

Cooper also believes that Pakistan wants to keep the Taliban in its “good graces” should U.S. forces withdraw and leave the Taliban to reassert control over the country. Likewise, Shuja Nawaz of the Atlantic Council asserts that Pakistan’s support of extremists is “leverage in the sense that it allows [the Pakistanis] to have a government in Kabul that is neutral, if not pro-Pakistan. That’s why they’ve always hedged on the Afghan Taliban.”²⁹

There is an ethnic dimension to the Indo-Pakistani rivalry in Afghanistan, as well. Pakistan wants an Afghan government that provides greater representation for the Pashtun and is more closely allied with Pakistan. The current Afghan government contains more Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara members that were aligned with the India-backed Northern Alliance, and thus Pakistan perceives the current Afghan government as being too close to India.

Additional evidence to support the claim that Pakistan is at least somewhat favorable to the Taliban and would be more so should U.S. forces withdraw, can be seen in the accusations



Under Gen. David Petraeus (middle, with U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry, right), U.S. operations expanded from counterterrorism measures designed to “disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan and to prevent their return to either country” to a counterinsurgency strategy viewing nation-building and democratization as essential to military success.

that Islamabad is undermining the current peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. According to *The New York Times*, Pakistan’s apparent stance against the peace process is due to the fact that the Karzai government is reported to be leaving out those Taliban members regarded as being controlled by the ISI.³⁰ Those Taliban leaders not associated with Pakistan who do show willingness to negotiate have been suppressed by Pakistan; for example, Pakistani agents arrested high-level Taliban official Mullah Baradur. *The New York Times* also reports, “Afghans who have tried to take part in, or even facilitate, past negotiations have been killed by their Taliban comrades, sometimes with the assistance of Pakistan’s intelligence agency.”³¹

A number of observers have suggested that

28 Helene Cooper, “Allies in War, but the Goals Clash,” *The New York Times*, Oct. 9, 2010.

29 *Time*, Dec. 2, 2009.

30 *The New York Times*, Oct. 19, 2010.

31 *Ibid.*

Overstaying in Afghanistan to please India is a lose-lose situation.

a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan would precipitate the return of the Taliban with ties to Pakistan that would enable increased terrorism against India. As Steve Coll observed in a *New Yorker* blog, “The probable knock-on effect of a second Taliban revolution in Afghanistan would be to increase the likelihood of irregular Islamist attacks from Pakistan against Indian targets—not only the traditional target set in Indian-held Kashmir, but in New Delhi, Mumbai, and other cities, as has occurred periodically during the

last decade.”³² Likewise, Robert Kaplan writes in a report for the Center of New American Security that Afghanistan is a “principal invasion route into India for terrorists” and “an Afghanistan that falls under Taliban sway ... would be, in ef-

fect, a greater Pakistan, giving Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate [ISI] the ability to create a clandestine empire composed of the likes of Jallaluddin Haqqani, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Lashkar-e-Taiba.”³³ The latter group carried out the 2009 Mumbai terror attacks against India.

Aside from terrorism, some observers point to potentially even more devastating consequences of increased India-Pakistan rivalry, following a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the likely return of the Taliban that it could facilitate. Associated Press reports that the “fight [in Afghanistan] pits nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan against one another in a battle for influence that will almost certainly gain traction as the clock ticks down toward America’s military withdrawal.”³⁴ Coll contends that the tension caused by terrorism against India, emanating from Pakistan, “would present, repetitively, the

problem of managing the role of nuclear weapons in a prospective fourth Indo-Pakistani war.”³⁵

Finally, some observers hold that a U.S. withdrawal would be seen as an abandonment of India, causing it to move closer to other powers. Associated Press reports that

India warns that it would form a coalition with Iran—an alliance that would infuriate Washington—if the Taliban appear poised to return to power. The “self-interested coalition” could include Russia and several Central Asian states that would also fear a Taliban return.³⁶

Kaplan suggests that a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan would be tantamount to deserting India, causing it to move closer to China:

The quickest way to undermine U.S.-India relations is for the United States to withdraw precipitously from Afghanistan ... [It] would signal to Indian policy elites that the United States is surely a declining power on which they cannot depend. Détente with China might then seem to be in India’s interest.³⁷

During off-the-record briefings in Washington, conducted under Chatham House rules, which allow the use of the information but not the identification of the source or organization at which the briefing took place, U.S. State Department officials indicated that indeed the department saw the need to keep India on the U.S. side for many reasons but especially to “balance” China, a major consideration in determining the role Washington should play in Afghanistan.

AN ASSESSMENT

The frequent re-juggling of the goals of a mission and lack of clarity on what they are is

32 Steve Coll, “What If We Fail in Afghanistan?” *The New Yorker*, Nov. 16, 2009.

33 Robert D. Kaplan, “South Asia’s Geography of Conflict,” Center for a New American Security, Washington, D.C., Aug. 2010.

34 Associated Press, Apr. 25, 2010.

35 Coll, “What If We Fail in Afghanistan?”

36 Associated Press, Apr. 25, 2010.

37 Kaplan, “South Asia’s Geography of Conflict.”

detrimental to any campaign. The main difficulties the U.S. administration faces in Afghanistan are due to mission creep generated by nation-building—in both the somewhat-limited counterinsurgency version and the expanded human rights and democracy version—often a highly unrealistic goal, in particular in a country that is as poor, illiterate, corrupt, and conflicted as Afghanistan.

The military mission, as originally defined by President Obama, was achieved in Afghanistan but not in Pakistan. However, there is no reason to hold that continued fighting in Afghanistan, by drawing on large conventional forces and a similar number of private contractors, will change the situation in Pakistan. Attempts to move the government to confront the Pakistani Taliban and eradicate the havens for Afghan terrorists in that country have largely failed. So have most efforts to pressure, cajole, or incentivize Islamabad to change the balance between the largely anti-U.S. ISI and the other parts of the military—and between the military and the civilian authorities in favor of the latter. Pakistan continues to have a rather unstable regime, to harbor terrorists, to be unable to put down an insurgency, to hold nuclear arms, and to be headed by a civilian government that is unpopular.

The most promising avenue for significant change in Pakistan lies in helping it and India to settle their major differences, which would free the Pakistani military from its eastward obsession and enable it to fight terrorism and insurgency, improve the economy, and downgrade the importance of nuclear arms. This is a very challenging mission, which might well be impossible to carry out. However, the prospects of such a settlement have little to do with what is happening on the ground in Afghanistan.

With regard to the geopolitical goal, New Delhi has many interests that Washington can serve—or neglect—from continued outsourcing to deals concerning fuel for nuclear reactors and technical knowhow, from weapon agreements to sharing intelligence about terrorists. For example, U.S. intelligence agencies are reported to have had knowledge about those

who attacked Mumbai before they struck.³⁸ Hence, given the high costs of staying the course in Afghanistan and the likelihood that it will fail, Washington will be better served if it disengages even if this leads to some displeasure in India.

Moreover, it further suggests the important role Washington can have by fostering a settlement of the Kashmir issue and other sources of conflict between India and Pakistan—a win-win situation compared to overstaying in Afghanistan to please India—a lose-lose condition. It remains for another day to ask whether the whole notion of nations such as India “balancing” nations such as China is not a highly anachronistic one, harkening back to the days when nations had no ideological commitments and shifted sides to maintain a balance of power.

Nation-building cannot be carried out long-distance by foreign powers in nations in an early state of development.

CAN WASHINGTON AFFORD WAR?

In recent years, a consensus is emerging among students of international relations that U.S. power is declining and that its foreign policy will have to adapt to its increasing weakness. This thesis has numerous facets and implications, only one of which is here explored—namely, the argument that because of the stressed condition of the U.S. economy, interventions of the kind seen in Iraq and Afghanistan will no longer be possible, at least in political ways.

Michael Mandelbaum of Johns Hopkins University contends:

the limits that constrain the government in its external initiatives will be drawn less on the basis of what the world requires and more by

³⁸ *The Washington Post*, Oct. 16, 2010.

considering what the United States can—and cannot—afford. In an era in which fewer resources will be available for everything, it is certain that fewer will be available for foreign policy. When working Americans are paying more than in the past to support their fellow citizens who have retired, and retirees are receiving fewer benefits from the government than they were promised, neither group will be eager to offer generous support to overseas ventures.³⁹

Defense Secretary Robert Gates has said:

The United States must limit its goals to key national interests and global security.

I think the Congress and the president would look long and hard at another military operation that would cost us \$100 billion a year ... If there's a real threat out there, the president and Congress will spend whatever it takes to protect the nation. But in situ-

ations where there are real choices, I think this would be a factor.⁴⁰

New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman writes:

If we become weak and enfeebled by economic decline and debt, as we slowly are, America may not be able to play its historic stabilizing role in the world.⁴¹

This viewpoint is based on the failed and costly attempt to engage in nation-building but does not apply to military interventions. Thus, the U.S. intervention in 1991 that rolled Saddam out of Kuwait exacted a heavy cost from Iraq for violating another nation's sovereignty and shored up U.S. credibility in the world, but it

was achieved swiftly with few casualties and at a low cost of \$61 billion,⁴² almost 90 percent of which was borne by U.S. allies. The same is true of 1989's Operation Just Cause in Panama. The 2003 invasion of Iraq and the removal of Saddam's regime were carried out swiftly with few casualties and low costs. Only \$56 billion had been appropriated for Iraq operations by the time President Bush declared "Mission Accomplished" on May 1, 2003, and 172 U.S. servicemen had died.⁴³ Most of the casualties and costs were inflicted during the nation-building phase that followed. Since May 2003, more than 4,500 Americans have died and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, and the direct financial cost has totaled \$650 billion.⁴⁴ The overthrow of the Taliban in 2001 was carried out swiftly with minimal U.S. casualties and low costs. Most of the casualties and costs that followed took place during the nation-building phase—only \$21 billion was spent in 2001 and 2002 while the costs since then have amounted to more than \$300 billion.⁴⁵ Only twelve U.S. soldiers died in Afghanistan in 2001, but almost 1,300 more have died since then.⁴⁶

Thus, it is wrong to conclude that the United States will be unable to afford military interventions to support its foreign policy goals, for instance, compelling Iran to give up its nuclear sites—although they are likely to be substantially higher than the interventions just cited—as long as no nation-building follows. This is not to suggest that the United States should go to war because wars are cheap. On the contrary, a nation should engage in a "just war" if and only if there is a clear and present danger, if all

39 Michael Mandelbaum, *The Frugal Superpower: America's Global Leadership in a Cash-Strapped Era* (United States: Public Affairs, 2010), p. 33.

40 *The Telegraph* (London), May 9, 2010.

41 Thomas L. Friedman, "This I Believe," *The New York Times*, Dec. 1, 2009.

42 *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*, final report to the U.S. Congress by the U.S. Department of Defense, Washington, D.C., Apr. 1992, appendix P.

43 "The Cost of Military Operations in Iraq: An Update," analysis by the House Budget Committee's Democratic staff, Washington, D.C., Sept. 23, 2003.

44 "The Budget and Economic Outlook: An Update," Congressional Budget Office, Washington, D.C., Aug. 2010.

45 Belasco, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11."

46 "Faces of the Fallen," *The Washington Post*, accessed Jan. 12, 2010.

other means to resolving the conflict have been exhausted, and only to protect innocents. However, when the United States must engage in war, economic considerations will not prevent it from proceeding.

Some argue that Washington has a moral obligation to “reconstruct” countries it invades.⁴⁷ Opinions can differ on what the United States owes a country it helped liberate or that used to harbor terrorists. However, in any case, given that nation-building cannot be carried out long-distance by foreign powers in nations in an early state of development (in contrast to post-World War II Germany and Japan), the moral issue is moot. At the same time, there is no reason to stop non-lethal interventions through educational, cultural, and public diplomacy means, from Fulbright scholarships to foreign aid. It is also worth noting that diplomacy is dirt cheap. The U.S. State Department budget famously has fewer foreign service officers than the Pentagon has military band musicians.⁴⁸ Granted, a return to military interventions and counterterrorism without counterinsurgency ef-

forts would mean that once the United States topples a regime that endangers it or others, the people of the nation will have to duke it out to determine which kind of regime will be established without coerced U.S. tutelage. Hence, for instance, if the people of Afghanistan find that the Shari‘a law that the Taliban is promoting is too harsh from their viewpoint, they will have to fight the Taliban. On the other hand, if they favor a strict Shari‘a regime, the swift justice the Taliban metes out, its harsh way of dealing with pedophilia and drug dealers—combined with injustice to women—then Washington should let them embrace that regime while exhorting them to work for reforms, the way it does in many nations in the Middle East and elsewhere.

In any event, the American decline is to a considerable extent a reflection of an inability to live up to the excessively ambitious goals Americans set for themselves. It matters little whether this goal-setting is due to an idealistic American commitment to human rights and democracy, to falling prey to public relations, to a lack of realism, or to sheer arrogance and hubris. If the United States limits its goals to key national interests and global security—it can readily afford to use its power for good purposes.⁴⁹

47 Noah Feldman, *What We Owe Iraq: War and the Ethics of Nation Building* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 80; Bill Wineke, “Whatever Happened to Freedom Fries,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, June 12, 2005; Gerard F. Powers, “The Dilemma in Iraq,” *America*, Mar. 6, 2006, pp. 19-26.

48 National Public Radio, Sept. 29, 2010.

49 For more discussion, see Amitai Etzioni, *Security First* (New Haven: Yale, 2007); idem, “The Promise of the Proliferation Security Initiative,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2009.



Queen Rania’s Islamist Facebook

Queen Rania al-Abdallah of Jordan is the recipient of numerous international prizes. She is also the author of *The Sandwich Swap*, a children’s book promoting tolerance and acceptance of the other.

However, a look at Queen Rania’s Facebook account reveals some disturbing content. A thread titled “Is Holocaust a Reality or a Myth” features a lengthy discussion about the veracity of the Holocaust, as well as posts denying Israel’s right to exist and presenting the 9/11 attacks as a Western conspiracy. Another thread opens with a post suggesting that peace with the Jews will only be possible after Israel ceases to exist.

It is noteworthy that neither one of these threads, nor any of the posts within them, have been censored or removed.

Middle East Media Research Institute, Jan. 25, 2011

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The Afghanistan Conflict

Reforming the Village War

by David Katz

In the strategic debate over Afghanistan, two opposing schools of thought have emerged. The first asserts that a durable victory requires a functioning, legitimate, and representative nation-state; the second contends that U.S. national security concerns can be satisfied without committing to a wholesale restructuring of the country. The predominate school advocates surging ground troops and deeper national commitment; its counterpart seeks solution through long-distance punitive strikes using cruise missiles, unmanned predator drones, or raids by special operations forces.

Limiting the strategic response to whether America is either spending billions of dollars and suffering thousands of dead to restructure whole countries or is a distant sword bearer antiseptically raining down death and destruction is, however, a false choice. Washington's challenge is to field a decisive and cost-effective global strategy implemented by successful tactics to bring a durable victory.

To be sure, Afghanistan is a seemingly intractable problem. Throughout history, dozens of foreign armies have marched into the country—from the ancient Greeks and Persians, to the Mongol hordes, to British, Russian, and Soviet occupiers. None of them remained, and the legacy of their battles and campaigns has not been empire but an indigenous Pashtun tribal structure and culture, refined and honed over millennia for fierce resistance against invaders.

The Pashtuns are permanent in the region. The Americans are not. The Afghans will wait out this latest incursion as they did those by every foreign invader since Alexander the Great. Unless Washington adopts a new and imaginative strategy that will separate the Taliban from the Pashtun tribes, the U.S. footprint in Afghanistan is bound to disappear with no lasting legacy.

SHIFTING STRATEGIES

In his address to the nation on October 7, 2001, announcing the beginning of combat operations in Afghanistan—or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) as it would come to be known—President George W. Bush defined the nascent campaign as

carefully targeted actions ... designed to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base

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of operations and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime ... Every nation has a choice to make ... In this conflict, there is no neutral ground. If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers themselves. And they will take that lonely path at their own peril.¹

The U.S.-backed Karzai government is seen as a foreign implant similar to Soviet-backed governments.

This goal was reaffirmed in "The National Security Strategy of the United States," the Bush administration's strategy document, published in September 2002, which sought to "disrupt and destroy terrorist organizations by ... denying further sponsorship, support, and sanctuary to terrorists by convinc-

ing or compelling states to accept their sovereignty responsibilities."²

Nine years later, Operation Enduring Freedom has progressed through three distinct strategic phases:

Phase one. Beginning as a counterinsurgency campaign, OEF quickly developed into an offensive war of maneuver where massed Northern Alliance militias advanced to engage the Taliban in open battle. OEF phase one was waged unconventionally—utilizing the Taliban's local rivals and supported by the CIA, Army Green Berets, and U.S. air power. It toppled the Taliban regime in a rapid and cost-effective manner that was over to all intents and purposes by December 20, 2001, when the U.N. Security Council established the British-led International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) "to assist the Afghan Interim Authority in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas."³

Phase two. Characterized by a logistical buildup and strategic defense waged through a conventional war of attrition, the second phase began with Operation Anaconda in March 2002 when more than 1,000 U.S. soldiers conducted fierce firefights in the Tora Bora region, inflicting hundreds of casualties on the Taliban, their Pashtun tribal backers, and their al-Qaeda allies.⁴

For all its achievements, Operation Anaconda was not decisive. It did not, in any strategic sense, destroy the enemy's forces, seize their terrain or populations, or break their will to fight. Quite the contrary in fact, it marked the beginning of the strategic defense as U.S. forces failed to pursue the enemy over the Pakistan border, thus enabling the creation of sanctuaries in that country's Northwest Frontier Provinces and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas from which the Taliban would carry out sporadic and diffuse guerilla operations.

Imposing a conventional framework on what had been a chaotic unconventional campaign, the new strategy involved the construction and expansion of ISAF bases around the country as the force grew from its initial 600-strong size to the current 131,700.⁵ Numerous tactical operations were launched. The Afghan national government, army, police and border forces were created. Twenty-six provisional reconstruction teams were dispatched to the provinces.⁶ Civil and public works were commissioned and funded by the international community.

The shift from a tribal-based counterinsurgency to a conventional Western diplomatic and military framework was an abrupt and radical change for Afghanistan, not least since the modest strategic goal of denying al-Qaeda a base of

1 *The Washington Post*, Oct. 7, 2001.

2 "The National Security Strategy, September 2002," The White House, chap. III, p. 2.

3 "Security Council Authorizes International Security Force for Afghanistan," resolution 1386, United Nations, New York, Dec. 20, 2001.

4 "Tora Bora Revisited: How We Failed to Get Bin Laden and Why It Matters Today," report to U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, 111th Congress, Washington, D.C., Nov. 30, 2009.

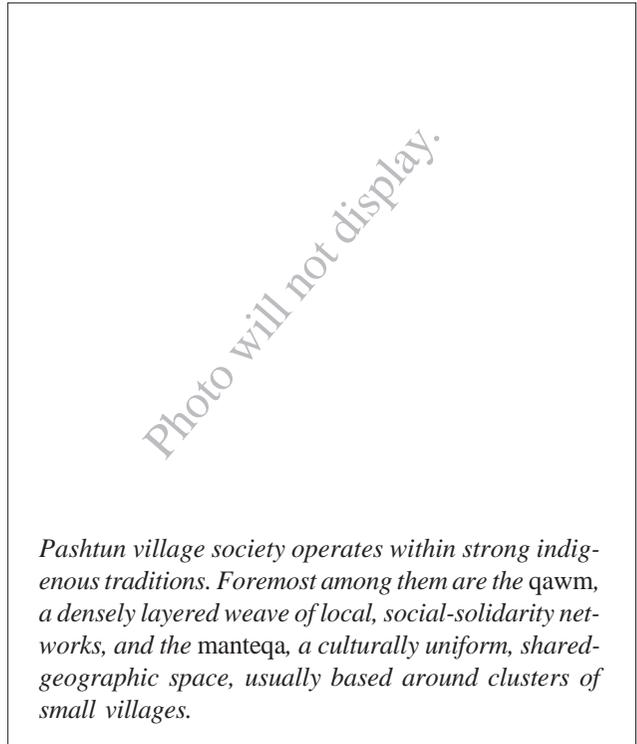
5 "Key Facts and Figures," International Security and Assistance Force, North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO), accessed Dec. 14, 2010.

6 "ISAF Regional Command Structure," International Security Assistance Force, NATO, Oct. 22, 2009.

operations gave way to compelling the Afghan government to enforce its authority over the country's tribal entities—something that had historically resulted in insurrection. Small wonder, therefore, that the latest imposition of modern state structures on this tribal society generated a reaction that served to unify and motivate current and possibly future generations of Pashtuns against U.S. forces, their allies, and the Afghan government. For most Afghans, the U.S.-backed Hamid Karzai government has been as much a foreign implant as the Soviet-backed communist governments; its military operations in the provinces are almost as foreign an exercise as Western interventions.

The ISAF's tactical successes notwithstanding, the Taliban continued to attack and did so in increasing numbers. The conventional war of attrition focused on kinetic operations against enemy forces in Afghanistan to the exclusion of Pakistani sanctuaries, militant *madrasas* (Islamic schools), and Pashtun tribal and religious imperatives. Moreover, it mismatched U.S. tactical advantages of speed, communication, and firepower against Pashtun strategic advantages of permanence, religious and tribal will, moral purpose, local knowledge, language, and culture.

The ISAF could inflict cumulative casualties numbering in the tens of thousands on the Taliban without deterring them, their Pashtun tribal backers, or their al-Qaeda allies. The reason for this is simple arithmetic. The total fertility rate—the average number of children born to a woman over her reproductive lifetime—in the Taliban's sanctuary of Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Provinces is 5.1⁷; in Afghanistan, it is

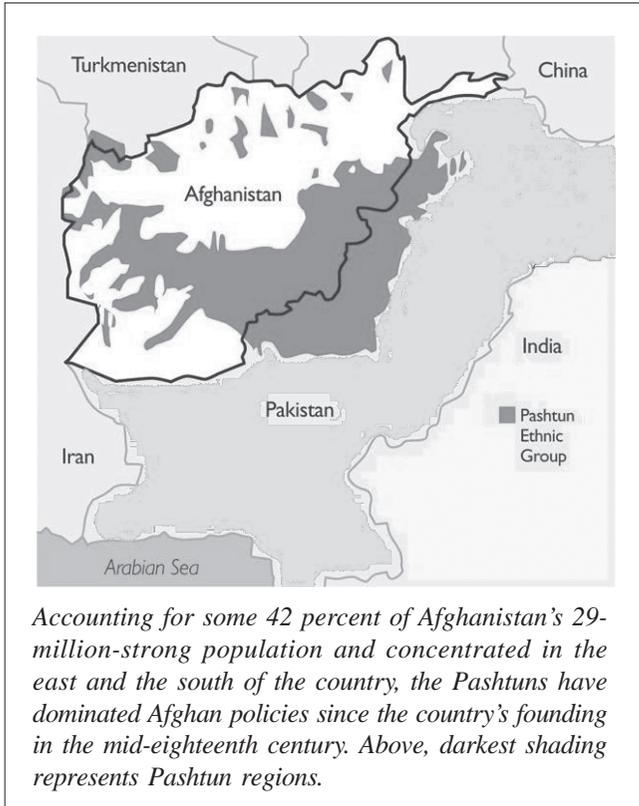


6.6.⁸ If these rates bracket the actual rates on either side of the border, the provinces' population of eighteen million doubles every eleven to fourteen years, providing some eight to nine million additional males for jihad. This regenerative capacity trumps any casualty rate the ISAF can inflict on the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Taliban needs to protract the conflict in order to realize its strategic advantage provided by birth rate. The ISAF's strategy not only provided that time but also surrendered the strategic offensive to the enemy, which could decide at its leisure if and when to engage.

Ultimately, the second strategy failed because it lacked a way to convert tactical gains into strategic victory. The ISAF's tactical-strategic disconnect manifested itself in emergent bad habits; timid generalship allowed force protection where avoidance of casualties is a pre-dominant strategic objective. It fixated on per-

7 "The Pakistan Reproductive Health and Family Planning Survey (PRHFPS)," National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS), Islamabad, 2001, p. 48.

8 "Afghanistan Statistics," UNICEF, New York, 2008, accessed Feb. 7, 2011.



Accounting for some 42 percent of Afghanistan’s 29-million-strong population and concentrated in the east and the south of the country, the Pashtuns have dominated Afghan policies since the country’s founding in the mid-eighteenth century. Above, darkest shading represents Pashtun regions.

sonalities, not war goals. Remote, periodic culling of the Taliban’s leadership through Predator drone strikes and commando raids achieved “silver bullet” status for a command substituting tactical body and bean counting for strategic gains.

Phase Three. This phase commenced with the insertion of 4,000 Marines into the Helmand River valley on June 30, 2009, as part of a new clear and hold strategy that de-emphasized protecting military forces in favor of deploying them across Afghanistan.⁹ As Gen. David Petraeus explained to the Senate Armed Forces Committee on April 1, 2009,

In order to address the situation in Afghanistan, we will implement a comprehensive counterinsurgency approach that works to defeat existing insurgent groups, develops the

institutions required to address the root causes of the conflict, maintains relentless pressure on terrorist organizations affiliated with the insurgency, dismantles illegal drug networks, and prevents the emergence of safe havens for those transnational extremist groups ... A properly sized, trained, and equipped Afghanistan National Security Force is a prerequisite for any eventual drawdown of international forces from Afghanistan ... In addition, we will bolster the capabilities and the legitimacy of the other elements of the Afghan government—an effort in which, in much of Afghanistan, we will be building, not rebuilding.¹⁰

While maintaining most frameworks of the second phase, this strategy avoided the pitfall of a conventional war of attrition by employing a comprehensive counterinsurgency approach. The strategic goal of compelling Afghanistan to exercise sovereign

control over its territory remained preeminent, and open-ended direct tactical engagement remained the means. Petraeus specifically mentioned an endpoint where ISAF’s security responsibilities would be transferred to the Afghans and its forces drawn down. The question is whether a foreign war can evolve, or devolve, into a purely Afghan war.

WINNING AFGHANISTAN

The United States and its allies have been battling the Taliban for nearly a decade, to no conclusive effect. While having a wide spectrum of responses and capabilities, they have relied almost exclusively upon direct tactical engagement, ignoring for the most part soft power,

⁹ *The Washington Post*, July 3, 2009.

¹⁰ Gen. David H. Petraeus, statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Washington, D.C., Apr. 1, 2009.

whether religious, economic, social competition, or co-optation. Yet armed force is only one means to defeat an adversary. In order to execute a successful war in Afghanistan or elsewhere, the West must broaden its approach, initiate new methods and remove failed ones.

The minimum goal must be to preclude the establishment of armed Salafi Islam in failed nation-state sanctuaries or defeat it locally where it threatens U.S. or Western national interests. Ultimately, this will require the removal of Islamism's hold on targeted tribal societies although this cannot be directly achieved through external intervention but rather through a decisive engagement between indigenous constituencies. As such, Western nationals, whether armed or nongovernmental organizations, are not part of the permanent solution.

Specifically, the key to victory lies in the reformulation of Afghanistan's Pashtun village society to the extent that it not only rejects Salafi Islam as its sole or preeminent organizing and motivating principle but also invigorates competitive forces—political, cultural, religious, economic, and ideological—capable of superseding and/or replacing the Salafi interpretation of Islam in those societies. Such natural competitors must create in-place, multigenerational societies, whose opposition to radical Islam is self-maintaining, self-replacing, and self-organizing. Their emergence requires that the West alter the predominance, range of control, and the depth and balance among these natural forces, elevating certain constituencies and diminishing others, without forgetting for a moment that these are native constituencies and are not proxy forces dependent upon foreign support and intervention.

The advantage of societal reformulation is that it uses existing constituencies, operating within natural parameters and constraints, which precludes the cost of introducing, preparing, and educating societies on foreign concepts; decreases the probability of rejection; and also reduces the probability that natural competitors are co-opted and used against U.S. and allied forces. Also, the use of existing constituencies decreases the need to deploy Western forces in direct tactical engagements. Lastly, evolution-

ary and consistent reformulation, rather than abrupt radical transformation, avoids supplying reactionary elements in society with a rallying focus.

DECENTRALIZATION AND ITS MERITS

Reformulation of a targeted society takes place within that society's natural operating parameters and constraints. In the case of southern Afghanistan, local Pashtun village society operates within the Hanafi school of Sunni Muslim jurisprudence and Pashtunwali indigenous traditions of the region expressed through *narkh*, a Pashto word meaning informal or traditional laws and rules.¹¹ *Qawm* (Dari) is a densely layered weave of constantly renegotiated, local, and social solidarity networks. *Manteqa* (Pashto) is a self-identified, culturally uniform, shared-geographic space, usually based around clusters of small villages.¹² Together, they articulate the depth, range of control, predominance, and balance among natural and traditional Afghan constituencies.

The straightforward integration of local village society to the central state will be no mean feat. The *qawm* networks have historically been inaccessible, if not hostile, to the imposition of external, hierarchical control, all the more so to a central government seeking to impose a Western-type state run by English speaking, transnational elites and backed by foreign troops. Current village-based counterinsurgency programs such as the Village

Victory lies in the reformulation of Pashtun village society to reject Salafi Islam.

11 Shahm Mahmood Miakhel, *Understanding Afghanistan: The Importance of Tribal Culture and Structure in Security and Governance* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2009), p. 2.

12 Raphy Favre, "Interface between State and Society in Afghanistan," Aizon, Addis Abeba, Feb. 2005, pp. 5-8.

Stability Program, Afghan Public Protection Program, Community Defense Initiative, and Local Defense Initiative that operate through *shuras* or *jurgas* (local or tribal consultative councils) will either be co-opted by a large repertoire of local interests or rejected because, at their core, they are antithetical to qawm and manteqa interests.¹³

The competition between the Afghan government and the Taliban may be about who will provide public order.

Short of a fundamental restructuring of the Afghan state, therefore, the solution is to construct an intermediate edifice or interface between the antithetical aspects of the Afghan state and village society. This structure should be able to directly access qawm networks, migrate them to the central state

over time, fight the sectarian war, and stabilize the village system. This requires that the predominance, range of control, depth and balance among the networked constituencies that make up village society is altered, elevating some and diminishing others. This intermediate structure must be evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, so as to preclude a reactionary backlash. It should, moreover, isolate and atomize those links Salafists use to access the village society's social structure.

Admittedly, the situation in Afghanistan is chaotic. The central government does not possess an established, widely trusted, or accepted capacity for institutional governance and is challenged by numerous warlords and heavily armed tribes dotting the Afghan and Pakistani landscape. Co-opting and making them enemies of Salafi Islam and allies of the national government will be difficult, but there are historical precedents for long-term success. The most directly applicable is the "internal imperialism" of Amir Abdurrahman (1880-1901),

aptly named the "Iron Amir," who consolidated previously independent tribes under central government authority. Likewise, Zahir Shah's long and peaceful reign (1933-73) was largely due to its co-optation of and cooperation with village society: He successfully maintained balance among tribes, religious leaders, and the central government by limiting its presence and role in the countryside and by skillful use of soft power.¹⁴

By way of repeating Abdurrahman's consolidation while emphasizing Zahir's co-optation, a prominent man from each manteqa should be selected as *baradur ikhan* (or heroic local leader in Pashto) and endowed with permanent, indivisible, and inheritable federal assets, obligations, and powers. These are intended to align the baradur ikhan, his family, extended relations, and constituents with the central government, and they then become a conduit between it and the qawm in each manteqa, facilitating the incorporation of village society over time to the state. By elevating select qawm members, providing them with federal assets (fiefs), and requiring allegiance and owed service (homage), the predominance, range of control, depth, and balance among the networked constituencies that make up village society are altered, interlinking the village with the decentralized substructure, and by extension—with the state's central superstructure. Additionally, the manteqa's fixed physical location attaches the baradur ikhan, his family, and clan to a defined geographic area they must defend if they want to retain the centrally-awarded benefits. If properly managed, the federal investiture of an individual from the manteqa and the qawm can generate a cascade of personal obligations and owed service—ultimately to the central government—from the baradur ikhan downward to his retainers in the manteqa, and horizontally through mutual support obligations to other baradur ikhans across manteqas.

13 *The New York Times*, Mar. 11, 2010.

14 Miakhel, *Understanding Afghanistan*, p. 21.

Decentralization also imposes an obligation on the central government, which must assist and support its representative, his family, retainers, and constituents, not intrigue against them, or reduce them to servitude. While it may specify terms and conditions for operating the fief, the government's goal is to generate a string of long-term, personal obligations from prominent individuals and families in those areas it needs to consolidate. Prior conditions on the baradur ikhan for holding and operating the fief cannot be overly constraining to ensure that federal assets are protected and operated profitably.

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Refined and honed over millennia for fierce resistance against invaders, Afghanistan's Pashtun tribal society must be separated from the Taliban and its Salafist allies and aligned to the central government as a prerequisite for winning the war.

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY

Newly-appointed baradur ikhans in the various manteqas will play a central role in creating links between village society and the central government. It is to them that local constituents would pledge personal allegiance in exchange for profiting from centrally created assets and federal alignment. The baradur ikhan must deliver homage, military service of a specified number of retainers in battle or garrison, or service support, such as digging fortifications, carting supplies, providing arms or vehicles, etc. Additionally, the baradur ikhan must provide hospitality and food for federal representatives and attend meetings at the national level when summoned.

A long-tenured baradur ikhan can provide direct, consistent, and stable civil-military representation to the manteqa. Long tenure makes it possible to fulfill cross-generational personal obligations between the central government, its subjects, and the qawm network. Without the ability to redress grievance or interface with the original, local individual guarantor or his family, neither the subject nor the qawm will risk a mean-

ingful relationship with the central authorities. Long tenure provides consistency and stability which minimizes random shocks to the qawm and manteqa, allowing for better planning and higher societal growth with lower societal risk. Ultimately, a long tenure facilitates the evolution of baradur ikhans' individual performance into the standard for the office, laying the foundations of institutional governance.

The baradur ikhan's duties as direct civil-military representative to the manteqa include territorial defense, both separately and in coordination with, but not subordinate to, the local consultative body (jurga or shura), administration of governmental goods and services, and facilitation of the government-qawm relationship.¹⁵ As such, the baradur ikhan would recruit and maintain a professional constabulary from local families. He would also incorporate those families, as appropriate, to his centrally-provided fiefs requiring formal homage obligations (i.e.,

¹⁵ Seth Jones, "Community Defense in Afghanistan," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 2nd Quarter, 2010, p. 11.

Salafism is a modern movement that lacks historic weight compared to traditional Islam.

armed support) from them to him. While there are many specific approaches, the baradur ikhan should report to the provincial governor as well as the interior ministry, be independent from district Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police elements and operate on his own recognizance under guidance from the provincial governor.

The baradur ikhan's duties are not to impose central law onto the

manteqa or into the qawm but primarily to conduct stability operations and maintain the peace. His long tenure and qawm interconnections ensure the firm subordination of tactical priorities, martial ideals, and warlike instincts to political goals and minimizes the misuse of force in pursuit of purely tactical goals or for the psychic rewards of purposeless victories.¹⁶ As a local, albeit elevated by the central government, he would operate with deep understanding and acknowledgement of local traditions.

Given the inherent power of the baradur ikhan, additional governmental checks and balances, as well as constraining regional offices, should be implemented. On stability operations, the baradur ikhan reports to the provincial governor and could be removed by him with the concurrence of the Interior Ministry and the defense department. On constituency-related issues (fief, homage, allegiance), the baradur ikhan answers to a federal justice of the peace. Unless and until hostile areas are pacified, stabilized, and consolidated under central control, there is no advantage to antagonizing the qawm by introducing national police or any variant of this profoundly alien concept.¹⁷ This is why the baradur ikhan is different and dis-

tinct from any national police force.

Beyond defeating Taliban paramilitaries and bandits, successful stability operations provide consistent, stable public order. The essential competition between the Afghan government and the Taliban may, in fact, be about who will provide public order and to what end. Given the presumption of sovereignty and the self-policing nature of the qawm, enforcing public order in Afghanistan requires the ability to maneuver among a large array of local interests. A viable approach is to facilitate the acculturation of national needs through village society's social framework into the qawm, manteqa, and shura. The baradur ikhan and his retainers, a local, permanent, federal force whose self-interest and personal survival is inextricably linked to governmental success, can operate inside the qawm to redirect and/or co-opt its mechanisms for enforcing public order to federal ends.

The baradur ikhan's responsibility for regional stability offers significant military and strategic advantages, mainly by freeing the Afghan army from territorial duties. This allows the army to remain a mobile strike force, employing the psychological weight of its presence and its mobility to pacify unruly districts with economy of force measures and to avoid the heavy force protection requirements of a garrisoned force.

Economically, the baradur ikhan with his intimate knowledge of both the qawm and the central government serves as an intermediary between the two. He not only satisfies the qawm's demand for government goods and services delivered at the right place, quantity, quality, and price but also stimulates demand through promotion, time, place, safe storage, and transport.¹⁸ In other words, a central government delivering a generic selection of non-priced goods and services on an ad hoc basis to a qawm will see those goods and services co-opted by local interests for local purposes. By contrast, the baradur ikhan matches the assortment of gov-

16 Edward Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 2.

17 Thomas Blau and Daryl Liskey, "Analytics and Action in Afghanistan," *Prism 1*, Sept. 2010, pp. 42-5.

18 Philip Kotler, *Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning, Implementation and Control* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1988), pp. 529-32.

ernmental goods and services to the market, sees that they are properly transported to where the market can gain access to them, or stored until they are ready for use, and exchanged for money, goods, or services. As an intermediary channel, the baradur ikhan also regularizes the transaction by standardizing the ordering, as well as valuing and paying for goods or services between the central government and the qawm. As the trade-relations mix is fulfilled by completed transactions between the government and the qawm, trust is created between the local and national institutions.

Cross-border sanctuaries present a challenge to any state. In theory, states either respect sovereign borders or declare war in order to violate them. On the ground, weak or failed states may be unable to control their borders, pursue national strategy asymmetrically through deniable proxy forces, or find it expedient to allow restive minorities to become a neighbor's problem.

To fight the Taliban and its allies in their Pakistan sanctuaries, the Afghan government could make use of ghazis—semiautonomous warlords operating as a vanguard for the central government—who would focus on expansion into contested areas and sanctuaries outside the operative Afghan state. These ghazis could conduct limited campaigns in hostile or contested Pashtun territories with a view to confederating independent manteqas and tribes and consolidating hostile manteqas under their authority and de-facto Afghan central control.¹⁹

The ghazis must be co-opted, controlled, and counterbalanced in order to preclude competition with the state. U.S. funding, logistical and combat support, as well as air power and special forces support are all available counterbalances. Shifting support among competing ghazis could reinforce dependency on U.S. and allied forces. Upon successful societal reformulation of confederated or consolidated popula-

tions, the ghazis will have to be incorporated into the Afghan state institutions through “acts of union” granting equal rights to those populations through locally arbitrated rather than centrally appointed representation.

FIGHTING ARMED SALAFISM

The war in Afghanistan is both nativist and sectarian. Any viable strategy must engage and defeat the Taliban in both. As an alien implant in a predominantly Hanifi Sunni society, armed Salafism in Afghanistan has exploitable weaknesses. For one thing, its doctrinarian oppressiveness creates an enormous resource drain and places Salafism in opposition to many pre-existing local constituencies and natural societal forces. For another, despite its atavistic yearning for the restoration of an idealized past, Salafism is a modern movement that lacks historic weight compared to traditional Islam. The Taliban, in particular, are poorly tutored in Islamic and Afghan history and have rudimentary familiarity with the Qur'an and

the Shari'a (Islamic law), not to mention political and theoretical developments in the Muslim world during the twentieth century.²⁰ This in turn leaves them exposed to numerous counter-strategies. It is possible, for example, to exploit Salafism's doctrinal characteristics and tendencies to wedge it away from and render it foreign to Afghan society, then use that foreignness to invoke an immune response from natural components of that society. It may also be possible to enhance and intensify existing schisms between doctrinal purist Salafists and their more pragmatic and less theological jihadist counter-

The Russians began using Sufism as a counterbalance to Salafism in Chechnya.

19 See a similar idea in Robert Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings: 1075- 1225* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 73.

20 Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 93.

parts until the local movement collapses—an approach that was successfully employed in Chechnya and Algeria where the Armed Islamic Group’s methods were so violent as to be questioned by some Salafi clerics.²¹

While both counter-strategies are feasible, the “foreignness” approach is most accessible and universal. Initially, Salafi sects must be denied a local foothold by the development and deployment of wedge issues that separate them from traditional, local village society. These can range across numerous sectarian, ethnic, and national divides as the Pakistani military attempted to wedge the Ahmadzai Wazir and Meshud Taliban factions apart in Waziristan.²² Ultimately, the theocratic case against Salafi Islam can be made and formalized in religious rulings (*fatwas*) issued by respected Pashtun ulema, something that should not be too difficult given the Taliban’s low level of religious knowledge.

Once the divide is drawn between Salafism and local, traditional Islam, the historical weight and resources of local religion must be mobilized for challenging Salafism for grassroots control of the mosque, imam, and ulema. Imams can be recruited to report on parishioners who chal-

lenge traditional doctrine. Parishioners can seize the religious endowments of radicalized mosques or the mosques themselves. Establishing an affiliated, rural Hanafi Islamic *madrasa* (school) system, providing a local center of gravity for community-based

social services, job training and placement, youth recruitment and education, all within pre-existing qawm and manteqa structures provides another avenue for challenging Salafism. As with

radical Islamic schools, these *madrasas* should be free of charge and driven by missionary zeal. As such, they should be able to attract vetted and trained ulema and clerics as well as the brightest and most ambitious students since official recognition of their diplomas would provide a safe and lucrative avenue to government employment and social services.²³

Such a system can provide a means for reinforcing and defending local religion’s position within the village social network while driving Salafism outside it. It employs the same method used to install Salafism in the Pashtun areas of Pakistan’s Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan during the 1980s but to opposite effect.²⁴ For example, emphasizing the differences between Pashtunwali and Salafi interpretations of the Shari‘a can create internal contradictions for Salafi Pashtuns, forcing them to choose between being good Pashtuns and good Salafis. Likewise, the employment of local ulema and mullahs provides them with a material incentive to spread the message within village society. At a minimum, it co-opts local religious resources and prevents their co-optation by others. Affiliation among local *madrasas* aids information flow and facilitates rapid response. Coupled with provincial associations for regional ulema and mullahs for additional education, specific services, and mutual defense, the system creates a religious critical mass competing directly with Salafi Islam—all without direct government presence.

The outcome is a coherent distribution channel for a competitive Pashtun Hanafi religious model where the individual adherent can be both a good Pashtun and a good Muslim as opposed to the Salafi model that rejects traditional Pashtun social structure.²⁵ A competing

Grassroots patriotism could fuel rejection of foreign concepts such as Wahhabism.

21 Quintan Wiktorowicz, “The New Global Threat: Transnational Salafis and Jihad,” *Middle East Policy*, Dec. 2001, pp. 25, 30.

22 Mona Kanwal Sheikh, “Disaggregating the Pakistani Taliban,” Danish Institute for International Studies Brief, Copenhagen, Sept. 2009, p. 5.

23 Olivier Roy, “Islamic Radicalism in Afghanistan and Pakistan,” U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Emergency and Security Service, Jan. 2002, p. 11; S.J. Malik, “Dynamics among Traditional Religious Scholars and Their Institutions in Contemporary South Asia,” *The Muslim World*, July-Oct. 1997.

24 Rashid, *Taliban*, p. 89.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 92.

madrassa system can also attack a critical vulnerability of armed Salafi movements by aggressively vying with them for new recruits. This could, in turn, limit the Taliban's ability to replace its combat losses, shrink its available pool of manpower, and drive up its labor costs. The confluence of these factors may cascade through to Taliban combat operations, reducing tempo, decreasing range, changing tactics and focus. If successful, a competing *madrassa* system should provide theological shock troops matching the Taliban's religious zeal and exceeding them in religious education. The end result would be an equal and opposite self-organized, armed, extra-tribal, sectarian force fundamentally opposed to the Taliban.

There are other minority sects in Afghanistan and Central Asia that can buttress the sectarian war against armed Salafism, notably the Sufi movement, which in many ways embodies the antithesis to Salafism. Its incorporation of local beliefs and variations of practice falls into the sinful category of Bid'a, or religious innovation after Islam's first generations; its veneration of saints, visitation of tombs, celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, all violate *tawhid*—the uniqueness and unity of God—by revering anything other than God.²⁶

Sufism's propensity to regionalize, acculturate, and seek economic uplift imbues it with the ability to create combined religious-ethnic-economic wedge issues. As such, it can offer an advantageous religious model for Pashtuns versus Salafism and be successful in competing for new adherents. Establishing Sufi centers or cloisters with schools in border regions intro-

26 Mary Brill Olcott, "Sufism in Central Asia: A Force for Moderation or a Cause of Politicization?" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Russian and Eurasian Program, Washington, D.C., May 2002, p. 1; Wiktorowicz, "The New Global Threat," p. 20.

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Burqa-clad Afghan women show identification cards as they wait to cast their votes at a school converted to a polling center in Kandahar, August 20, 2009. To win the fight against Salafism, the historical weight and resources of local religion must be mobilized for grassroots control of the mosque, imam, and ulema.

duces a strategic, sectarian challenge to the Salafis. Sufism in Chechnya operates in a military-style cell structure.²⁷ This could easily be imported to Afghanistan. In hostile locations, Sufism operates underground schools, and the combination of military organization and tendency to secrecy may allow for strategic penetration of Salafi areas.²⁸ Indeed, the Russians began using Sufism as a counterbalance to Salafism in 1996 under Chechen president Aslan Maskhadov, and the idea of promoting Sufism as a counterbalance to Salafism is gaining currency in some U.S. defense-related think tanks, such as the Rand Corporation and the Heritage Institute.²⁹

Given their inclination to oppose foreign occupation, Sufis fought alongside Salafis and

27 Mairbek Vatchagaev, "The Role of Sufism in the Chechen Resistance," *North Caucasus Analysis*, Jamestown Foundation, Washington, D.C., Dec. 31, 1969.

28 Olcott, "Sufism in Central Asia," p. 16; Reuters, June 26, 2009.

29 Reuters, June 26, 2009.

Baathists against U.S. forces in Fallujah in 2004, and this factor may limit their strategic employment.³⁰ However, Sufi expansions into Salafi areas will undoubtedly induce Salafi attacks, which could in turn provide the impetus for armed Sufi response. Moreover, the use of Afghan non-Salafi sects, like the Sufis, directly challenges Salafi claims to sacred legitimacy, fragments their attempts to organize village society, and plunges those areas under Salafi control into destructive, internecine, sectarian war.

Finally, the newly-appointed ghazis could be induced to support the Hanafi system and Sufi monasteries so as to introduce religious competition at the local level in harmony with, but not a direct component of, the decentralized system. On a wider level, local patriotism can reinforce the sectarian wedge. A Pashtun cultural renaissance will compete with radical Islam as a societal motivator and organizer. A Pashtun cultural renaissance, distributed as an ethnic-tribal component of a federally-funded, religious-educational system, could support the establishment of specifically created local groups. In addition to providing cultural identification, these groups could become natural competitors, promoting and distributing indigenous dogma with positive or punitive scope on issues, including Pashtun tribal history, politics, and genealogy. Their grassroots patriotism could fuel rejection of foreign concepts such as Wahhabism and the individuals and groups carrying it.

Pashtun patriotism could be a means to isolate and drive out foreign, non-Pashtun radicals and their religious concepts. It could directly attack the linkage between non-traditional, non-local Islamic jurisprudence and militarism. Track-

ing, targeting, and locating foreign militants would be consistent with such groups and highly useful to U.S. intelligence. Promoting low intensity conflict between the proponents of Pashtun patriotism and foreign-derived Islamic militarism could shut down the pipeline of foreign recruits coming to centralized training facilities. This would force Islamic radicals to expend resources replicating training bases in each locale where they seek to operate.

ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Religious and ideological motivators provide the will. Political and cultural organizations provide the force. Economic programs provide the staying power. The goal of a national logistics system is to compete for tribal affiliation, based upon standard of living. National logistics programs conducted at the district level must be delivered as a package of goods and services only to clans willing to affiliate or ally with the national, provincial, and district governments or their representatives, such as the baradur ikhan. Goods or services must not be delivered to clans of suspect loyalty or to those unwilling to make a substantial, up-front commitment. This would be counterproductive and could, in fact, serve to aid and abet national self-destruction. The tribes who ally will win and expand; those who oppose will lose and contract. U.S. allied forces would be the arbiters of the difference. The advantage of a basic, franchised package of goods and services is efficient delivery, comprehensive program control, coherence of government support at the district level, and ease of replication.

Forces such as demographic, industrial, agricultural, distribution, and communications make the strategic offensive possible but are often overlooked in war planning because they do not generally require soldiers. Replacing U.S. soldiers with local nationals and tribal-based logistic programs can be a tremendous force multiplier. The national logistic program must generate measurable, positive results for allied clans, qawm, and manteqa. Demographic programs such as public health, field medical, and mid-

Replacing U.S. soldiers with local nationals and tribal-based programs can be a force multiplier.

30 Rafid Fadhil Ali, "Sufi Insurgent Groups in Iraq," *Terrorism Monitor*, Jamestown Foundation, Washington, D.C., Jan. 25, 2008.

wifery-based prenatal and childbirth programs would need to enhance the birthrate, decrease infant mortality, and increase life expectancy for allied clans. The cumulative result is to engineer a higher growth rate for clans opposing radical Islam, rather than for those supporting it. The net effect, and strategic goal, is to create a multigenerational, in-place tribal army, and an allied population that would grow faster and live longer than radical Islam's supporters.

Industrial economic programs may include the creation of specialized guilds to establish, train, and support a myriad of manufacturing, mining, and engineering activities. For example, a federal fief delivered to a government allied *manteqa* could be a man-powered, machine shop for metal and wood parts manufacture, complete with a district manufacturing contract. The provincial governor and interior ministry would determine which allied family receives it in exchange for becoming a *baradur ikhan*. The regional manufacturing guild council would then be responsible for setting it up, training guild members, and getting the *manteqa* into operations. Specialized guilds have the advantage of being self-organizing, self-motivating, and self-maintaining. They could be used to seed and support industrial activity in allied families and across the nation. This would develop, if not create, local economies. Guild-generated industrial specialization would create local economies with greater efficiency, diversification, and resilience. Industrial finance programs could include micro-finance for village-based businesses, guild-based businesses, and women- and minority-based businesses. The net effect and strategic goal is to create more prosperous societies, capable of supporting larger, denser populations, full-time law enforcement, and civil defense capabilities.

Agricultural programs may include seed banks, production, distribution, and sales cooperatives as well as district and provincial level consulting. These programs would be measured by the comparative increase in calories per day provided to allied or affiliated families and tribes versus those supporting radical Islam. The net effect and strategic goal would be to create larger, higher density, better fed populations

with a lower incidence of illness due to dietary deficiency.

Distribution programs make use of transportation, roads, bridges, fuel, fleet management, etc. The ability to move material, military, and allied populations may become the most important lever of pacification in Afghanistan. Targeted population growth could be the ultimate arbiter of sovereignty, displacing those who oppose the government with those who support it. The control and reformulation of Pashtun societies, two components of victory, are in many ways prepped by military, political, and religious initiatives and fueled by economic programs riding national distribution grids into the societal battle-space. The geographic coherence of economic programs is facilitated by the physical distribution grid.

Perceptual coherence is facilitated by the introduction of a new communications grid distributing intellectual property. Creating and distributing a low cost, suitably engineered smart phone for disseminating information, intelligence, and knowledge to locals in hostile regions via one-to-one conversations, party-line discussions, and one-to-many broadcasts preps the intellectual battlefield for further government initiatives. This grid also serves as a platform for collecting visual, audible, text, and other information from locals in hostile regions allowing the coordinating authorities to sequence and calibrate future actions.

An allied Pashtun tribal society and paramilitary is the most efficient means of conducting an offensive against radical Islam.

CONCLUSIONS

Distributive, economic, religious, and military initiatives are the means of achieving victory in Afghanistan if expressed through naturally occurring enemies of armed Salafism. The strategic intent is to destroy Salafist military capacity, seize control of Pashtun populations un-

der Salafism's grasp, and reformulate those societies so that they ally with the government and reject radical Islam. A multigenerational, allied, in-place, Pashtun tribal society and paramilitary is the most efficient means of conducting a comprehensive, strategic offensive that matches radical Islam's advantages of permanence, religious and tribal will, local knowledge, language and culture. The allied Pashtuns' lives must be measurably superior to radical Islam's Pashtun supporters and opposed to them as a matter of politics, culture, religion, and ideology.

The rise of armed Salafi Islam has been a generational phenomenon. Washington can succeed by moving off the strategic defensive and launching a comprehensive, coherent, and generational strategic offensive against Salafi Islam in Afghanistan and Pakistan's Pashtun majority provinces. The requirements of U.S. strategy are to engage and destroy core enemy forces decisively, seize populations, and break the enemy's

willpower. U.S. strategy must, therefore, be comprehensive to allow for the use of any tool to achieve victory, across the spectrum from societal competition to armed force, and must also be coherent, harnessing all individual outcomes from agricultural and ideological competition to military conflict.

The U.S. strategic offensive against armed Salafi Islam must match its advantages of terrain, tribal and cultural knowledge, language, birth rate, and permanence. In order to be practical and efficient across multiple generations, it should be self-organizing, self-maintaining, and self-replicating. Victory in Afghanistan will manifest in the creation of a multigenerational, in-place, Pashtun village society with a paramilitary and population whose lives and work are measurably superior to Salafi Islam's Pashtun supporters and that opposes them as a matter of politics, culture, religion, and ideology.



Not a Prayer at Finnish Fitness Center

Espoo, Finland—According to Ombudsman for Minorities Eva Biaudet, a ban on prayer issued by Lady Fitness Entresse in Espoo [Finland] was not discriminatory. Biaudet's stance on the matter is based on her discussions with the owner of the fitness center and the representatives of the Muslim community in Espoo.

In August, Lady Fitness Entresse, located in the Entresse shopping complex in the Espoon Keskus district of the city, posted a notice on the wall of the locker room asking its clients to refrain from praying and eating in its premises. The sign read, "The locker room is a religion and politics-free zone where everyone can spend their free time in a neutral manner."

In her statement, Minority Ombudsman Biaudet noted for example that the request to refrain from praying was drawn up in a matter-of-fact way, and it did not call special attention to any particular religion.

The representatives of the Muslim community in Espoo Center agreed to the view expressed by the owner of the fitness center, to the effect that the facility was not considered to be a suitable place for prayer. Biaudet feels that a prayer space organized in the shopping mall library would be more appropriate and could serve all religious groups among regular users of the library.

Helsingin Sanomat, Dec. 21, 2010

The Afghanistan Conflict

India's Changing Role

by Harsh V. Pant

As the Afghan war enters its final and most decisive phase, India's strategic position in the country has turned a full circle. Having maintained a close relationship with the post-Taliban government for years, New Delhi suffered a humiliating setback last January when its warning against the folly of making a distinction "between good Taliban and bad Taliban" was summarily ignored by the Afghanistan Conference in London.¹

At a stroke, Pakistan squeezed its nemesis from the evolving security architecture by persuading the West that the time had come to incorporate the "moderate" faction of the Taliban into Afghanistan's future state structure and to give Islamabad a key role in mediating this process.² Meanwhile, despite its best attempts to keep a low profile, India and its nationals have been increasingly targeted by extremist forces in Afghanistan. The Indian embassy in Kabul was struck twice over the past two years, and guest houses frequented by Indians were attacked with nine Indian nationals killed.³

Viewing these strikes as a blatant attempt to drive it out of Afghanistan, something New Delhi has explicitly ruled out despite the recent setbacks, the Indian government has embarked on a major rethink of its Afghanistan-Pakistan policy; and while this process has yet to be completed, it might eventually culminate in a new regional alignment—between India, Iran, and Russia—that will only complicate Washington's exit strategy from Afghanistan.

INDIA'S AFGHAN POLICY

India's approach toward Afghanistan has largely been a function of the desire to prevent Pakistan from dominating that country, something Islamabad views as a vital counterweight to India's preponderance in South Asia.⁴ The two countries have been stuck in a classic security dilemma in so far as their Afghan policies are concerned, in that any measure by either side to

increase its security is liable to trigger a reaction thus causing a deterioration in the overall regional balance.

India's relations with Afghanistan have improved steadily since the fall of the Taliban for a number of reasons. To begin, unlike relations

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1 *Times of India* (New Delhi), Jan. 29, 2010; Gen. Stanley McChrystal, interview, *The Financial Times* (London), Jan. 19, 2010.

2 *The New York Times*, Jan. 28, 2010.

3 *Times of India*, Feb. 26, 2010.

4 Marvin G. Weinbaum, "Pakistan and Afghanistan: The Strategic Relationship," *Asian Survey*, June 1991, pp. 498-9; Rifaat Hussain, "Pakistan's Relations with Afghanistan: Continuity and Change," *Strategic Studies*, Winter 2002, pp. 43-75.

New Delhi has pursued “soft power” in Afghanistan, sticking to civilian rather than military matters.

between Afghanistan and Pakistan, this bilateral relationship is not hampered by the existence of a contiguous and contested border. For another, India’s support for the Northern Alliance against the Pakistan-backed Taliban in the 1990s strengthened its position in Kabul

after 2001 as many Alliance members have come to hold key governmental or provincial posts. New Delhi has also done its best to restore the balance in its engagement with a range of different ethnic groups and political affiliations in Afghanistan and has used its vocal support for President

Hamid Karzai, an ethnic Pashtun educated in India, to demonstrate its keenness to revive its close ties with the Pashtuns, on the one hand, and to support the Afghan government and the country’s economic and political restructuring on the other.⁵

Broadly speaking, New Delhi has pursued a “soft power” strategy toward Afghanistan, sticking to civilian rather than military matters. In consonance with the priorities laid down by the Karzai government, Indian assistance has focused on building human capital and physical infrastructure, improving security, and helping the agricultural and other important sectors of the country’s economy. The Indian government is building roads, providing medical facilities, and helping with educational programs in an effort to develop and enhance long-term Afghan capabilities.

New Delhi has pledged some US\$1.3 billion on various projects, emerging as the sixth largest bilateral donor to Afghanistan. Important infrastructural projects undertaken by Indians include the construction of electricity transmission lines, the Salma Dam power project in

the Herat province, construction of the Afghan parliament building, helping in the expansion of the Afghan national television network, and several smaller projects in agriculture, rural development, education, health, energy, and vocational training. The 218-kilometer Zaranj-Delaram highway, enabling Afghanistan to have access to the sea via Iran and providing a shorter route for Indian goods to Afghanistan, was completed by India’s Border Roads Organization in 2008 despite stiff resistance from the Taliban. A 300-strong paramilitary force provided by India ensured the safety of the Indian workers and allowed the project to beat construction and monetary deadlines.⁶

As a consequence, New Delhi has come to enjoy considerable influence in Afghanistan. Ordinary Afghans have welcomed Indian involvement in development projects in their country; Indian films and television programs are extremely popular among the local Afghan populace, and India remains the favorite destination for Afghans with its embassy and four other missions issuing around 350 visas daily. The Indian government has a fundamental interest in ensuring that Afghanistan emerges as a stable and economically integrated state in the region. Though the Afghan economy has recovered significantly since the fall of the Taliban with real gross domestic product growth rate exceeding 7 percent in 2008 and exceeding 22 percent in 2009, it remains highly dependent on foreign aid and trade with neighboring countries.⁷ The only way in which the flailing Karzai government can retain and enhance its legitimacy is by bringing the Afghan economy back on track. For this, it largely depends on other states, and New Delhi is playing an important role by laying the foundations for sustainable economic development in the country. A preferential Afghan-Indian trade agreement gives substantial duty concessions to certain categories of Afghan dry fruits when entering India with Afghanistan

5 Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions (Bonn agreement), United Nations, Bonn, Ger., Dec. 5, 2001.

6 *The Indian Express* (New Delhi), Jan. 23, 2009.

7 “Afghanistan,” *The World Factbook*, Central Intelligence Agency, McLean, Va., Dec. 28, 2010.

allowing reciprocal concessions to Indian products such as sugar, tea, and pharmaceuticals. Kabul wants Indian businesses to take advantage of the low tax regime to help develop a manufacturing hub in areas such as cement, oil and gas, electricity, and in services including hotels, banking, and communications.

The Indian government also piloted the move to make Afghanistan a member of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in the hope that this move will expedite the country's economic development by facilitating transit and free flow of goods across borders in the region. Moreover, Afghanistan's SAARC membership could also enable South Asia to reach out to Central and West Asia more meaningfully. It has been estimated that given Afghanistan's low trade linkages with other states in the region, its participation in the South Asian Free Trade Area would result in trade gains of \$2 billion to the region with as much as \$606 million accruing to Afghanistan.⁸

THE LIMITS OF SOFT POWER

These gains notwithstanding, there is a growing consensus in New Delhi that the soft power approach has yielded no real strategic gains and that, despite being the only country that has been relatively successful in winning Afghan hearts and minds, India has been increasingly sidelined by the West.

From the very beginning, the foremost objective of India's policy has been to preempt the return of Pakistan's embedment in Afghanistan's

Photo will not display.

Indian foreign minister S.M. Krishna (right, here with Secretary of State Clinton, New Delhi, July 20, 2009) failed to convince Western leaders of the folly of making a distinction between "good Taliban and bad Taliban."

strategic and political firmament. Ironically, it is India's successes in Afghanistan that have driven Pakistan's security establishment into panic mode with a perception gaining ground that India was taking over Afghanistan. The Obama administration's desire for a rapid disengagement from Afghanistan has given the necessary opening to the Pakistanis to regain their lost influence in Kabul.⁹ In order to keep Islamabad in good humor, Washington insisted on New Delhi limiting its role in Afghanistan, having apparently bought the argument that a substantial Indian presence in the country threatened Pakistan and made it difficult for it to cooperate fully with the international community in the fight against al-Qaeda and the Taliban. In fact, India had a very limited presence in Afghanistan in the 1990s, and it was then that the Pakistanis had a free hand in nurturing the Taliban.

The Indian government's traditional stance that while it is happy to help the Afghan government in its reconstruction efforts, it will not be directly engaged in security operations is be-

⁸ *The Hindu Business Line* (Chennai, Madras), Mar. 29, 2007.

⁹ *The New York Times*, Dec. 1, 2009.



As President Karzai began hedging his bets ahead of the impending U.S. departure, he was reported to have held a meeting with Sirajuddin Haqqani (pictured), Taliban ally and head of a prominent Pakistan-propped terror network, in the presence of Pakistan's army chief of staff and the intelligence chief.

coming harder to sustain. A debate has therefore ensued as to whether the Indians should start backing their humanitarian endeavors in Afghanistan with a stronger military presence. If Afghanistan is the most important frontier in combating anti-Indian terrorism, then how long can New Delhi sustain its present policy trajectory whereby its civilians are being killed in pursuit of developmental objectives?

The Indians have much to consider. The return of the Taliban to Afghanistan would pose a major threat to India's security. In the end, the brunt of escalating terrorism will be borne by India, which has already been described as "the sponge that protects" the West.¹⁰ Indian strategists have warned that a hurried U.S. withdrawal, with the Taliban still posing a threat to Afghanistan, will have grave implications for India, not least the emergence of Pakistan, its rival, as a bigger regional player. As Henry Kissinger has noted, "In many respects, India will be the most

affected country if jihadist Islamism gains impetus in Afghanistan."¹¹

True, India's role in Afghanistan should not be viewed through the eyes of Western observers who have dubbed it provocative, or through the eyes of the Pakistanis, who have long resented their own waning influence. Rather, New Delhi's involvement should be considered through the eyes of the Afghan people who, arguably, are benefitting from the use of its neighbor's soft power, whatever its ultimate motivations.

President Karzai, meanwhile, is grudgingly accepting Islamabad's larger role in his country. The July 2011 deadline was intended to force Karzai to address urgent problems such as corruption and ineffective governance. But it may have had the opposite effect, convincing the Afghan president that in the not too distant future he would be left on his own. Though Washington is at pains to underline that July 2011 "will be the beginning of a conditions-based process,"¹² there are few who believe that the Obama administration has the stomach for a prolonged stay despite the recent NATO decision to hand over security to the Afghans by 2014. Declaring that the war in Afghanistan is "on track" toward achieving its military and political goals but that progress is coming "slowly and at a very high price" for Americans who are fighting there, the most recent review of the Afghanistan war effort suggests that significant progress has been made but that the gains in the country remain fragile. The review concludes that U.S. forces can begin withdrawing in July 2011, despite finding uneven signs of progress in the year since President Obama announced the deployment of an additional 30,000 troops.¹³

Karzai in particular seems convinced that the United States will not be able to stay the course as evidenced by his attempts to craft a

11 Ibid., Sept. 13, 2010.

12 *The New York Times*, June 19, 2010.

13 *The Washington Post*, Dec. 16, 2010.

10 *Indian Express*, Jan. 29, 2009.

more autonomous foreign policy. The Afghan president lost no time in sacking the two closest U.S. allies in his cabinet—the interior minister Hanif Atmar¹⁴ and the chief of intelligence Amrullah Saleh.¹⁵ These were the men Washington had insisted that Karzai include in his cabinet after his 2009 reelection, and they stubbornly resisted his attempts to negotiate with the Taliban and to develop closer ties with Islamabad, which Karzai considered an important player in ending the war whether through negotiations with the Taliban or on the battlefield. The decision to send a contingent of officers for training in Pakistan is of great symbolic value and is the result of talks between the Afghan government and Pakistan’s security agencies that began in May 2010.¹⁶ It has even been reported that Karzai had a face-to-face meeting with Sirajuddin Haqqani, head of a prominent Pakistan-propped terror network, in the presence of Pakistan’s army chief of staff and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief.¹⁷ The Taliban’s growing power and self confidence are also evident in their dismissal of proposed negotiations with Washington, an indication of the conviction that they are winning the war and that public opinion in the West is turning against the war.

Pakistan’s security establishment relishes the double game it is playing in Afghanistan. Pakistani support for the Taliban continues to be sanctioned at the highest levels of government, with the ISI even represented on the Quetta Shura—the Taliban’s war council—so as to retain influence over the movement’s leadership. Taliban fighters continue to be trained in Pakistani camps while the ISI not only provides financial, military, and logistical support to the insurgency but also retains strong strategic and operational control over the Taliban campaign in Afghanistan.¹⁸ Likewise, despite its counterinsurgency offensives in North and South Waziristan, the Pakistani military contin-

ues to view the Taliban as a strategic asset. The conclusion of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Trade and Transit agreement is a major shot in the arm for Islamabad since it explicitly affirms that India will not be allowed to export goods to Afghanistan through the Wagah border.¹⁹

In one of the largest single disclosures of such information in U.S. history, WikiLeaks, a self-described whistleblower organization, released more than 91,000 classified documents in July 2010, largely consisting of low-level field reports.²⁰ These documents merely confirmed the long-held belief that

The return of the Taliban to Afghanistan would pose a major threat to India’s security.

Pakistan’s intelligence agency is guiding the Afghan insurgency even as it continues to receive more than US\$1 billion a year from Washington to combat the extremists. The ISI has been helping Afghan insurgents plan and carry out attacks on U.S. forces and their Afghan government allies in Afghanistan, and its efforts to run the networks of suicide bombers as well as its help in organizing Taliban offensives at crucial periods in the Afghan war have also been underscored.²¹ Washington’s frustration at its inability to persuade the Pakistani army and intelligence apparatus to cease supporting the Afghan Taliban and other militants has been growing over the years. It is clear from leaked documents that Washington remains convinced that Pakistan will never cooperate fully in fighting the whole range of extremist groups. It is also well understood by the U.S. administration that Pakistan is preparing for the eventual U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, viewing the militant groups as insurance and as a means of exerting influence inside Afghanistan and against India. The assessment of former U.S. ambassador Anne W. Patterson is blunt: “There is no chance that

14 *One India* (Bangalore), June 7, 2010.

15 Reuters, June 8, 2010.

16 *The Washington Post*, July 1, 2010.

17 *Ibid.*

18 *The Sunday Times* (London), June 13, 2010.

19 *The Wall Street Journal*, July 18, 2010.

20 *The Washington Post*, July 26, 2010.

21 *The New York Times*, July 25, 2010.

Pakistan will view enhanced assistance levels in any field as sufficient compensation for abandoning support for these groups, which it sees as an important part of its national security apparatus against India.” She noted that burgeoning U.S.-India ties “[feed] Pakistani establishment paranoia and pushes them closer to both Afghan and Kashmir focused terrorist groups.”²²

By giving the Pakistanis a leading role in the Afghan state, the West is sowing the seeds of regional turmoil.

These revelations also made it clear that India had been systematically targeted by the Pakistani security services. The bombing of the Indian embassy in 2008 was at the behest of the ISI, which also paid the Haqqani terror network to eliminate Indian workers in Afghanistan

and gave orders to orchestrate attacks on Indian consulates there.²³ That the Pakistani security complex had engendered targeting of Indian interests in Afghanistan was hardly news in New Delhi. But Indian policymakers have been deeply dismayed by Washington’s reluctance to counter Pakistan’s designs in Afghanistan.

Though New Delhi continues to insist that it will not retreat from Afghanistan, there are clear signs that it is scaling down its presence. Almost half of the Indian personnel working on various projects have returned home; some Indian schemes have been put on hold, and the Indians are not taking on any new projects. Training programs for Afghan personnel are now taking place in India.

INDIA DEBATES ITS OPTIONS

The Indian government is debating its options in Afghanistan in a strategic space that seems to have shrunk over the past few years.

By failing to craft its own narrative on Afghanistan and Pakistan ever since U.S. troops went into Afghanistan in the wake of 9/11, New Delhi has allowed the West, and increasingly Pakistan, to dictate the contours of its policy toward the region.

Two major strands can be discerned in the present debate. On the one hand, there are those who maintain that despite the recent setbacks, New Delhi should continue to rely on Washington to secure its Afghanistan and Pakistan interests.²⁴ In their opinion, there is a fundamental convergence between the Indian government and the Obama administration in viewing Pakistan as the source of Afghanistan’s insecurity and in believing that the world must act together to cure Islamabad of its political malaise. In identifying the borderlands between Pakistan and Afghanistan as the single most important threat to global peace and security, arguing that Islamabad is part of the problem rather than the solution, and asking India to join an international concert in managing the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, Washington has made significant departures from its traditional posture toward South Asia. The Indians would, therefore, be best served by coordinating their counterterrorist strategy with the United States and should help Washington by addressing Pakistan’s fears of Indian meddling on its western frontiers, unfounded as they might be; it has even been suggested that New Delhi should not hesitate to reach out to the Pakistani army.²⁵

The other side of the debate is becoming impatient with New Delhi’s continued reliance on Washington to pull its chestnuts out of the fire. According to this argument, a fundamental schism has emerged between the U.S. and Indian positions as the Obama administration has systematically ignored Indian interests and sensibilities.²⁶ While actively discouraging a higher Indian profile in Afghanistan for fear of offending Pakistan, the administration has failed

22 *The Guardian* (London), Nov. 30, 2010.

23 *The Indian Express*, July 27, 2010.

24 *Ibid.*, Mar. 3, 2010.

25 *Ibid.*, Jan. 27, 2010.

26 *The Tribune* (Chandigarh), Aug. 19, 2010.

to persuade Islamabad to take Indian concerns more seriously. Anxious for a semblance of victory, the West has decided to court the “good” Taliban with Pakistan’s help, thus underscoring Islamabad’s centrality in the unfolding strategic dynamic in the region, much to the Indian government’s discomfiture. By pursuing a strategy that will give the Pakistanis the leading role in the nascent Afghan state structures, the West, however, is only sowing the seeds of future regional turmoil. While Washington may have no vital interest in determining who actually governs the country so long as Afghan territory is not used as a springboard for attacks on American soil, New Delhi most certainly does. The Taliban—good or bad—are

hostile to India in many fundamental ways. The abandonment of the goal of establishing a functioning Afghan state and a moderate Pakistan is liable to put a greater pressure on Indian security.²⁷

India’s influence in Afghanistan rose significantly as U.S. support for Pakistan waned in the immediate wake of 9/11 and Washington demanded that Islamabad adopt policies long advocated by the Indians. Moreover, India emerged as a major economic actor in Afghanistan trying to bolster that state’s capacity in various measures. But by refusing to use hard power and asserting its profile more forcefully, New Delhi soon made itself irrelevant as the anti-Taliban campaign proved far more intractable than expected, leading to a widening gap between the strategic perceptions of the Indian government and U.S. administrations. The Obama administration, intent on moving out of Afghani-



India’s extensive economic activity and investments in Afghanistan have played an important role in helping the flailing government of President Hamid Karzai (left), with Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh, New Delhi, May 2010, to retain and enhance its legitimacy by bringing the Afghan economy back on track.

stan, has managed to signal to India’s adversaries that they can shape the post-American era to serve their own ends. New Delhi lost the trust of its own allies in Afghanistan: For if it would not stand up for its own interests, few saw the benefit of aligning with it. The Indian presence which looked formidable during the George W. Bush era began unraveling with the advent of the Obama administration, which deepened its security dependence on Pakistan in the hope of achieving rapid success.

Moreover, Pakistan’s weak democracy and powerful military and intelligence apparatus has failed to get a grip on the problem that now threatens to overwhelm the Pakistani state itself. The three-year extension granted to the Pakistani army chief of staff Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani will ensure that a return to meaningful democracy will continue to elude Pakistan and that the army’s inflexible India-centric security perception will render rapprochement with New Delhi a nonstarter. Kayani is also clear about his determination to call the shots in Kabul. He remains wedded to the notion of “strategic depth”—that is, to making Afghanistan the kind

27 *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), Mar. 2010; *Business Standard*, Sept. 15, 2010.

of proprietary hinterland for Pakistan, free of Indian or other outside influence, as had been the case from 1992 to 2001.²⁸ Despite the tide of religious fanaticism sweeping across Pakistan, most recently exemplified by the assassination of liberal governor of the Punjab province, Salman Taseer,²⁹ the Pakistani security establishment continues to view religious extremist groups as assets that could be exploited to serve strategic interests during and after the endgame in Afghanistan. The latest Afghan war review has indicated that the Obama administration was setting conditions to begin the “responsible reduction” of U.S. forces in Afghanistan in July 2011. Fearing U.S. withdrawal soon, Hamid Karzai now seems ready to hitch his wagon to Pakistan. He views Pakistan as playing a positive role by helping to deny terrorists sanctuary and by using its leverage over some elements of the Afghan Taliban. Facing the collapse of the nation-building project in Afghanistan on the one hand and Pakistan’s rising influence on the other, India’s policy in Afghanistan stands at a crossroads.

FORGING NEW ALIGNMENTS

To preserve its interests in a rapidly evolving strategic milieu, New Delhi is trying to cooperate more closely with states such as Russia and Iran, with which it has convergent interests vis-à-vis Afghanistan and Pakistan. None of these states would accept a fundamentalist Sunni-dominated regime in Kabul or the reemergence of Afghanistan as a base for jihadist terrorism directed at neighboring states. The Indian government has reached out to Moscow at the highest political levels, reiterating the two nations’ shared positions on Afghanistan and institutionalizing cooperation on this issue.³⁰

Moscow, for its part, having kept itself aloof

from Afghanistan and Pakistan for years after the Taliban’s ouster, is refocusing on Afghanistan as Islamist extremism and drug trafficking emanating from Central Asia have reemerged as major threats to its national security. It hosted the presidents of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan in August 2010, promised to invest heavily in developing Afghan infrastructure and natural resources, and repeatedly laid down certain “red lines” for the Taliban’s integration into the political process, notably renunciation of violence, cessation of the armed struggle, acceptance of the Afghan constitution, and a complete break with al-Qaeda.³¹ During Prime Minister Vladimir Putin’s visit to New Delhi in March 2010, the Indian government sought Russian support in countering what it viewed as a U.S.-Pakistan axis in Afghanistan.³²

Iran is the third part of this triangle, and New Delhi’s outreach to Tehran became more serious after signals from the Iranians that the relationship was drifting. The two countries had worked closely when the Taliban was in power in Kabul and continued to cooperate on several infrastructure projects allowing transit facilities for Indian goods, but the Indian decision to vote against Iran at the International Atomic Energy Agency on the nuclear issue led to a chilling of the bilateral relationship.³³ Now New Delhi is trying to revive its partnership with Tehran in Afghanistan. In the second governmental-level visit in less than a month, Iran’s deputy foreign minister was in India in early August 2010, and the two sides decided to hold “structured and regular consultations”³⁴ on the issue of Afghanistan.

In defiance of the international sanctions, the Indian government is encouraging Indian companies to invest in the Iranian energy sector so that economic interests can underpin the bi-

28 *Dawn* (Karachi), Feb. 2, 2010.

29 *The Telegraph* (London), Jan. 13, 2011.

30 *The Hindu*, Aug. 3, 2010.

31 *Ibid.*

32 RT TV (Moscow), Mar. 12, 2010; *Rediff News* (Mumbai), Mar. 12, 2010.

33 *The Indian Express*, Nov. 27, 2009.

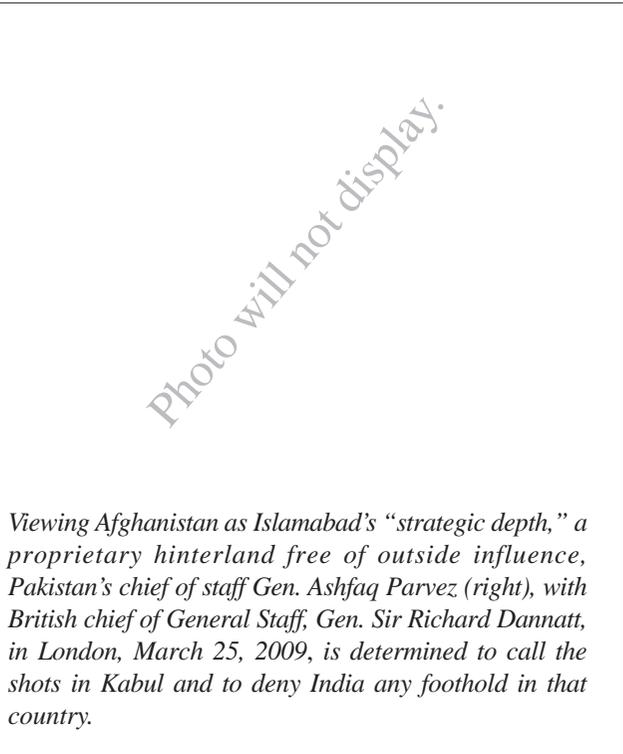
34 *Thaindian News* (Bangkok), Aug. 2, 2010; see, also, Harsh V. Pant, “Delhi’s Tehran Conundrum,” *The Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 20, 2010.

lateral political realignment.³⁵ For its part, Tehran is worried about the potential major role for leaders of the almost exclusively Sunni Taliban in the emerging political order in Afghanistan. It has even encouraged New Delhi to send more assistance to provinces in northern and western Afghanistan that are under the control of those associated with the Northern Alliance. At the Iranians' initiative, India is now part of a trilateral Afghan-Iranian-Indian effort to counter Pakistan's attempts to freeze India out of various regional initiatives.³⁶ India's ties with Iran, however, remain circumscribed by Iranian defiance of the international community on the nuclear issue and India's desire to be viewed as a responsible rising power. New Delhi is also seeking reassurances from Moscow and Tehran that the three states are in unanimity on Afghanistan and Pakistan. It remains to be seen, however, if India's gravitation toward Russia and Iran would be enough to arrest the slide of the situation in Afghanistan-Pakistan to India's detriment.

CONCLUSION

For some members of the Indian strategic community, Afghanistan is a litmus test for their country's ascendance as a regional and global power. India's capacity to deal with instability in its own backyard will in the final analysis determine its rise as a global power of major import, so failure in Afghanistan is not an option.

India has a range of interests in Afghanistan that it would like to preserve and enhance, notably containment of Islamist extremism, the



Viewing Afghanistan as Islamabad's "strategic depth," a proprietary hinterland free of outside influence, Pakistan's chief of staff Gen. Ashfaq Parvez (right), with British chief of General Staff, Gen. Sir Richard Dannatt, in London, March 25, 2009, is determined to call the shots in Kabul and to deny India any foothold in that country.

use of Afghanistan as a gateway to the energy-rich and strategically important Central Asian region, and assertion of its regional preeminence. Yet the most important goal for New Delhi remains the prevention of Pakistan from regaining its central role in Afghan affairs. The last time Pakistan enjoyed such a position was the 1990s, and Indian security interests suffered to an unprecedented degree. But then India was a weaker state, marginal in the strategic equations of the major global powers, and so could be easily ignored. Today, as India considers itself a rising global power with many more cards to play in Afghanistan than ever before, it is highly unlikely that it would give up on Kabul without a fight. Because India has core interests to protect in its periphery, it will continue to play an important role in Afghanistan with or without U.S. approval. Washington, therefore, would do well to take Indian concerns into account as the Afghan endgame looms larger.

³⁵ *South Asia Monitor* (Society for Policy Studies, New Delhi), Sept. 13, 2010; Press TV (Tehran), Nov. 1, 2010.

³⁶ *The Indian Express*, Sept. 21, 2010.



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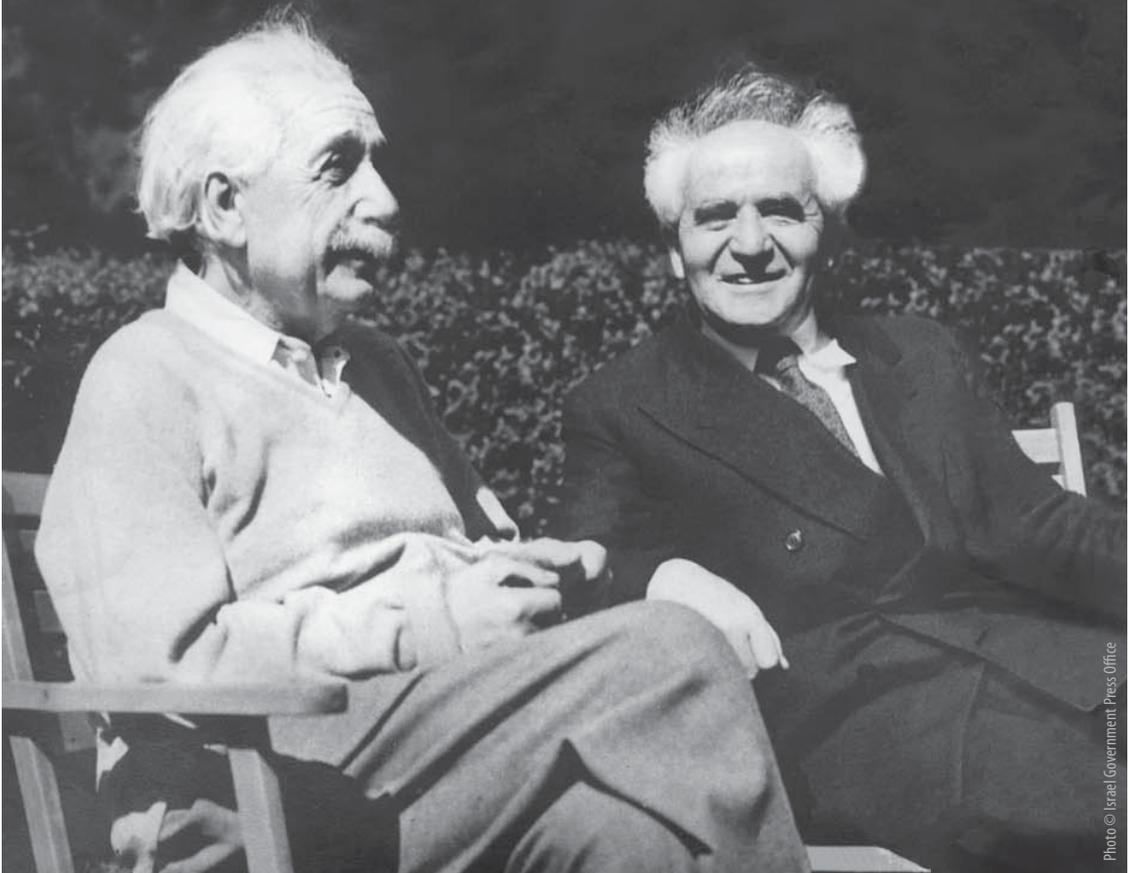


Photo © Israel Government Press Office

Turkey's Christians under Siege

by John Eibner

The brutal murder of the head of Turkey's Catholic Church, Bishop Luigi Padovese, on June 3, 2010, has rattled the country's small, diverse, and hard-pressed Christian community.¹ The 62-year-old bishop, who spearheaded the Vatican's efforts to improve Muslim-Christian relations in Turkey, was stabbed repeatedly at his Iskenderun home by his driver and bodyguard Murat Altun, who concluded the slaughter by decapitating Padovese and shouting, "I killed the Great Satan. Allahu Akhbar!" He then told the police that he had acted in obedience to a "command from God."²

Though bearing all the hallmarks of a jihadist execution, the murder was met by denials and obfuscation—not only by the Turkish authorities but also by Western governments and the Vatican. This is not wholly surprising. In the post-9/11 era, it has become commonplace to deny connections between Islam and acts of violence despite much evidence to the contrary.³ But while this denial has undoubtedly sought to win the hearts and minds of Muslims, as opposed to Christians, Jews, or any other religious group, it has served to encourage Islamist terrorism and to exacerbate the persecution of non-Muslim minorities even in the most secularized Muslim states. For all President Barack Obama's high praise for its "strong, vibrant, secular democracy,"⁴ and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's "Alliance of Civilizations" rhetoric, Turkey is very much entrenched in the clash of civilizations paradigm. Unless Ankara is prepared to combat the widespread "Christophobia" that fuels violence and other forms of repression, the country's Christians are doomed to remain an oppressed and discriminated against minority, and Turkey's aspirations of democratic transformation and full integration with Europe will remain stillborn.

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1 According to International Religious Freedom Report 2009, U.S. Department of State, Washington D.C., there are approximately 90,000 Christians in Turkey. Vatican sources claim a total of 30,000 Catholics. Catholic News Agency (Rome), Nov. 27, 2006.

2 *Asia News* (Bangkok), June 7, 2010.

3 Daniel Pipes, "Denying [Islamist] Terrorism," *The New York Sun*, Feb. 8, 2005.

4 "Remarks by President Obama to the Turkish Parliament," in Ankara, Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, Apr. 6, 2009.

THE VICTIM AND HIS MISSION

Consecrated bishop in November 2004, half a year following Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's elevation to the papacy, Padovese belonged to the body of intellectually sharp, proactive clerics who share Benedict XVI's ecumenical understanding of the church and its global mission of evangelization, especially in the Islamic Middle East where a century of intensive de-Christianization now threatens the faith's regional existence.

Padovese's mission in Turkey was to help save the country's Christian community from extinction and to create conditions for its religious and cultural renaissance. Rejecting the church's historic *dhimmi* status as a protected religious minority under Islam—which reduced it to little more than a submissive worshipping agency with no other legitimate activity—he viewed Turkey's European Union candidacy as a golden opportunity for winning significant concessions from Ankara and pinned high hopes on the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops, which took place in Rome in October 2010.⁵ However, the synod ended on a sour note. While confirming the Second Vatican Council's positive shift in attitude toward Judaism and unequivocal rejection of anti-Semitism, the Middle

Padovese's mission was to save Turkey's Christian community from extinction and create conditions for its renaissance.

Eastern bishops sought to enhance the security of their flocks by playing an anti-Israel card and criticizing Israel—the one country of the region with a growing Christian population—with a directness that was not employed in relation to any Islamic state, no matter how repressive.

Had it not been for his murder, the bishop

5 Bishop Luigi Padovese, "Christians in Turkey: From the Cradle of Christianity to the Persecuted Minority," presentation, St. Louis Catholic Parish, Ansbach, Germany, June 18, 2009.

would have traveled to meet the pope in Cyprus on the very next day for the launch of the synod's *Instrumentum laboris*, the Vatican's strategic plan for reviving Christianity in its Middle Eastern cradle, to which Padovese was a substantial contributor.

Though written in low-key Vatican jargon, the *Instrumentum laboris* is full of radical implications for Turkey and the broader Middle East.⁶ In contrast to the common post-9/11 predilection to downplay Islamism's less savory aspects, the document does not gloss over the disadvantaged position of Christians in the Islamic world and identifies the issue of human rights, including religious freedom, as central to the well-being of the whole of society:

Oftentimes, relations between Christians and Muslims are difficult, principally because Muslims make no distinction between religion and politics, thereby relegating Christians to the precarious position of being considered non-citizens, despite the fact that they were citizens of their countries long before the rise of Islam. The key to harmonious living between Christians and Muslims is to recognize religious freedom and human rights.⁷

This harmonious living was to be achieved through a policy of dialogue—defined by Benedict XVI at the beginning of his papacy as "a vital necessity, on which in large measure our future depends"⁸—that would identify the common ground between the two religions: service to society, respect for common moral values, the avoidance of syncretism, joint opposition to the atheism, materialism, and relativism emanating from the Western world, and a collective rejection of religious-based violence, that is—killing in the name of God.

The *Instrumentum laboris* also encouraged a search—together with Muslim reformers—for a

6 "The Catholic Church in the Middle East: Communion and Witness. 'Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul' (Acts 4:32)," Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for the Middle East, Vatican City, June 6, 2010.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

8 "Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI," meeting with representatives of Muslim communities, Cologne, Libreria Editrice Vaticana (Rome), Aug. 20, 2005.

new system of church-state relations, which it referred to as “positive laicity.” But the Vatican does not uphold Turkey’s secularism—which the George W. Bush and Obama administrations have praised as a model for the Islamic world—as the answer. “In Turkey,” the *Instrumentum laboris* notes—undoubtedly on account of the influence of Bishop Padovese—“the idea of ‘laicity’ is currently posing more problems for full religious freedom in the country.” The working document did not elaborate but simply stated that the aim of this “positive,” as opposed to “Turkish laicity,” would be to help eliminate the theocratic character of government and allow for greater equality among citizens of different religions, thereby fostering the promotion of a sound democracy, positively secular in nature, which also fully acknowledges the role of religion in public life while completely respecting the distinction between the religious and civic orders.⁹

These were the principles that guided Padovese’s Turkish mission. He worked in the clear knowledge that “faithfully witnessing to Christ”—as the synod’s preparatory document acknowledges—“can lead to persecution.”¹⁰ And so it did.

CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE

Within hours of Padovese’s death, the provincial governor preempted the results of police investigations with the announcement that the murder was not politically motivated but rather committed by a lone lunatic.¹¹ Moreover, in an attempt to eliminate any Islamic motive, NTV Turkey announced that the murderer was not actually a Muslim but a convert to Catholicism.¹²



The brutal murder on June 3, 2010, of the head of Turkey’s Catholic church, Bishop Luigi Padovese, seen here in 2006 leading the funeral procession of another slain priest, Andrea Santoro, was met by denials and obfuscation—not only by the Turkish authorities but also by Western governments and even the Vatican.

Then the police leaked word—allegedly from the assassin—that he had been “forced to suffer abuse” in a homosexual relationship with the bishop and that the killing had been an act of “legitimate defense.”¹³

It is true that Turkey’s minister for culture and tourism, Ertuğrul Günay, issued a short message of condolences on behalf of the government¹⁴ and that the foreign ministry expressed regret to the international media. But neither President Abdullah Gül nor Prime Minister Erdoğan expressed their own condolences or publicly addressed the murder of the head of their country’s Catholic Church, and even the foreign ministry’s statement took care to highlight the murderer’s alleged “psychological problems.”¹⁵

Erdoğan’s silence in response to this national tragedy was particularly striking. Together with Spanish prime minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, the Turkish prime minister and leader of

9 “The Catholic Church in the Middle East,” pp. 10-12.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

11 ANSA News Agency, Vatican City, June 3, 2010.

12 Agence France-Presse, June 4, 2010.

13 *Asia News*, June 7, 2010.

14 Press release, Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, June 3, 2010.

15 CNN, June 3, 2010.

the ruling Islamist Peace and Justice Party (AKP) has been a principal architect and cosponsor of the U.N.'s flagship program to promote a global "Alliance of Civilizations." Diversity, cross-cultural dialogue, and opposition to isolation of "the other" were among the principles articulated by Erdoğan in his attempts to present Turkey as "the best panacea against 'clash of civilizations' theories."¹⁶ The beheading of a senior

Pope Benedict endorsed the Turkish government's denial of a religious-political motive.

Christian cleric by a Muslim zealot could not but send an unmistakable message that this very clash was in full swing on Erdoğan's home turf.

Moreover, at the time of the murder, Erdoğan was both sending thinly veiled threats of Turkey's growing im-

patience with the slow progress of its EU application and seeking to enhance his stature throughout the Islamic world with menacing anti-Israel diplomacy in response to its interception of the Turkey-originated Gaza flotilla.¹⁷ He thus had nothing to gain and much to lose by generating headlines about Padovese's execution.

So did Washington and its European allies. If Western diplomats spoke at all about the bishop's murder, it was in the same hushed tones that are used when referring to Turkey's Armenian genocide of World War I, its subsequent use of terror against remnant Christian communities and Kurdish villages, its 1974 invasion of Cyprus and subsequent ethnic cleansing of the occupied Christian population, and its blockade of neighboring Armenia.

Well aware of the absence of backing from Western powers, the Vatican acted swiftly to avoid confrontation with Turkey. Notwithstanding an early observation by Vatican spokesman Federico Lombardi that the murder highlighted the "difficult conditions" of the church in the

region,¹⁸ the official explanation was swiftly harmonized with that of Ankara. In a statement broadcast on Vatican Radio on the same day, Lombardi negated his previous comment by stating that "political motivations for the attack or other motivations linked to socio-political tensions are to be excluded." He also stressed the killer's "mental imbalance"¹⁹ as if solo psychopaths might be a primary source of the church's difficult conditions in the Islamic world.

The day after the murder, while en route to one of Europe's hot spots of Muslim-Christian communal tension—the divided island of Cyprus—Pope Benedict XVI himself sought to quash speculation about its motivation. He admitted that he still had "very little information" about the killing, yet endorsed—much to the bewilderment of Christians in Turkey—the Turkish government's reflexive denial of a religious-political motive when he declared, "We must not attribute the fact [of Bishop Padovese's murder] to Turkey ... What is certain is that it was not a religious or political assassination."²⁰

THE LESSONS OF REGENSBURG

Why did the pope so swiftly deny political or religious motives for Padovese's murder when so much about the crime was still shrouded in mystery? Benedict XVI provided a motive when he explained, "We do not want this tragic situation to become mixed up with dialogue with Islam or with all the problems of our journey [to Cyprus]."²¹ A quarrel with Ankara at this particular juncture could certainly have had damaging repercussions for the church, but behind the pontiff's timidity, lay his keen awareness of how easy it was to trigger the destructive rage of the Islamic powers and the temporal weakness of his church.

Indeed, a few months before his ascendancy in May 2005, the pope-to-be caused consterna-

16 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, statement, opening session, Alliance of Civilizations Forum, Madrid, Jan. 15, 2008.

17 *Ynet News* (Tel Aviv), June 1, 2010.

18 Associated Press, June 3, 2010.

19 Radio Vatican, June 3, 2010.

20 *Ibid.*, June 4, 2010.

21 *Ibid.*

tion in Turkey by declaring his opposition to its application for EU membership because “historically and culturally, Turkey has little in common with Europe.”²² Upon Ratzinger’s election to the papacy, Erdoğan opined that his “rhetoric may change from now on ... because this post, this responsibility, requires it.”²³

Benedict XVI did lower his tone but not before the mass demonstrations, violence, and threats that followed his now famous Regensburg University lecture of September 2006—just two months before he was scheduled to travel to Istanbul for his first papal foray into the world of Islam. At Regensburg, the pope broached one of the key issues obstructing harmonious relations between the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds: the sensitive question of violent jihad as a legitimate means of advancing the Islamic faith.²⁴

In his address, the pope overstepped a red line drawn by Muslim political elites throughout the world. Erdoğan joined angry Muslim clerics and statesmen, demanding that the pope apologize for his “wrong, ugly, and unfortunate statements” and calling into question whether the planned papal visit to Istanbul would take place.²⁵ He was followed by Director for Religious Affairs Ali Bardakoğlu—the overseer of the Turkish state’s massive financial support for Islamic institutions, including those in Europe, especially Germany²⁶—who condemned the pope’s message as reflecting “anger, hostility, and hatred” in addition to a “Crusader and holy-war mentality.”²⁷ The deputy chairman of Erdoğan’s AKP Party, Salih Kapusuz, announced that the Regensburg speech would place Benedict XVI in the “same category as Hitler and Mussolini.”²⁸

22 *Le Figaro* (Paris), Aug. 13, 2004; CatholicCulture.org, Dec. 17, 2004.

23 Inter-Press Service (Rome), Apr. 20, 2005; Agence France-Presse, Apr. 21, 2005.

24 Benedict XVI, “Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections,” University of Regensburg, Sept. 12, 2006.

25 *Yeni Şafak* (Istanbul), Sept. 17, 2006; Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), Special Dispatch, no. 1297, Sept. 22, 2006.

26 Ali Bardakoğlu, “The Structure, Mission and Social Function of the Directorate of Religious Affairs,” accessed Dec. 31, 2010.

27 MEMRI, Special Dispatch, no. 1297, Sept. 22, 2006.

Left isolated and exposed by Washington and Europe, the pope quickly succumbed to pressure. To be sure, he did not retract a single word uttered at Regensburg, and his apology was more of a regretful explanation than an admission of error, but his humble and appeasing demeanor was conciliatory enough to salvage his church’s dialogue with Islam and keep the door open to Istanbul. Since then, he has taken extraordinary pains to temper his language and make flattering gestures to avoid frenzied Muslim responses.

Consider Benedict XVI’s November 2006 visit to Turkey—his first as pope to a Muslim-majority country. While reiterating the Vatican’s customary plea for religious liberty, his remarks were overshadowed by his gestures of goodwill aimed at underscoring his esteem for Islam and Turkey’s Islamist government, notably his prayer facing Mecca in Istanbul’s Blue Mosque and his praise for Erdoğan’s role in launching the Alliance of Civilizations.²⁹

The biggest plum for Erdoğan was the indication that the pope would now welcome Turkey’s membership in the EU.³⁰ Although the Vatican made no mention of it, the Turkish press announced that Benedict XVI had endorsed Erdoğan’s plan to establish a bureau of Turkey’s Directorate of Religious Affairs in Brussels to “counter efforts to inflame Islamophobia.”³¹

The Regensburg speech led to the harmonization of the Vatican’s diplomatic language with that of Turkey and the Alliance of Civilizations, on which the Padovese murder had no apparent effect. Anti-Christian violence remains a powerful factor in influencing the language of the church as it struggles to balance its fundamental, unwa-

Pope Benedict has taken extraordinary pains to temper his language to avoid frenzied Muslim responses.

28 *Ibid.*

29 Catholic News Agency, Nov. 29, 2006.

30 *The Sunday Times* (London), Nov. 29, 2006.

31 *Today’s Zaman* (Istanbul), May 14, 2009.

vering advocacy of religious freedom and opposition to killing in the name of God with the pursuit of dialogue with Turkey and other Muslim majority states.

THE PLOT THICKENS

Not all Christians in Turkey accepted the denials and obfuscation of Ankara and the Vatican about the circumstances surrounding the murder. Foremost among them was the archbishop of Smyrna, Ruggero Franceschini—Padovese’s successor as head of the country’s Catholic Church—who rejected the official explanation of his

colleague’s murder and maintained that the pope had received “bad counsel” prior to his denial of the murder’s political or religious motives.³²

The archbishop had lived in Iskenderun, where the murder took place, and had known the assassin and his family personally.

In the hope of ascertain-

ing the true facts, he immediately visited the scene of the crime, subsequently telling the press that he could not accept the “usual hastily concocted, pious lie” about the murderer’s insanity. He also dismissed the claim that the assassin was a Catholic convert, confirming that he was a non-practicing Muslim.³³

The archbishop did not doubt the murder’s religious and political motivation. “I believe that with this murder, which has an explicitly religious element, we are faced with something that goes beyond government,” he said. “It points towards nostalgic, perhaps anarchist groups who want to destabilize the government. The very modalities of the murder aim to manipulate public opinion.”³⁴

What the archbishop suspected was a crime stage-managed by Turkey’s “deep state”—an

opaque underworld where powerful elements within the state, especially the military and security services, act in conjunction with violent extremist groups, such as the ultra-nationalist Grey Wolves and the Islamist Hezbollah, as well as the apolitical criminal underworld, to undertake special, illegal operations in the political interest of the country’s ruling elite.³⁵

Until recently, the deep state was imbued with the secularist ideology of the republic’s founding father, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. But since coming to power in 2003, Erdoğan’s AKP has vigorously endeavored to lay hands on all levers of power including the deep state with a view to promoting its Islamist, “neo-Ottoman” vision for the country.³⁶ This has in turn produced a schizophrenic deep state with older elements loyal to the Kemalist opposition and newer elements loyal to the AKP’s Islamist agenda.

Since 2007, the Turkish media has feasted on a steady stream of revelations about an extensive deep state network called “Ergenekon.” Government prosecutors have secured the arrest and indictment of scores of retired and still-serving military and security officials for allegedly plotting to destabilize the AKP-dominated government. Show trials are already underway.

Deep state documents released by the prosecution, if taken at face value, point to Ergenekon as a source of anti-church activity, including the torture and Islamic-style ritual murder of three evangelical Christian book publishers in the town of Malatya in April 2006.³⁷

The Ergenekon conspiracy has been similarly linked with the murder of the 61-year-old Catholic priest, Fr. Andrea Santoro—shot and killed in his Trabzon church in February 2006. Witnesses report that the convicted killer, a 16-year-old, shouted “Allahu Akbar” immediately

Plain-speaking about persecution of Christians invites hostile reactions, sometimes deadly.

32 Documentation Information Catholiques Internationales (Menzingen, Switzerland), June 28, 2010.

33 *Asia News*, June 10, 2010.

34 *Ibid.*

35 Gareth H. Jenkins, “Between Fact and Fiction: Turkey’s Ergenekon Investigation,” Silk Road paper, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C., Aug. 2009; H. Akim Ünver, “Turkey’s ‘Deep-State’ and the Ergenekon Conundrum,” The Middle East Institute, Policy Brief, no. 23, Apr. 2009.

36 Michael Rubin, “Erdoğan, Ergenekon, and the Struggle for Turkey,” *Mideast Monitor*, Aug. 8, 2008.

37 *Today’s Zaman*, Nov. 22, 2008, Jan. 17, 2009, Apr. 13, 2010.

before firing his pistol.³⁸ Bishop Padovese said at the time that the assassination “did not seem incidental” as it occurred while passions were aroused by the Danish cartoon affair.³⁹ The former papal nuncio to Turkey, Msgr. Antonio Lucibello, had similarly argued that there was a mastermind behind Santoro’s murder.⁴⁰

Prosecutors also ascribed the January 2007 murder of the Armenian Christian journalist, Hrant Dink, by a 17-year-old, to the Ergenekon.⁴¹ A vigorous and well-known campaigner against Turkey’s denial of the Armenian genocide, Dink had been convicted of having violated article 302 of the penal code banning “insults to Turkishness.” The hanged body of Dink’s Turkish lawyer, Hakan Karadağ, was found in suspicious circumstances the day after the Padovese murder.⁴²

It is far from certain whether the alleged anti-AKP Ergenekon conspiracy is a reality, or whether it is largely an AKP fabrication, designed to cover the efforts of Erdoğan’s Islamists to turn the deep state into an instrument for promoting their own agenda.⁴³ But whoever may be pulling the strings, Kemalists or Islamists, the deep state is no friend of Turkey’s Christians.

A TURKISH ANTI-CHRISTIAN AGENDA

Persecution, however, is by no means limited to the deep state. Like their counterparts in most

38 Reuters, Oct. 4, 2007.

39 Catholic News Service, Feb. 6, 2006.

40 *Asia News*, Feb. 7, 2006.

41 *BBC News*, Feb. 4, 2008.

42 *Today’s Zaman*, June 5, 2010.

43 Rubin, “Erdoğan, Ergenekon and the Struggle for Turkey.”

Photo will not display.

Inside Istanbul’s 17th century Blue Mosque, Pope Benedict XVI (center, with the Mufti of Istanbul, November 30, 2006) prays silently. The pontiff dismayed many Turkish Christians by declaring, a day after Bishop Padovese’s murder, that Turkey should not be held culpable for the tragic event and that what “is certain is that it was not a religious or political assassination.”

of the Islamic Middle East, Turkey’s Christians are effective hostages to the arbitrary actions of powerful elites, made up of Islamic state and non-state actors who collectively monopolize violence. The oldest Christians retain living memory of the state-sponsored mass deportations and massacres that culminated in the World War I Armenian genocide. During the twentieth century, Turkey’s Christian population has dropped to the verge of extinction.⁴⁴ The last anti-Christian mass violence was the 1955 deep state-sparked, anti-Greek pogrom in Istanbul, which also took a heavy toll on the city’s Jewish and Armenian populations.⁴⁵

Such memories are reinforced in the younger generation of Christians by continuing acts of smaller scale and more discriminative violence.

44 Ahmet Igduygu, Sule Toktas, and Bayram Ali Soner, “The Politics of Population in a Nation-building Process: Emigration of Non-Muslims from Turkey.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Feb. 2008, p. 363.

45 Ünver, “Turkey’s ‘Deep-State’ and the Ergenekon Conundrum.”

In February 2006, for example, a Slovenian priest was attacked by a gang of teenagers in the parish compound in Izmir (Smyrna), and five months later a 74-year-old clergyman was stabbed by young Turks on a street in Trabzon, following which Padovese told the media, “The climate has changed ... it is the Catholic priests that are being attacked.”⁴⁶ In December 2007, another priest was knifed by a teenager as he left his church following Sunday mass.⁴⁷

A leader of the Turkish Protestant community, Rev. Behnan Konutgan, recently recorded cases of violence against church property and the

physical harassment of church members while a noted Turkish sociologist of religion, Ali Carkoğlu, has argued that no non-Muslim religious gathering in Turkey is completely risk free.⁴⁸

What little protective law there is, whether national or international,

does not have the strength to provide adequate defense. Plain-speaking about persecution invites hostile reactions, sometimes deadly. The church’s language of dialogue is powerfully influenced by this reality. But there are some voices in Turkey that do not always cower to the violence-backed taboos of official Christian-Muslim dialogue or of the Alliance of Civilizations.

At the end of 2009, Bartholomew I, the normally subservient Ecumenical Orthodox patriarch of Constantinople, appeared on CBS’s *60 Minutes* and shocked Turkey’s political establishment. Speaking to Bob Simon, the patriarch reported no significant improvement in conditions for the church. Instead, he argued that Turkey’s Christians were second class citizens and that he personally felt “crucified” by a state that wanted to

see his church die out. Asked whether Erdoğan had responded to the petitions submitted to him in the course of many meetings, Bartholomew answered, “Never.”⁴⁹

Turkey’s rulers lashed out angrily. “We consider the crucifixion metaphor an extremely unfortunate metaphor,” argued Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. “In our history, there have never been crucifixions, and there never will be. I couldn’t really reconcile this metaphor with his mature personality.”⁵⁰ President Gül endorsed the foreign minister’s assessment while the head of the ruling AKP’s international relations section, Kürsat Tüzmen, menacingly retorted, “If there is someone who is being crucified, it is the politician, security officials, and others. If he [the patriarch] is a religious and spiritual leader, he should be much more cautious when making a statement. Someone who really loves his country has to be more responsible.”⁵¹

Bartholomew seems to have touched a raw nerve. For all its Alliance of Civilizations rhetoric, Erdoğan’s Islamist government has maintained a tight stranglehold on the country’s Christian institutions and blocked reforms that could lead to the growth of Christianity. True, the government has made some minor concessions to Christian institutions, including legislation that creates new but very limited possibilities for Christian foundations to recover some confiscated property,⁵² but this was little more than a ploy to please the European Union and Washington and pales into insignificance by such hostile measures as the refusal to reopen the Halki Theological Seminary—the only institution in Turkey where Orthodox clergy could be trained—before Greece and Bulgaria improved the conditions of their Muslim minorities.⁵³ In other words, Ankara does not recognize the right of the Orthodox Church, or any other church for that matter, to run a theological seminary as a religious liberty but merely

The Turkish public as a whole sees Christians as dangerous, subversive aliens within society.

46 *Asia News*, Feb. 9, 2006; *BBC News*, July 2, 2006.

47 *Voice of America*, Dec. 16, 2007.

48 Behnan Konutgan, “Christians Still Second-class Citizens under Turkish Secularism,” *International Journal for Religious Freedom*, 1 (2009): 99-110; *Compass Direct News*, Dec. 4, 2009.

49 *60 Minutes*, CBS, Dec. 17, 2009.

50 *Today’s Zaman*, Dec. 22, 2009.

51 *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), Dec. 21, 2009.

52 Otmar Oehring, “Turkey: What Difference Does the Latest Foundations Law Make?” *Forum 18* (Oslo), Mar. 13, 2008.

53 *Hürriyet*, Dec. 21, 2009.

as an instrument of deal-making with Western powers for the purposes of enhancing the position of Islam.

Indeed, while Turkey's churches have long enjoyed freedom of worship, they have remained without legal status to this very day. Most of their work takes place in the legal framework of foundations that operate under the strict supervision of the General Directorate for Foundations⁵⁴ and other state institutions—including a secret national security department whose mandate is to control non-Muslim minorities.⁵⁵ They have, moreover, been entangled in labyrinthine negotiations and lengthy and expensive court cases for the return of confiscated property as well as permission to expand their engagement with society through the provision of education and other charitable activity. Churches have experienced grave setbacks in addition to the above mentioned murders, notably: The state conducted a four-year prosecution of two Turkish, evangelical Protestant converts from Islam on charges of “insulting Turkishness.” Although these charges were dropped for lack of evidence in October 2010, the converts were forced to pay fines of \$3,170 each or go to prison for seven months for “collecting information on citizens.”⁵⁶

Ankara is taking legal action to confiscate lands that historically belonged to the Syriac Orthodox Monastery of Mor Gabriel (founded in



During the twentieth century, Turkey's Christian population has dropped to the verge of extinction. The oldest Christians retain living memory of the state-sponsored mass deportations and massacres that culminated in the World War I Armenian genocide; the younger generation has experienced numerous acts of smaller scale and more discriminative violence. Here Orthodox faithful journey to the Black Sea Sumela Monastery, on August 15, 2010, after the government authorized prayer on the site in fulfillment of its pledges to the EU to expand minority rights.

379 CE), whose bishop has encouraged persecuted Christian refugees to return to the area and rebuild their villages.⁵⁷

Less than a year before his death, Padovese was especially disappointed by the rejection of his appeal for the status of the Church of St. Paul in Tarsus to be changed from a museum to a functioning place of regular worship. Not only had the pope made a personal appeal in this respect, but the archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Meisner, had asked Erdoğan for the return of the church “as a gesture of European cooperation.” The Turkish media reported that Ankara turned down these requests from the pope, Cardinal Meisner, and Bishop Padovese, notwithstanding the Catholic leaders' pledge to support the building of a mosque in Germany on condition that the Turkish government hand over the holy site to the church, together with permission for the con-

54 Orphan Kemal Cengiz, “Minority Foundations in Turkey: From Past To Future,” part 1, *Today's Zaman*, June 16, 2010, part 2, June 18, 2010.

55 “Religious Freedom in Turkey: Situation of Religious Minorities,” European Parliament, Directorate General External Policies of the Union, Policy Department External Policies, Luxembourg, Feb. 2008, p. 10.

56 Compass Direct News, Oct. 19, 2010.

57 *The Wall Street Journal*, Mar. 7, 2009.

struction of a center for pilgrims.⁵⁸

The Islamist Erdoğan maintains continuity with his ultranationalist predecessors by refusing to respect the historic, ecumenical character of the Patriarchate of Constantinople—i.e., its titular ascendancy over the other patriarchates of the 300 million-strong Orthodox communion worldwide—and by requiring that the patriarch be a Turkish citizen by birth. Last October, the Turkish authorities allowed the right-wing Nationalist Movement Party to conduct Islamic prayers at the ancient Armenian Cathedral of the Holy Virgin at Ani.⁵⁹

RAGING CHRISTOPHOBIA

Padovese believed that there would be no end to the war against the church in Turkey until the public as a whole rejected the widely-accepted negative stereotypes of Christians as dangerous, subversive aliens within society, and he especially blamed the popular Turkish media for perpetuat-

More than half of Turkish Muslims believe that Christians should not be allowed to express their religious views in public.

ing a climate of hate. He highlighted as an example two cases involving the late Fr. Santoro. In the first, he was run out of a village near Trabzon by a group of children while local adults incited the youth with applause. The local newspaper reported the incident with the headline “Priest Sighted on the Coast Road,” as if his

presence there justified the mob action against him.⁶⁰ The second case followed Santoro’s murder when the daily *Vatan* alleged that the assassinated priest had been guilty of distributing money to young people to entice them to visit his church.⁶¹

Turkey’s Christians were especially alarmed by the mass popular hysteria whipped up by the 2006 blockbuster *Valley of the Wolves*, an action-packed adventure film set in post-Saddam Iraq. Reviewing the movie in *Spiegel*, Cem Özdemir—a member of the European Parliament of Turkish descent—decried its pandering to “racist sentiments” and its making “Christians and Jews appear as repugnant, conspiratorial holy warriors hoping to use blood-drenched swords to expand or reclaim the empire of their God.”⁶²

Far from distancing themselves from the movie, ultra-nationalists and those at high levels in the Islamist camp praised it. “The film is absolutely magnificent . . . It is completely true to life,” exclaimed the parliament speaker (and later deputy prime minister) Bülent Arınç. Unconcerned about the damaging implications of the film’s negative images of Christians and Jews, Turkey’s President Gül refused to condemn it, saying it was no worse than many Hollywood films.⁶³ Erdoğan’s pious wife is reportedly a fan of the racist film.⁶⁴

The Christophobia of the boulevard press and “Istanbulywood” can also be found in state documents. A national intelligence report, exposed by the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper in June 2005, revealed similar dangerous sentiments that are at odds with the principles espoused by Erdoğan at showcase Alliance of Civilizations events.

Titled “Reactionary Elements and Risks,” the report put Islamist terrorist groups on a par with Christian missionaries, who, it claimed, cover Turkey “like a spider’s web” and promote divisions in sensitive areas such as the Black Sea and eastern Anatolia. According to the report, the Christian evangelizers included Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants, as well as other Christian and non-Christian groups such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Baha’is, with the latter concentrating on government officials, liberal businessmen, and performing and other artists.⁶⁵

Echoing the tenor of the intelligence report,

58 Catholic News Service, Aug. 3, 2009; *Hürriyet*, Aug. 6, 2009.

59 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Oct. 1, 2010.

60 *Asia News*, Feb. 8, 2006.

61 *Ibid.*, Mar. 14, 2006.

62 *Spiegel Online* (Hamburg), Feb. 22, 2006.

63 *The Times* (London), Feb. 17, 2006.

64 *Deutsche Welle* (Bonn), Feb. 20, 2006.

65 Compass Direct News, June 22, 2005.

Turkish state minister Mehmet Aydın, who oversees the state's Directorate for Religious Affairs and who has served as an advisor to the National Security Council on religious issues, argued that the goal of Christian missionaries was to "break up the historical, religious, national, and cultural unity of the people of Turkey," adding that much evangelizing was "done in secret."⁶⁶ This claim was echoed by Erdoğan's interior minister Abdülkadir Askü, who told the Turkish parliament that Christian missionaries exploited religious and ethnic differences and natural disasters to win the hearts of poor people. Having highlighted the secret and subversive nature of this allegedly devious effort, he noted an embarrassingly small success rate: 338 converts to Christianity (and six converts to Judaism) out of 70 million Turks during the previous seven years.⁶⁷

DEEP PREJUDICE

When Erdoğan, as an Islamist opposition politician, announced in 1997 that "the minarets are our bayonets, the domes our helmets, the mosques our barracks and the faithful our army"—lines from a poem of by Ziya Gökalp, a nineteenth-century architect of Turkish nationalism based on a synthesis of Islam and Turkish ethnicity—he was not only making a statement about the role of Islam in promoting the interests of the Turkish state but also indicating the unity of religion and nationalism in Turkish perception. As historian Bernard Lewis explained, "One may speak of Christian Arabs—but a Christian Turk is an absurdity and a contradiction in terms. Even today, after thirty-five years of the secular republic, a non-Muslim in Turkey may be called a Turkish citizen, but never a Turk."⁶⁸

Much has changed in Turkey over the past half century but not the fundamental character of Turkish nationalism. The Turkish nation still thinks

of itself in terms of Islam and Turkish ethnicity, leaving little scope for the full integration of non-Muslims into the life of the nation. Most Christians in Turkey belong to ethnic minorities. In the case of the Greeks and Armenians, they are identified in the public mind with historically hostile states. Roman Catholics and Protestants are linked with the Western powers that imposed humiliating conditions on the Ottoman Empire, notably the capitulations for the protection of non-Muslims and the sponsorship of Christian missionary activity.

Four academics of Turkish background have highlighted this Islamo-Turkish supremacism in a 2008 EU-commissioned report. They argued:

Despite laicism, the Turkish state has not been able to overcome the segregation of non-Muslim minorities and to integrate them into the nation as citizens with equal rights. While the Muslim Turks have been the "we," the non-Muslim minorities have been categorized as "the other"... they have been rather perceived as "domestic foreigners."

The authors make further observations about the prevailing concept of nationality in the context of the need for the state to end religious-based discrimination:

Notwithstanding the spirit of the founding text of the republic, the notion of Turkish citizenship was shaped according to the legal context that prevailed before the Tanzimat reforms of 1839. Although the new republic defined itself as a secular state, Sunni Islam has been functional in the nation-building process as a uniting, common cultural factor of the majority of Turkey's inhabitants. A person who is not a Muslim is usually referred to as a minority person or a Turkish citizen, but not a Turk. Turk designates an ethno-religious characteristic of a political community.⁶⁹

There is little scope for the full integration of non-Muslims into the life of the Turkish nation.

⁶⁶ *Forum 18*, July 10, 2007.

⁶⁷ *Compass Direct News*, June 22, 2005.

⁶⁸ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 15.

The extent to which this cultural phenomenon still influences Turkish society at the grassroots level is evident from the findings of an EU-financed public opinion survey conducted in 2008 by two Turkish scholars as a part of the International Social Survey Program. It discovered that

- One third of Turkish Muslims would object to having a Christian as a neighbor.
- More than half believe that Christians should not be allowed to openly express their religious views in printed publication or in public meetings.
- More than half are opposed to Christians serving in the army, security services, police force, and political parties.

There is a lack of political will to break from Turkey's tradition of Islamic and Turkish supremacism.

- Just under half believe Christians should not be active in the provision of health services.⁷⁰

The road from such views to outright discrimination and a heightened threat of violence is very short indeed.

CONCLUSION

All available evidence points to the presence of important religious and political elements in the assassination of Bishop Padovese. If truth is to prevail over “pious lies”—as the archbishop of Smyrna desires—Ankara and the Vatican will have to cooperate to ensure a full and transparent en-

69 “Religious Freedom in Turkey. Situation of Religious Minorities,” pp. 2, 10.

70 Compass Direct News, Dec. 4, 2009; *Hürriyet*, Nov. 17, 2009.

quiry into the bishop’s death. The credibility of an enquiry will depend on open examination of the details of the murderous act itself as well as on the broader circumstances surrounding it, including other violent acts of Christophobia and the encouragement of xenophobic attitudes by the media, the entertainment industry, and the educational system. This means penetrating the netherworld of connections between the Turkish government, the deep state, and radical political groups, and examining the institutional sources of Turkish Christophobia.

Such a joint investigation, perhaps with the assistance of the deceased bishop’s homeland, Italy, or with the United States as Turkey’s most important ally, would be an expression of Christian-Muslim dialogue in practice. A government-sponsored campaign to combat Christophobia in Turkish society would demonstrate Turkey’s commitment to bring to an end its own historic clash of civilizations and replace it with a strong, equitable alliance of civilizations.

In the months that have passed since Padovese’s beheading, Erdoğan and his Islamist government have not taken such steps. This failure is a sign of a lack of political will to break from Turkey’s historic tradition of Islamic and Turkish supremacism. Unless determination is publicly demonstrated, Turkey will entrench itself still deeper in an Ottoman-oriented Islam that is increasingly at odds with its Christian minorities, its former non-Muslim ally Israel, and the West.

The soft power of the modern papacy, with its appeals for religious liberty, can exercise a positive influence on Turkey and the rest of the Islamic world. But Islamic powers can see, as did Stalin, an absence of papal military divisions in the current clash of civilizations. Unless the thoroughly secularized nations of what was once Christendom provide firmer backbone, the Vatican will have little choice but to bend with the breeze.



Abbas vs. Obama

by Steven J. Rosen

Having sidelined Barack Obama's peace initiative by refusing to return to the negotiations table without apriori Israeli concessions, the Palestinian leadership seeks to secure an international declaration of statehood at the next U.N. General Assembly session in September 2011. This "date certain" strategy, whereby its entitlement to a state will be fulfilled by the world powers, has long been preferred by the Palestinian leadership to any arduous, bilateral negotiation with Israel, which would require painful concessions. The Palestinians enjoy wide support in many European capitals, and they know that the Obama administration is close to their positions on many of the core issues. So forcing the statehood demand into a multilateral forum can entice governments into satisfying the Palestinian aspirations by a fixed date.

EUROPEAN SUPPORT

Some key European leaders have shown growing receptivity to setting a date for the creation of a Palestinian state. Their frustration has mounted since the breakdown of the Oslo negotiations when Yasser Arafat launched his war of terror in September 2000, then rejected Bill Clinton's final proposal in January 2001. In 2002, the Europeans hatched the idea of a "road map" for Arab-Israeli resolution as a way to create deadlines for the establishment of a Palestinian state,¹ and European Union pressure led to the creation of the Quartet (the United States, U.N., European Union, and Russia), and to the Quartet's first statement on September 17, 2002, announcing "a concrete, three-phase implementation road

map that could achieve a final settlement within three years."²

But the Bush administration was unwilling to go all the way with fixed deadlines and a date certain because it recognized that this would free the Palestinians from the responsibility to compromise with Israel. Bush insisted that the road map deadlines be conditional: Transition from one phase to the next would be "performance based"—i.e., based on the responsibilities of the parties themselves. The road map announced "clear phases, timelines, target dates, and benchmarks."³ But the Quartet partners were forced to agree that "progress between the three phases would be strictly based on the parties' compliance with specific performance benchmarks to

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1 "Chronological Review of Events Relating to the Question of Palestine," *Monthly Media Monitoring Review*, U.N. Information System on the Question of Palestine, Nov. 2002.

2 "Communiqué Issued by the Quartet," United Nations, New York, Sept. 17, 2002.

3 "A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," United Nations, New York, Apr. 30, 2003.



The Palestinian campaign to have an independent state declared at the earliest possible date regardless of Israel's consent received a major boost when President Obama, in his remarks to the opening session of the United Nations General Assembly on September 22, 2010, proclaimed, "When we come back here next year, we can have an agreement that will lead to a new member of the United Nations—an independent state of Palestine."

be monitored ... based upon the consensus judgment of the Quartet of whether conditions are appropriate to proceed."⁴

For these reasons, the road map did not achieve its stated goal of "a final settlement within three years," and European frustration continued to mount. In July 2009, Europe's then-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 U.N. 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 parties are not able to stick to [the timetable],

4 "Quartet Statement on the Middle East," European Union @ the United Nations, New York, Sept. 17, 2002.

then a solution backed by the international community should be put on the table."⁵

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."⁶ Kouchner and his Spanish counterpart Miguel Angel Moratinos wrote on February 23, 2010, that the European Union "must not confine itself to the ... outlines of the final settlement" but "should collectively recognize the Palestinian State ... There is no more time to lose. Europe must pave the way."⁷ Then in July 2010, Kouchner said, "France supports the creation of a viable, independent, democratic Palestinian state ... by the first quarter of 2012."⁸

But none of this happened. Solana, Moratinos, and Kouchner are no longer in their positions, and Europe has not delivered what the Palestinians sought.

PALESTINIAN GAINS

The Palestinian leadership has taken its own initiative to force a deadline for statehood without negotiations. In a major address at al-Quds University on June 22, 2009, Salam Fayyad of the Palestinian Authority announced a 24-month program to build the institutions of statehood, so that "the Palestinian State [will] become—by the end of next year or within two years at most—a firm reality." He predicted that the "building of institutions ... within two years will enable us to swing back the position of the

5 Reuters, July 12, 2009.

6 France 24 TV, Feb. 22, 2010.

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

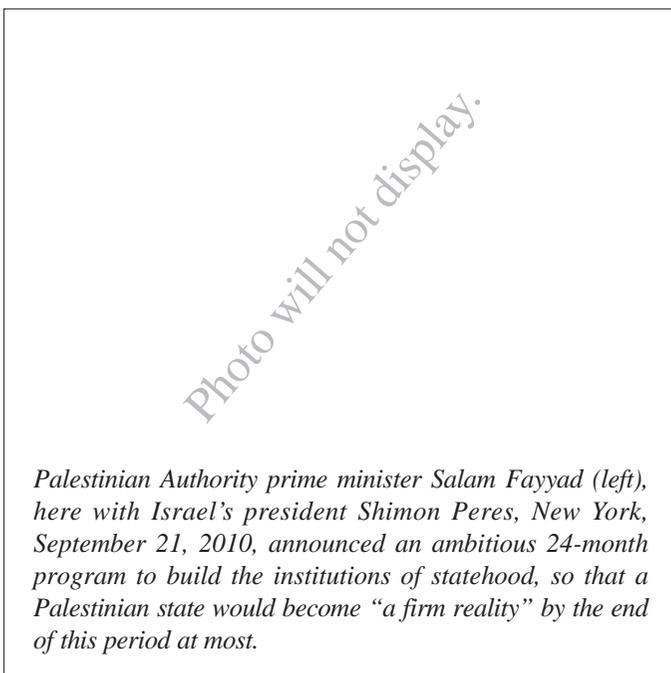
8 Bernard Kouchner, "Viable Palestinian State by 2012," Ma'an News Agency (Bethlehem), July 27, 2010.

international community in support of our right to an independent, fully sovereign State on the 1967 border and with East Jerusalem as its capital.”⁹ On August 26, 2009, Fayyad issued the details of his program for building statehood institutions within two years.¹⁰

His initiative was quickly adopted by the Middle East Quartet, which declared on March 19, 2010, that “negotiations should lead to a settlement negotiated between the parties within 24 months.”¹¹

“It’s not a coincidence that the Europeans came out with a landmark statement,” Fayyad boasted. “All of a sudden everyone is talking about a two-year timeline. The Quartet on March 19 of this year said two years. Well, their two years is longer than ours—we started a bit earlier.”¹² On August 20, 2010, the Quartet made another statement shortening its timeline to match that of Fayyad, declaring that “a settlement ... can be completed within one year” instead of the two years it had announced just five months earlier.¹³

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced the same timeline, saying, “Direct negotiations to resolve all final status issues ... can be completed within one year.”¹⁴ Special



Envoy George Mitchell gave Clinton’s reasons:

Prime Minister Netanyahu said ... that he believed it could be done within a year. President Abbas has expressed similar sentiments to me. So we believe it can be done within a year ... Both the United States and the Quartet have said that we believe there should be direct talks without preconditions ... If those negotiations are conducted seriously ... they can produce such an agreement within 12 months.¹⁵

Indeed, Netanyahu did give a nod to the 2011 target date, perhaps as an indication of his own sincerity about peace talks. In his September 8, 2010 Rosh Hoshana greeting, the prime minister said, “I believe that we should make every effort to reach a historic compromise for peace over the coming year.”¹⁶ Then during a press conference in Sderot on September 21, 2010, Netanyahu added, “My goal is not to con-

9 Salam Fayyad, address at al-Quds University, Abu Dis, Prime Minister’s Office, Palestinian National Authority, June 22, 2009.

10 “Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State: Program of the Thirteenth Government,” Palestinian National Authority, U.N. Information System on the Question of Palestine, Aug. 2009.

11 “Statement by Middle East Quartet,” Moscow, Mar. 19, 2010.

12 “Fayyad: ‘Build, build despite the occupation,’” Palestine Note website, Washington, D.C., July 30, 2010.

13 Quartet statement, United Nations, New York, Aug. 20, 2010.

14 Political Transcript Wire, Aug. 20, 2010.

15 Ibid.

16 “Rosh Hashanah Greeting from PM Netanyahu,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem, Sept. 8, 2010.

duct a process but to complete it ... to reach a historic peace. ... [through] accelerated negotiations within one year in order to achieve a framework agreement.”¹⁷

It was not the Obama administration’s intent to support statehood by certain dates if negotiations did not occur.

But the most important victory for the Palestinian date-certain campaign was the dramatic pronouncement by Obama in his remarks to the opening session of the United Nations General Assembly on September 22, 2010. Obama said, “When we come back here next year, we can have an agreement that will lead to a new member of the United Nations—an independent state of Palestine.”¹⁸ This was the only line in Obama’s 2010 speech that received an enthusiastic ovation.

The Palestinians remained unimpressed. Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas responded, “I hope this is not just a slogan, and when the time comes, he says, ‘We are sorry we could not [do it]. Leave it for next year.’” He continued, “[It] is a promise and a debt around your neck, and it must be realized so that Palestine becomes a full member state of the United Nations.”¹⁹

THE FINAL PUSH

The Palestinians now have a plan to receive payment for all these promises and collect on this “debt.” In January 2011, the Palestinian Authority (PA) announced that it had prepared a draft resolution to be introduced in the U.N. Security Council in September 2011 when Obama’s one-year promise falls due.²⁰ This in-

cludes formal recognition of a Palestinian state by the most authoritative organ of the world body and admission of Palestine as a member state of the United Nations. And it enshrines two additional key principles: (1) that the pre-1967 armistice line should be the basis for future negotiations over borders, and (2) that eastern Jerusalem be the capital of this Palestinian state.

In his announcement of the draft resolution, Riad Malki of the PA said, “Such recognition would create political and legal pressure on Israel to withdraw its forces from the land of another state that is recognized within the ‘67 borders by the international organization.”²¹ It would also have the effect of making eastern Jerusalem, where more than half the Jews in Israel’s capital live, occupied territory, invalidating the titles to their homes. It would give a new state of Palestine legal standing to seek indictment of Israel’s leaders before the International Criminal Court and to litigate a great variety of claims before the International Court of Justice.

When Obama, Hillary Clinton, and Mitchell made their several statements approving target dates, they framed the goal in every case as dates by which bilateral direct negotiations between Tel Aviv and the PA should be completed. It was not the administration’s intent to incur an obligation to support statehood by those dates if the negotiations did not occur, certainly not if the Palestinians themselves refused to negotiate. But since the onset of this administration, the Palestinians have in fact refused to engage in direct talks unless the Israeli government yielded to a precondition: that there be no construction of any homes for Jews in eastern Jerusalem nor anywhere on the West Bank. This is, as Clinton acknowledged, an unprecedented precondition. Israeli building on the West Bank, she said on October 31, 2009, has “always been an issue within the negotiations. ... There’s never been a precondition.”²²

17 Benjamin Netanyahu, press conference in Sderot, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem, Sept. 21, 2010.

18 Barack Obama, remarks to the United Nations General Assembly, New York, White House Press Office, Sept. 22, 2010.

19 *World Bulletin* (Istanbul), Nov. 11, 2010.

20 *Ha’aretz* (Tel Aviv), Jan. 10, 2011.

21 *Ibid.*

22 Benjamin Netanyahu and Hillary Clinton, remarks in Jerusalem, U.S. State Department, Oct. 31, 2009.

In fact, Abbas himself negotiated with seven previous Israeli prime ministers without such preconditions. For seventeen years—from the Madrid conference of October 1991 through Abbas’s discussions with Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert, which ended in 2008—a subject of recent disclosures by Al-Jazeera television—negotiations moved forward while construction of homes for Jews in eastern Jerusalem and the West Bank continued. Madrid, Oslo I, Oslo II, the Hebron protocol, the Wye River memorandum, Camp David, Taba, the disengagement from Gaza, and Olmert’s offer to Abbas—all these events over the course of two decades were made possible by a continuing agreement

to disagree about Israeli construction of Jewish homes in Jewish neighborhoods outside the pre-1967 line in East Jerusalem.

But now, on Obama’s watch, the PA is refusing to negotiate. This is a direct violation of the commitment the Palestinians made at the start of the Oslo process, which included Arafat’s pledge to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on September 9, 1993, that the “PLO commits itself to the Middle East peace process, and to a peaceful resolution of the conflict between the two sides, and declares that all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations.”²³ It is also a direct violation of the pledge that Abbas himself made barely three years ago at the Annapolis conference, witnessed by the foreign ministers of fifty-seven countries: “We agree to immediately launch good-faith bilateral negotiations ... vigorous, ongoing, and continuous negotia-

23 Exchange of letters between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat, Sept. 9, 1993, MidEast Web archive.



Since the start of the Obama administration, PA president Mahmoud Abbas has refused to engage in direct talks before the stoppage of all Jewish construction activities in eastern Jerusalem and the West Bank, despite having negotiated with seven previous Israeli prime ministers without such preconditions.

tions.”²⁴ Yet the Obama administration has been utterly silent about the Palestinian refusal to negotiate, issuing not a single audible word of criticism.²⁵

Obama has certainly not been reticent to criticize what he sees as the failures on the Israeli side. On at least thirteen separate occasions, starting just weeks after Netanyahu took office, he and his top officials have issued sharply expressed objections to the building policies of the Israeli government, often doing so in the presence of the Israeli prime minister himself. For example, on March 9, 2010, Vice President Biden condemned “the decision by the government of Israel to advance planning for new housing units in East Jerusalem.”²⁶ Secretary Clinton said, “The president was very clear

24 Annapolis agreement, *The Guardian* (London), Nov. 27, 2007.

25 Steven J. Rosen, “Why Isn’t Obama Pressuring the Palestinians?” *Foreign Policy*, Jan. 4, 2011.

26 Joseph R. Biden, Jr., statement in Jerusalem, White House Press Office, Mar. 9, 2010.

when Prime Minister Netanyahu was here. He wants to see a stop to settlements ... That is what we have communicated very clearly ... And we intend to press that point.”²⁷

Mahmoud Abbas has attributed the hardening of his own stand toward Israeli settle-

Previous negotiations moved forward while construction of homes for Jews in eastern Jerusalem continued.

ments to the example set by Obama. “President Obama stated in Cairo that Israel must stop all construction activities in the settlements. Could we demand less than that?”²⁸

The administration did not mean to produce this result. Obama’s envoy, George Mitchell, argued, “We do not believe

in preconditions. And we urge others not to impose preconditions.” Despite this, to repeat, neither Mitchell nor any other member of

the Obama team has said anything pointed about Abbas’s refusal to negotiate unless his preconditions are met.

In February 2011, Abbas succeeded in putting Obama on the defensive at the U.N. Security Council by rejecting the administration’s compromise formula and forcing it to veto a Palestinian resolution condemning Israeli settlements as an obstacle to peace.²⁹ In September 2011, he will be going to the Security Council, daring the president to veto, and putting him in the hot seat. A veto would not be received well in the Muslim world, a key target of Obama’s outreach, which is why he is looking for avenues for multilateral cooperation that would preempt the need for unilateral measures like the veto.³⁰ And if Obama does nonetheless veto a statehood resolution that has wide international support, he will be under pressure to offset this with fresh gestures toward the Palestinians. Obama’s dilemma is that, either way, the refusal to negotiate will be rewarded. And negotiation of the issues between the Palestinians and the Israelis will still be nowhere in sight.

27 Ahmed Ali Aboul Gheit, Egyptian foreign minister, and Hillary Clinton, remarks in Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of State, May 27, 2009.

28 “Mahmoud Abbas: I Reached Understandings with Olmert on Borders,” Middle East Media Research Institute, Washington, D.C., Nov. 16, 2010; *The Jerusalem Post*, Jan. 22, 2011.

29 *BBC News*, Feb. 18, 2011.

30 Steven J. Rosen, “Will Obama Use His U.N. Veto?” *Commentary*, Sept. 2010.



Muslim Group: “Christmas Is Evil”

London—Fanatics from a banned Islamic hate group have launched a nationwide poster campaign denouncing Christmas as evil. Organisers plan to put up thousands of placards around the UK claiming the season of goodwill is responsible for rape, teenage pregnancies, abortion, promiscuity, crime and pedophilia. They hope the campaign will help “destroy Christmas” in this country and lead to Britons converting to Islam instead.

The placards feature an apparently festive scene with an image of the Star of Bethlehem over a Christmas tree. But under a banner announcing “the evils of Christmas,” it features a message mocking the song the “12 Days of Christmas.”

It reads: “On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me an STD [sexually transmitted disease].

“On the second day, debt, on the third rape, the fourth teenage pregnancies, and then there was abortion.”

According to the posters, Christmas is also responsible for paganism, domestic violence, homelessness, vandalism, alcohol and drugs. Another offence of Christmas, it proclaims, is “claiming God has a son.”

Daily Mail, Dec. 23, 2010

Damascus on Trial

by David Schenker

In September 2008, the U.S. Federal Court in Washington, D.C., rendered a \$413 million civil judgment against the government of Syria for its provision of support and material aid to the killers of two American contractors in Iraq.¹ Syria's appeal is pending, but should it lose, the victims' families will undoubtedly endeavor to attach Syrian assets in the United States and abroad.

Until now, with the exception of sanctions, financial designations, and periodic cross-border direct action, Washington has imposed little cost on Damascus for its consistent support for terrorist attacks in Iraq since the 2003 war. And while the financial implications of this court verdict are unlikely to change Damascus's standing support for terrorism, it will impose an unprecedented price on Bashar al-Assad's increasingly reckless regime.

SUPPORT FOR THE INSURGENCY

In December 2010, U.S. counterterrorism officials reported an uptick in the number of insurgents entering Iraq via Syria.² It was the most significant reference to a Syrian role in the movement of jihadists since December 2009 when Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki blamed Damascus for car bomb attacks that killed more than one hundred in Baghdad. But it was only the latest in a long series of U.S. complaints about Syrian provision of support to Iraqi insurgents, a development that started even prior to the 2003 U.S.-led invasion. Indeed, as Washington was surging troops to the region in 2003 in preparation for the blitz on Baghdad, Damascus was deploying its own counter-force to fight the Americans.

In the months leading up to the invasion, the Assad regime allowed the establishment of an office across the street from the U.S. embassy in Damascus where insurgent hopefuls could sign up and get on a bus to Baghdad for the opportunity to repel the invaders.³ While brazen, Damascus's support and encouragement for Washington's enemies in Iraq came as little surprise. From the very start, Syria made no secret of its intent to undermine the U.S. invasion. Just days after the start of military operations, for example, then-Syrian foreign minister Farouq Shara publicly announced that "Syria's interest is to see the invaders defeated in Iraq."⁴

The defeat of the U.S. project in Iraq was an interest Damascus shared with Tehran. So much so that, according to then-Syrian vice president Abdel Halim Khaddam, on the eve of the invasion, the two countries forged an agreement to encourage "resistance" against U.S. forces in Iraq.⁵

David Schenker, the Aufzien fellow and director of the Program on Arab Politics at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, previously served as the Pentagon's top policy aide on the Arab countries of the Levant.

1 Associated Press, Oct. 3, 2008.

2 Ibid., Dec. 5, 2010.

3 David Schenker, testimony in *Francis Gates, et al. v. Syrian Arab Republic, et al.*, U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, Civil Action No. 06-1500 (RMC), Sept. 2008.

4 *BBC News*, Apr. 1, 2003.

Syria supported terrorists moving to Iraq while supplying information on attacks outside the Middle East.

The Assad regime also took other steps including recruiting local staff—such as the Aleppo-based militant Islamist cleric Abu al-Qaqa—to help organize the infiltrations across Syrian territory.⁶

To ensure that these dangerous Islamists did not plant domestic roots that might threaten the Assad regime, Syria's security apparatus apparently documented the presence of these killers. Then-deputy secretary of defense Paul Wolfowitz displayed some of the evidence of this official Syrian complicity during testimony before the Senate Armed Services

Committee in September 2003.

Holding up passports belonging to foreign fighters encountered by U.S. forces in Iraq, Wolfowitz said,

A foreigner who came into Iraq on March 24th through Syria—not a Syrian, but through Syria. The entry permit on his passport said he came to, quote, “volunteer for jihad.” Here’s another one, came into Iraq through Syria—same crossing point. The entry permit said, “to join the Arab volunteers.” And here’s a third one that came in on April 7th.⁷

Wolfowitz's statements were subsequently augmented by those of a dozen or so U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) flag officers, also focusing on the movement of jihadists through Syrian territory and Assad regime complicity in the endeavor. In March 2007, for example, CENTCOM revealed that training camps had been established on Syrian territory for Iraqi and foreign fighters.⁸

The most prominent of these statements, however, was issued by then-U.S. commander in Iraq Gen. David Petraeus, who during testimony to Congress on September 10, 2007, presented maps illustrating Syria's pivotal role as the source of foreign fighters entering Iraq.⁹ Only a week earlier, during an interview with *al-Watan al-Arabi*, the general described how Syria allowed thousands of insurgents to arrive at Damascus International Airport and then cross the Iraqi border.¹⁰ These foreign fighters, he explained, supplied the main manpower pool for the majority of suicide bombings in Iraq. That same month, the centrality of Syria to the insurgency was corroborated by the Sinjar documents, a trove of al-Qaeda materials captured by U.S. forces in Iraq.¹¹

Syrian conduct during the war—in particular the state's burgeoning support for and tolerance of al-Qaeda's transit—came as a surprise to many. After all, following September 11, 2001, Damascus provided intelligence on al-Qaeda to Washington that helped save American lives. But Syria was playing a double game by supporting terrorists moving to Iraq while simultaneously supplying information on future attacks—outside of the Middle East—to Washington. Damascus hoped this would purchase immunity, but the gambit failed. After Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld accused Syria in March 2003 of providing night vision goggles to Saddam and declared that Washington would “consider such trafficking as hostile acts and [would] hold the Syrian government accountable for such shipments,”¹² Damascus cut off the intelligence sharing.

As a Syrian foreign ministry official confided to *New Yorker* correspondent Seymour

5 Author interview with Abdel Halim Khaddam, Paris, Nov. 10, 2008.

6 Sami Moubayed, “The Islamic Revival in Syria,” *Mideast Monitor*, Sept.-Oct. 2006.

7 Paul Wolfowitz, deputy secretary of defense, presentation before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, Washington, D.C., Sept. 9, 2003.

8 *ABC News, The Blotter*, Mar. 22, 2007.

9 “Charts to Accompany the Testimony of Gen. David Petraeus,” Multi-National Force-Iraq, Sept. 10-11, 2010.

10 *Al-Watan al-Arabi* (Riyadh), Aug. 29, 2007. Excerpts from Gen. Petraeus's interview in *al-Watan al-Arabi*, Tony Badran, trans., Sept. 4, 2007.

11 For full English translations, see “Personal Information for Foreign Fighters,” Harmony Project, Combating Terrorism Center, West Point, accessed Jan. 18, 2011.

12 Donald Rumsfeld and Gen. Richard Myers, Pentagon briefing, Washington, D.C., Mar. 28, 2003.

Hersh, if Washington had agreed to discuss these issues in a back channel, the intelligence sharing might have continued. “But when you publicly try to humiliate a country,” he said, “it’ll become stubborn.”¹³ While Damascus sought to blame Washington for the breakdown of the channel, by the time the cooperation had ceased, Syria had been actively facilitating the movement of jihadists into Iraq for months. In addition to killing U.S. soldiers and innocent Iraqi civilians, these insurgents also captured and killed dozens of U.S. civilians working in Iraq.

THE CASE AGAINST DAMASCUS

Two of those American contractors executed by al-Qaeda in Iraq were Olin Eugene “Jack” Armstrong and Jack Hensley. In 2004, Thailand resident Armstrong and Hensley, who was based in Marietta, Georgia, were employed as contract managers by private construction subcontractors in Iraq. The two were kidnapped from their residential housing in Iraq on September 16 of that year. On September 20 and 21 respectively, videos documenting the gruesome beheadings of Armstrong and Hensley were posted on an online web forum associated with al-Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi.¹⁴ Remains of the victims were found in Baghdad soon after.

In August 2006, the families of Armstrong and Hensley brought a civil action against the government of Syria, President Bashar al-Assad, Syrian military intelligence, and its director, Assif Shawkat. The action, launched by the estates of Armstrong and Hensley—under the name of estate administrator Francis Gates—alleged that Damascus “provided material support and re-



In the months leading up to the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, Syrian president Bashar al-Assad (right), here with fallen Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, Cairo, November 3, 2009, allowed insurgent hopefuls to sign up and get on a bus to Baghdad for the opportunity to repel the coalition forces. As the turmoil in Iraq increased in the ensuing years, vast numbers of al-Qaeda terrorists and other insurgents were allowed to cross from Syria into Iraq.

sources” to al-Qaeda in Iraq and sought economic damages, compensation for grief, pain, and suffering, and punitive damages arising from their deaths.¹⁵

A three-day evidentiary hearing was held in January 2008 to establish the facts of the case. Four American expert witnesses testified how Syria facilitated the movement of jihadists to Iraq, how the Assad regime provided support and sanctuary to the Zarqawi network, and how the regime—and specifically the president and his brother-in-law, military intelligence chief Shawkat—were aware of the ac-

¹³ Seymour Hersh, “The Syrian Bet,” *The New Yorker*, July 28, 2003.

¹⁴ *Fox News*, Sept. 22, 2004.

¹⁵ *Francis Gates v. Syrian Arab Republic*.



On September 26, 2008, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia ruled that Syria “supported, protected, harbored, and subsidized” the Iraq-based terrorist group headed by Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi, thus being culpable for the beheading of two U.S. contractors by this group.

tivities of Zarqawi and al-Qaeda.¹⁶ The government of Syria neither answered the suit nor appeared in court.

On September 26, 2008, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia issued its memorandum opinion. In her ruling, Judge Rosemary Collyer wrote,

Plaintiffs proved, by evidence satisfactory to the Court, that Syria provided substantial assistance to Zarqawi and al-Qaeda in Iraq and that this led to the deaths by beheading of Jack Armstrong and Jack Hensley. . . . The evidence shows that Syria supported, protected, harbored, and subsidized a terrorist group whose *modus operandi* was the targeting, brutalization, and murder of American and Iraqi citizens.¹⁷

Most importantly, in her ruling, Judge Collyer

concluded that consistent with precedent, Damascus could in fact be held liable for damages pursuant to the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act (FSIA).¹⁸ Under the international principle of sovereign immunity, U.S. courts have no jurisdiction over foreign states aside from certain enumerated exceptions codified by a U.S. federal statute in the act. Cases of state-sponsored terrorism are one exception. As of January 28, 2008, U.S. law “waives sovereign immunity for states that sponsor terrorism and provides a private right of action against such states.”¹⁹ Because Assad and Shawkat were not individually served with the action, the court ruled that they would not be defendants.

Based on this ruling, the court awarded damages requested by the Armstrong and Hensley estates. In terms of economic damages—lost income incurred by premature death—the compensation was relatively low, slightly over \$1 million each. However, the especially cruel and prolonged technique of execution—and the resultant suffering of the victims and surviving family members—produced substantial damages awards. Most significant were the pain and suffering and punitive damages, which were especially high “in hopes that [these] substantial awards will deter further Syrian sponsorship of terrorists.”²⁰ The court awarded to each family \$50 million for pain and suffering, and \$150 million for punitive damages. All told, the civil judgment against Syria totaled \$413,909,587.

THE SYRIAN LINE OF DEFENSE

Although the mammoth judgment did not get much attention in the U.S. media, Damascus

16 Ibid., testimony by David Schenker and Matthew Levitt, Washington Institute for Near East Policy; Evan Kohlmann, NEFA Foundation; Marius Deeb, professor, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

17 Ibid.

18 28 U.S.C. § 1605(a), 1605A.

19 *Francis Gates v. Syrian Arab Republic*. The language appears in the Defense Authorization Act for FY2008, Public Law No. 100-181, 122 Stat. 3, 338-344 (2008).

20 Ibid.

clearly took note of the award.²¹ On October 24, 2008—less than a month after the initial ruling—it filed a notice of appeal. In its effort to overturn the ruling, the government of Syria engaged Johnson administration attorney general Ramsey Clark as its counsel.²²

Retention of Clark by the Assad regime was not very surprising. Clark has a prodigious record of defending publicly reviled individuals and causes. His clientele list is a veritable “Who’s Who” of dictators and perpetrators of genocide that includes Radovan Karadzic, Slobodan Milosevic, Saddam Hussein, and Elizaphan Ntakirutimana (first member of the clergy to be convicted of genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda). Perhaps of more relevance to this case, in the early 1990s, Clark defended the Palestine Liberation Organization in the suit brought by the family of the murdered American Leon Klinghoffer.

The appeal motion did not address the allegations of Syrian material support to terrorists who killed Americans. Rather, it centered largely on two jurisdictional matters. The first of Syria’s arguments was that the case should be dismissed because “no service of process has been delivered by DHL [international delivery company] to Syria and no legally sufficient showing of service of process has been made.” Indeed, according to the appeal brief, the signature documenting receipt by the Foreign Ministry in Damascus of the package alerting Syria of the legal action “could have been photocopied from an earlier signature ... and could readily have been the product of manipulation and falsification.” In any event, the brief continued, DHL is unreliable and “the Internet is rife with anguished, indignant complaints by DHL customers.”²³

Damascus conceded that “Essam” was in fact the name of the person who typically signs for packages at the Foreign Ministry, but it main-

tained that DHL perpetrated fraud to cover-up incompetence and that the government of Syria was never aware of the suit. While Syria’s DHL conspiracy theory was entertaining, indications suggest the court will not find the explanation compelling.

More interesting was Clark’s second argument as to why the case should have been dismissed or remanded to the district court. Syria argued that the terrorism exception to sovereign immunity that allowed the action to be brought was unconstitutional “because it gives the Executive and Legislative branches incentive and opportunity ... to misuse the exception to deny equal sovereignty for political purposes.”²⁴ Most recently, the brief noted, these branches terminated cases and undermined the judiciary’s independence with regard to Libya.

In addition to expressing concerns about preservation of balance of powers in the United States, Syria argued that by singling out the state, the suit violated article II of the U.N. charter, which, Syria said, establishes the principle of “sovereign equality of all [U.N.] Members.” “By force of the U.S. Secretary’s designation [of Syria as a state sponsor of terrorism],” the brief laments, Syria is “deprived of its fundamental right of equal sovereignty.”²⁵

Worse, the brief continued, the enormous judgment—which Syria described as “economic warfare”—would only “further inflame anti-American passions [and] invite retaliation.”

The near half a billion dollars in damages and penalties assessed against Syria for the deaths of two Americans in this case ... can only fill Syrians and most of the rest of the world with wonder at the monetary demands U.S. laws place on American deaths and America’s

The Assad regime argued that the judgment would result in Arabs hating Americans more.

21 Reports of the judgment appeared in *Naharnet News Desk* (Beirut), Oct. 5, 2008; *Tayyar al-Mustaqbal* website, Oct. 5, 2008.

22 *Now Lebanon* (Beirut), Dec. 21, 2008.

23 *Corrected Brief of the Syrian Arab Republic*, U.S. District Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, Aug. 31, 2010.

24 *Ibid.*

25 *Ibid.*

Photo will not display.

In its effort to overturn the court ruling, the government of Syria engaged Johnson administration attorney general Ramsey Clark as counsel. Clark has a prodigious record of defending publicly reviled individuals and causes. In the early 1990s, Clark defended the Palestine Liberation Organization in the suit brought by the family of the murdered American Leon Klinghoffer. Here Clark (left) meets with Hamas's Ismail Haneya (right) in Gaza City, January 5, 2011.

non-accountability for the lives it takes. With a gross domestic product per capita of \$7,000, it would take 30,000 years for the average Syrian to earn the sum awarded for the death of one American in this case.²⁶

In short, the Assad regime argued that the mammoth judgment leveled against Syria by the U.S. District Court with the expressed purpose of not letting “depraved lawlessness go unremarked and without consequence” will only result in Arabs hating Americans more.²⁷ Consistent with the long-standing Damascus modus operandi, Syria’s lawyers essentially threaten violence against the United States unless the initial verdict is reversed.

PRECEDENTS

Notwithstanding the seeming novelty of the defense’s strategy—attacking the constitution-

ality of the Foreign Sovereign Immunity Act exception for state sponsors of terrorism—Damascus and Clark are employing this tack in other cases. During another recent civil action, two Americans taken hostage in 1988 by the Syrian-supported Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) sought damages against Damascus for its provision of material support to the terrorist organization.²⁸ In this case, too, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia did not accept Damascus’s argument that the terrorism exception was unconstitutional.

At the time of publication, the appeal verdict was pending, but judgments in several previous cases suggest that the Court of Appeals will af-

firm precedent and deny Syria’s argument that the FSIA exception is unconstitutional, just as it has previously found that the U.N. charter is not self-executing and has no jurisdiction in U.S. courts.

Syria is only the latest state to be held accountable in U.S. courts for its role in killing Americans. Most famously, in 1998, the family of Alisa Flatow, who was killed in a bus bombing perpetrated by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, won a \$247 million award from the group’s Iranian sponsors. But significant judgments have also been rendered against Tehran for kidnappings, tortures, and murders perpetrated in Lebanon by its client Hezbollah and in Israel by Hamas. In 1997 and 2010, nearly \$4 billion in civil judgments were rendered against Iran in U.S. courts by the victims of the 1983 Marine barracks bombing in Lebanon. Likewise, in 2007, U.S. courts awarded \$6 billion to six American families and

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ *Francis Gates v. Syrian Arab Republic*.

²⁸ See *Mary Nell Wyatt, et al v. Syrian Arab Republic, et al*, Civil Action No. 08-0502, U.S. District Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, Sept. 8, 2010.

UTA airlines after Libya was found responsible for downing Flight 772 by a bomb over Niger in 1989. Ultimately, the UTA settlement was folded into the \$1.5 billion fund established by Libya in 2008 to compensate Lockerbie, La Belle, and all other pending terrorism claims against Libya.²⁹

While these astronomical figures would optimally constitute a deterrent for terrorist regimes, regrettably they have not proven effective. The problem, obviously, is that the judgments are exceedingly difficult to collect. After a \$1.3 billion judgment was levied against Iran in 2010, U.S. District Court Judge Royce C. Lamberth calculated that more than \$9 billion in uncollected torts had been ordered against Tehran, a sum that made the money a “meaningless charade.”³⁰ Federal courts have frozen some Iranian funds, including a \$2 billion account at Citibank.³¹ Still other victims of Iran have sought, thus far unsuccessfully, to attach ancient Iranian artifacts in Chicago museums.³²

As with Iran, wresting assets from Syria to satisfy the awards to the Armstrong and Hensley families will also prove a challenge. Damascus has relatively few assets in the United States, and diplomatic property is inviolable. Still, attorney Steven Perles, who represented the families, remains optimistic. To date, according to his assessment, he has recovered some \$70-\$75 million in frozen Iranian assets for his clients.³³ And should the verdict be upheld, he says he intends to focus on Syrian assets in Europe “where a number of countries recognize compensatory [if not punitive] damages from American courts.” While compensation remains a distant prospect, as long as these judgments are pending—if Iran is any example—it may become increasingly difficult for Damascus to do business in Europe.

In any event, it is increasingly clear that because the Assad regime has contributed to so

many American deaths in Iraq and elsewhere in the region, this lawsuit is sure to generate dozens more. Indeed, Perles himself has pledged to “financially pound the Syrians until they do what [Libyan leader] Qaddafi did and compensate the families for the deaths of their loved ones.”³⁴ More suits against Damascus await.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The \$413 million civil judgment represents the latest in a growing series of irritants in the U.S.-Syrian relationship. Since 1979, when Syria was added as an inaugural member of the State Department list of state sponsors of terrorism, U.S. relations with Damascus have never been good. Nevertheless, despite the pariah moniker, over time, relations between Washington and the terrorist state reached a condition of normalcy. This persisted until the Bush-era deterioration triggered by Syrian provision of assistance to insurgents in Iraq and the subsequent assassination of former Lebanese premier Rafiq Hariri in 2005, a murder widely believed to have a Syrian connection.

Despite the Obama administration’s sincere efforts to reset the relationship, improve the ties via a more active program of diplomatic engagement, and split Syria from its 30-year strategic relationship with Iran, over the first two years of this presidency, the bilateral dynamic has only gotten worse. Since 2010, Washington has watched Syrian support for terrorism and meddling in Lebanon increase. Meanwhile, Assad regime coordination with Tehran appears to be on the upswing.

An early item on President Obama’s agenda was the appointment of a new ambassador to

As long as these U.S. judgments are pending, it may be difficult for Damascus to do business in Europe.

29 CNN, Nov. 21, 2008.

30 ABC News, *The Blotter*, Apr. 3, 2010.

31 *The Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 12, 2009.

32 See Daniel Pipes, “The University of Chicago vs. Victims of Terror,” *Lion’s Den Blog*, June 28, 2006.

33 *Fulton County Daily Report* (Atlanta), Oct. 13, 2008.

34 Author interview with Steven Perles, Washington, D.C., Jan. 10, 2011.

Damascus, a post that had been vacant since the Hariri killing. In February 2010, Robert Ford was appointed to the post, but his confirmation was scuttled when President Assad hosted Iran's president Mahmoud Ahmedinejad and Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah for a trilateral meeting in Damascus on February 26.³⁵

Ford was given a recess appointment at the end of 2010 congressional term and was dispatched to Syria in January 2011.³⁶ But it is unclear what he will be able to accomplish. In the face of two years of good will gestures by the Obama administration, Syria has provided increasingly lethal and destabilizing support to Hezbollah, believed to include SCUD and/or Fatah 110 missiles, and perhaps game-changing MANPAD systems, which can target Israeli F-16s over Lebanon. In addition to providing ongoing training to Hamas in Syria, recently released State Department cables suggest the presence of Hezbollah military facilities on Syrian soil.³⁷ At the same time, Damascus continues its policy of noncooperation with the International

Atomic Energy Agency investigation of the North Korean nuclear facility in al-Kibar destroyed by Israel in 2007.³⁸ Finally, the human rights situation in Syria remains appalling and shows no signs of improving.³⁹

This \$413 million judgment joins the perennial catalogue of U.S.-Syrian issues for discussion. And although it is unlikely to become a priority issue, the outstanding award does serve an important purpose on the list. For unlike the other items—which pose a concern for regional stability and a threat to regional friends—the pending damages highlight that Syria's behavior is not just a problem for other states but for Washington. While it is possible that this Syrian obligation will ultimately be met through a Libya-style arrangement where the Assad regime jettisons its support for terrorism, ends its quest for nuclear weapons, and changes its strategic orientation in exchange for a rapprochement with Washington, this kind of deal remains a distant hope at best. In the meantime, the *Gates v. Syria* verdict is a useful reminder that Syrian support for terrorism kills Americans.

35 *Ha'aretz* (Tel Aviv), Feb. 26, 2010.

36 *The Washington Post*, Dec. 29, 2010.

37 "Is Now the Time to Raise Hizballah with Syria?" USEMB Damascus Cable, Nov. 19, 2009, released by WikiLeaks, Dec. 6, 2010.

38 *Der Spiegel* (Hamburg), Feb. 11, 2009.

39 "Syria—Amnesty International Report 2010," Amnesty International, London, accessed Jan. 19, 2011.



Syria Orchestrated Muhammad Cartoon Riots

The government of Syria was active in organizing the 2006 riots that erupted across the Arab world following the publication of controversial cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, Oslo daily *Aftenposten* reported Monday, quoting U.S. diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks.

The cartoons were originally published in neighboring Denmark in 2005. Their publication resulted in violent protests, including attacks on several embassies in Damascus in early February 2006. Embassies targeted included those of Norway, Denmark, and Sweden.

A U.S. diplomatic cable published by *Aftenposten* said the Syrian premier had "several days before the demonstrations, instructed the Grand Mufti Sheikh Hassoun to issue a strongly worded directive to the imams delivering Friday sermons in the mosques of Damascus."

The riots ended when Syria "felt that 'the message had been delivered,'" the cable said, quoting a Sunni sheikh whose name was blacked out. The incident resulted in the evacuation of Norwegian diplomats and demands for compensation.

Ha'aretz, Dec. 27, 2010

NGOs vs. Israel

by Ben-Dror Yemini

On January 5, 2011, after months of heated public debate, the Israeli Knesset established a parliamentary committee of inquiry to probe foreign funding of Israeli nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) involved in the international Israel delegitimization campaign.¹ Was this a draconian, McCarthyist encroachment on the freedom of press as claimed by left-wing groups and politicians, or a legitimate attempt by a besieged democracy to fend off hostile intervention in its internal affairs as argued by the legislation's proponents?

INTERNATIONAL OBSESSION

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has historically attracted extraordinary, and largely disproportionate, international attention. Not because of its ferocity: The number of Palestinians killed by Israelis (and vice versa) over the past six decades is probably smaller than the 9,000 Muslim Bosnians massacred in Srebrenica in July 1995 by their Serb and Croatian compatriots² and decidedly smaller than the death toll from other conflicts throughout the globe that range in the hundreds of thousands if not millions.³

Nor has this obsession been driven by humanitarian considerations. Not only is the Gaza Strip not in the throes of a deep crisis, but the humanitarian situation there is better than in some of the countries whose ships have been sent on occasion to break "the siege" of Gaza. Infant mortality in the Gaza Strip, for example, is 17.71 per thousand births compared to Turkey's 24.84 or the global average of 44⁴; life expectancy in Turkey is 72.23 years whereas in Gaza it is 73.68, much higher than the global average of

66.12, not to mention such Arab or Islamic countries as Yemen (63.36), Sudan (52.52), or Somalia (50).⁵ Even by more advanced indicators, such as personal computer use or Internet access, Gazans are in a much better position than many of the world's inhabitants.⁶ In the words of the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, no Israel-lover by any stretch of imagination, "an average Congolese citizen would probably have sold his mother into slavery to be able to move to the West Bank."⁷

But whatever its underlying causes, the intense international meddling in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, whether by governments or by NGOs, has become a major obstacle to the peaceful resolution of this century-long feud.

1 *The Jerusalem Post*, Jan. 5, 2011; *BBC News*, Jan. 19, 2011.

2 *The New York Times*, Nov. 11, 2004.

3 This has also applied to the wider conflict between Israel and the Arab states. See Gunnar Heinsohn and Daniel Pipes, "Arab-Israeli Fatalities Rank 49th," *FrontPage Magazine*, Oct. 8, 2007.

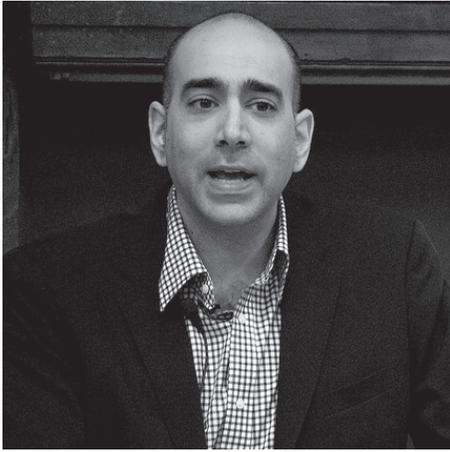
4 "Infant Mortality Rate," *The World Factbook 2011*, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), McLean, Va., accessed Feb. 8, 2011.

5 "Life Expectancy at Birth," *The World Factbook 2011*, CIA, accessed Feb. 8, 2011.

6 "Internet Users," *The World Factbook 2011*, CIA, accessed Feb. 8, 2011.

7 "Violence and Left in Dark Times: Bernard-Henri-Lévy and Slavoj Žižek," *Intelligence2: The World of Debate*, Sept. 16, 2008.

Ben-Dror Yemini is the opinion-editor of the Israeli daily *Maariv*.



The Dutch government funds the radical website The Electronic Intifada, whose cofounder Ali Abunimah considers PA president Abbas a “collaborator” and advocated the “one state solution”—the replacement of Israel by an Arab and Muslim state in which Jews would be reduced to a permanent minority as dhimmis.

RIGHTS DEFENDERS OR PEACE AVERTERS?

The two-state solution—Israel plus a Palestinian state in most of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital—has long been identified by the majority of the international community, or at least by the West, as the key to Arab-Israeli peace. In these circumstances, one would expect the international community to help remove the main obstacles between the two sides by allaying Israel’s security fears and by devising economic and demographic proposals for the resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem. Yet an examination of the international intervention in the conflict reveals a highly disturbing pattern: The greater the intervention, the more both sides harden, not moderate, their positions. Rather than facilitating peace and reconciliation, the international funds invested in the conflict have produced an organizational and ideological infra-

structure that inhibits the chances for a future agreement.

More specifically, the European Union as a whole and the European states individually finance a long list of associations dealing with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that are part of a wider conglomerate seeking to perpetuate the conflict.⁸ The political discourse has fundamentally changed, and this is no longer the era of peace organizations but rather that of human rights organizations, many of which are deeply involved in protecting Palestinian “rights.”

Granted, there are Palestinian rights that deserve support and protection. But there are just as many false claims for rights that are designed to harm Israel and prevent reconciliation rather than improve the Palestinian condition. Foremost among them is “the right of return”—the standard Arab and Palestinian euphemism for Israel’s destruction through demographic subversion. For example, in an internal meeting in March 2009, Palestinian Authority (PA) president Mahmoud Abbas acknowledged that the repatriation of even one million Palestinian refugees “would mean the end of Israel.”⁹ In fact, there is no such right. It does not exist; nor has it been recognized or implemented on the political level virtually anywhere in the world, and certainly not as a tool to destroy an existing nation-state. Only last year, the European Court of Human Rights ruled against a Greek demand for a “right to return” to the Turkish part of Cyprus stating that there is no such absolute right.¹⁰ But this does not prevent many groups from cultivating this destructive fantasy.

For argument’s sake, imagine that the international community convinces Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and PA president Abbas to return to the negotiations table, and

8 Steven J. Rosen, “The Arab Lobby: The European Component,” *Middle East Quarterly*, Fall 2010, pp. 17-32.

9 *The Jerusalem Post*, Jan. 24, 2011; see, also, Saeb Erekat, “The Returning Issue of Palestine’s Refugees,” *The Guardian* (London), Dec. 10, 2010.

10 *Demopoulos v. Turkey*, European Court of Human Rights, Strasbourg, France, Mar. 1, 2010.

that news of an agreement leaks out. The broad contours of such an agreement would presumably be along the principles laid down by President Bill Clinton in December 2000 (about 95 percent of the West Bank given to the Palestinians with Israeli compensation in kind for annexed territories; Jerusalem partitioned on a demographic basis; no return of refugees to Israel with the problem solved by an international effort) or the not-so-different Ehud Olmert proposals at the 2007 Annapolis summit, most of which were apparently accepted by the Palestinian leadership in the ensuing negotiations.¹¹

Would this breakthrough be welcomed by these NGOs? Hardly. A significant number of human rights groups will do precisely what they have been doing in previous years: They will conduct an international campaign against the agreement claiming it “fails to address the basic rights of the Palestinian people,” first and foremost, the “right of return.”

These groups are part of a new empire—an empire comprised of official, international bodies such as the Human Rights Council of the United Nations in Geneva, the U.N. General Assembly, and the many “human rights” groups that voice a similar position. The automatic majority bloc of nondemocratic states in international bodies is a sad testament to the state of the world community; the identification of human rights organizations with this dark majority is a tragedy for world human rights. There is little discussion of the lack of human rights in such brutal dictatorships as Syria or Libya; but there is a disproportionate focus on Israel by these bodies,¹² which in turn creates the false impression that Israel, and not such states as Sudan or Iran (or North Korea for that matter), is the foremost threat to world peace.

How has this come to pass? The West finances an extensive network of NGOs with funding often going to projects feigning defense of

11 *Ha'aretz* (Tel Aviv), Jan. 24, 2011.

12 See, for instance, Bat Ye'or, “Delegitimizing the Jewish State,” *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2011, pp. 3-14. It was only on January 26, 2011, after Mu'ammarr al-Qadhafi had been slaughtering his subjects in full view of the world for some time, that Libya was expelled from the U.N. Human Rights Council.

Photo will not display.

Omar Barghouti is a Palestinian doctoral student at Tel Aviv University and a prominent activist in the anti-Israel BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) movement. Despite lip service to human rights, the driving force behind the movement is rejection of the two-state solution and castigation of any Israeli-Palestinian cooperation or Palestinian concessions for the sake of peace.

human rights. In reality, the absolute majority of these groups has a radical, political agenda, which at times is not only anti-Israel or anti-Zionist but also anti-West.¹³ There are many in the West who hope that a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict will help resolve the wider conflict between East and West. This is an illusion. The Afghan and Pakistani Taliban or al-Qaeda terrorists would have difficulty finding Israel on the map.

REJECTIONIST NETWORK

The EU supports dozens of Israeli groups dealing with the conflict, but only a handful of these deal with the conflict's political dimension,

13 Gerald M. Steinberg, “NGOs Make War on Israel,” *Middle East Quarterly*, Summer 2004, pp. 13-25.

Photo will not display.

The anti-Israel campaign has hardly been motivated by humanitarian considerations. Not only is the Gaza Strip not in the throes of a deep crisis, but the humanitarian situation there is better than in some of the countries, notably Turkey, whose ships have been sent on occasion to break "the siege" of Gaza. Here, pro-Palestinian Turkish demonstrators welcome a ship back to Istanbul from a Gaza-bound flotilla.

notably the Israeli group Peace Now and the Israeli-Palestinian Geneva Initiative, both of which support the two-state solution. By contrast, there are numerous groups that, while paying lip service to the two-state solution, reject Israel's right to exist.

Consider the Israeli-Arab groups Adalah¹⁴ and Mossawa¹⁵—both of which are openly opposed to Israel's existence as a Jewish state—that is to its very existence—and support the "right of return." Or consider the Israeli Committee against House Demolitions, headed by Jeff Halper, who roams the world lambasting not only Israel but also "global capitalism." He has gone so far as to deride the 2002 Saudi peace proposal as an attempt "to placate the Arab street" and to accuse Arab leaders of seeking Israel's regional hegemony in order to tighten their grip over their oppressed masses.¹⁶

14 "Adalah," NGO Monitor, Jerusalem, accessed Feb. 8, 2011.

15 "About Mossawa," Mossawa, Haifa, accessed Feb. 8, 2011.

Furthermore, the Israeli Committee against House Demolitions publicly supports the "right of return" and the total boycotting of Israel. Yet this radical group is financed by the EU to the tune of €169,661 (US\$232,198, for the years 2010-12).¹⁷

On the Palestinian side, the Dutch government funds the militant website The Electronic Intifada,¹⁸ whose cofounder Ali Abunimah considers PA president Abbas a "collaborator." Not surprisingly, Abunimah is fiercely opposed to the peace process, subscribing instead to the "one state solution"¹⁹—the replacement of Israel by an Arab and Muslim state in which Jews would be reduced to a permanent minority as *dhimmis*, historically accorded a legally and socially inferior existence in Islam.

Likewise, the Ramallah-based Palestinian group al-Haq receives support from the Swedish, Dutch, and Canadian governments,²⁰ presumably to bolster its formal human rights agenda. Yet this organization is openly committed to the "right of return,"²¹ as is the Ramallah-based, Palestinian-run NGO Development Center. Funded by the World Bank

16 Jeff Halper, "A Just Street or Apartheid?" *Counterpunch*, May 3, 2007; YouTube, "Peace in the Middle East: Jeff Halper speaks at UCL, Part 3 of 8," accessed Feb. 9, 2011.

17 "Why BDS?" The Israeli Committee against House Demolition, Jerusalem, accessed Feb. 9, 2011; "Projects: Home Demolitions and the Law," Delegation of the European Union to Israel, Ramat Gan, accessed Feb. 9, 2011.

18 "Vragen en Antwoorden over Partnerorganisatie Electronic Intifada," Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation (ICCO), Utrecht, Netherlands, accessed Feb. 9, 2011.

19 Ali Abunimah, "Why Israel Won't Survive," The Electronic Intifada, Jan. 19, 2009; "One Country: A New Book from El Cofounder Ali Abunimah," The Electronic Intifada, accessed Feb. 9, 2011.

20 "Donors for 2005/2006," al-Haq, Ramallah, accessed Feb. 9, 2011.

21 "A Joint Open Letter to the Member States of the UN General Assembly from Palestinian Human Rights Organizations," al-Haq, Ramallah, Oct. 1, 2009.

and a string of European states, including France, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, it disburses millions of dollars to Israeli and Palestinian associations, supposedly for the protection of human rights. But a glance at the list of the supported groups or their leaders readily reveals that most of them are also involved in political activism²²—including promotion of the “right of return”—and many of them support the anti-Israel boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement.

This hydra-like BDS is supported by dozens of different organizations. The EU or individual Western states do not directly finance the movement, yet they fund numerous groups that subsidize and support it. What makes this matter particularly galling is that the ultimate goal of the BDS movement is not just the end of the Israeli “occupation” of the West Bank and Gaza, but rather Israel’s demise.²³ The leaders and members of the BDS movement travel around the world and speak on human rights, democracy, and equality. But behind this lip service to universal values underlie the same extremist objectives preached by al-Qaeda, the Iranian ayatollahs, or Hamas: rejection of the two-state solution and castigation of any Israeli-Palestinian cooperation or Palestinian concessions for the sake of

peace, as collaboration with one of the world’s worst ever regimes. As one of the movement’s leaders, Omar Barghouti, candidly admitted: “The end of the occupation is not the end of our struggle.”²⁴ Paradoxically, Barghouti is a student at Tel Aviv University, the same university he wishes to have boycotted.

CONCLUSION

A vast and intricate network of NGOs, funded by the European Union and individual European states, is busy fanning Palestinian and Arab rejectionism, whether through the promotion of “the right of return,” support for the BDS campaign, or discouragement of acceptance of Israel.²⁵ Not all members of this network are in contact with one another, nor do they necessarily share the same specific goals. Yet they are unified by principled and ideological opposition to the two-state solution, and by implication—to Israel’s very existence. Should Israeli lawmakers be faulted for trying to resist this trend?

The ultimate goal of the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement is Israel’s demise.



22 “Human Rights and Good Governance Secretariat (HR/GG) NGO Grant Recipients 2010-2012,” NGO Development Center, Ramallah and al-Rimal, Gaza, accessed Feb. 9, 2011; “Dons,” *idem*, accessed Feb. 9, 2011.

23 “Palestinian United Call for BDS against Israel,” Palestinian BDS National Committee, July 9, 2005.

24 “Boycott Divestment Sanction Israel,” YouTube, accessed Feb. 9, 2011.

25 “Overview of European Governmental Funding for NGOs,” NGO Monitor, Jerusalem, June 10, 2010.

Palestinians Think Life Is Improving

Dr. Nabil Kukali, founder and director-general of the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion, said that the improvement of the economic situation in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip in 2010 compared with the foregoing years “gave the Palestinian public a feeling of optimism that their financial situation in 2011 will be further improved.”

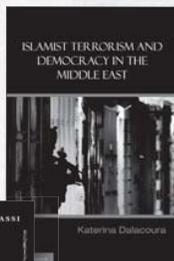
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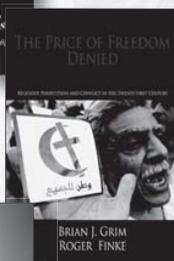
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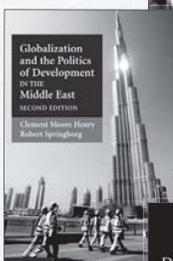
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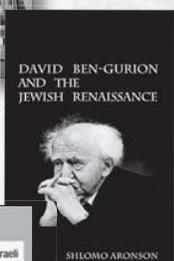
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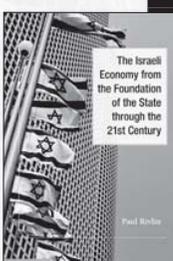


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Egypt's Antiquities Caught in the Revolution

by Alexander H. Joffe

The initial spasm of images from the Cairo Museum shocked observers. As tens of thousands of demonstrators confronted the security forces in what quickly evolved into the first popular revolution in Egypt's history, the museum was ransacked in a scene reminiscent of the looted tombs of ancient Egyptian kings. A statue of Tutankhamun astride a panther was ripped from its base but then cast to the floor when thieves discovered it was gilded and not solid gold. A boat model from a tomb was smashed, the figures huddled in the boat-house pulverized but the navigator at the bow still pointing sadly forward. Two mummies were beheaded, mouths agape; it was rumored that they were Tut's grandparents.

The extent of the chaos was unknown but ominous. Egypt's antiquities were suddenly caught up in a revolution. But those antiquities have always been both a tool to create Egypt and Egyptians in the present as well as a telling map of Egyptian society.

CONFLICTING NARRATIVES

A second narrative quickly appeared. In this one, the police, military, and most importantly "everyday Egyptians," joined together to protect museums and sites. Farid Saad, a 40-year-old engineer, was quoted as saying, "I'm standing here to defend and to protect our national treasure."¹ The nation was united in protection of its past.

Alexander H. Joffe is a Middle Eastern historian and archaeologist. He is the author of "Museum Madness in Iraq," published in the Spring 2004 *Middle East Quarterly*. He has taught archaeology at the Pennsylvania State University and Purchase College, State University of New York.

For his part, Zahi Hawass, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, reacted with characteristic histrionics, which for once might have been justified: "Of course, I was so worried. I have been protecting antiquities all my life. I felt if the Cairo Museum is robbed, Egypt will never be able to get up again."² Hawass's ego is perpetually on display; every television documentary about ancient Egypt appears contractually bound to feature him in his full braggadocio, and he has long been the absolute master of which archaeologist does and does not work in Egypt.

But after forty-eight hours, his assessment of the situation changed. Hawass, appointed Mubarak's minister for antiquities after the erup-

1 *The Christian Science Monitor*, Jan. 28, 2011.

2 *The Washington Post*, Jan. 30, 2011.

The positive narrative of the regime in command was challenged by telephone calls, faxes, and tweets.

tion of chaos, now reported that nothing much had been stolen or destroyed, that all the museums were safe, that the people stood united against the looters, and that even the looted objects had been restored. "People are asking me, 'Do you think Egypt will be like Afghanistan?'" he recounted. "And I say, 'No, Egyptians are different—they love me because I protect antiquities.'"³

After seventy-two hours, Hawass was even more resolute:

I am the only source of continuing truth concerning antiquities, and these rumors are aimed at making the Egyptian people look bad. If anything happens to the museum, I would bravely tell everyone all over the world because I am a man of honor, and I would never hide anything from you. It is from my heart that I tell people everywhere that I am the guardian of these monuments that belong to the whole world.⁴

Now Egypt's monuments belonged to the world, but the source of all truth was made clear. The identification of Egypt's antiquities with a single man is not simply supremely egotistic but telling of a tradition where rulers point to monuments and demand respect, legitimacy, and obedience. It is only one of many apparent constants in Egyptian history.

Whether or not Egyptians are different from their Iraqi or Afghan brethren, however, remains to be seen. As the Taliban came to power, the contents of the Afghan National Museum in Kabul were moved to safe locations.⁵ The museum itself was destroyed in 1994. Other antiquities, most notably the Buddhas of Bamiyan, were destroyed by the Taliban in a campaign of iconoclasm in 2001. The Baghdad Museum was looted in 2003 by lo-

cal Iraqis and probably museum insiders and professional thieves during the U.S.-led invasion.⁶ Though the site had been used as a firing position to attack U.S.

forces, Washington was blamed for the looting and for failing to secure Iraq's thousands of archaeological sites, many of which were mined for antiquities that have disappeared, presumably onto world markets.

Even as Mubarak held on, Hawass's positive narrative of the regime in command was challenged by telephone calls, faxes, and tweets that were aggregated on various web sites outside of his control. Near Cairo, reports indicated that looters attacked tombs and antiquities storehouses in Saqqara and Abusir. In Middle Egypt, the site of Ehnasya was attacked, but in Upper Egypt, Luxor and Aswan, sites with major tourism interests, were reported to be safe. And in a curious echo of ancient Egypt, "Sinai Bedouins" apparently attacked the Qantara Museum. Some allegations have even emerged that the thugs and villains who attacked the Cairo Museum, and who attacked opposition demonstrators gathered on Tahrir Square, were policemen and goons in the employ of the regime. True or not, such allegations have galvanized the opposition. After the fall, Hawass was forced to admit that another gilded statue of Tutankhamun was missing from the Cairo Museum, along with other objects. "I have said if the Egyptian [Cairo] Museum is safe, then Egypt is safe. However, I am now concerned Egypt is not safe."⁷ As ever, the fate of Egypt was tied together with that of its leaders and its past.

WHY ANTIQUITIES?

But why were antiquities targeted? The simplest answer is that most of Egypt's eighty-three million people survive on approximately US\$2 per

3 *The New York Times*, Feb. 1, 2011.

4 Zahi Hawass, "State of Egyptian Antiquities," Zahi Hawass website, Feb. 3, 2011.

5 "Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul," *National Geographic*, accessed Feb. 8, 2011.

6 Alexander H. Joffe, "Museum Madness in Baghdad," *Middle East Quarterly*, Spring 2004, pp. 31-43.

7 NewsCore Agency, Feb. 13, 2011.

day. Antiquities represent valuable commodities to be exploited, whether directly as gold and other precious metals or as saleable items on a black market. The world's antiquities markets and museums could easily absorb better objects, disguise their recent origins, or hide them in stasis for years. This happens every day with loot from every corner of the earth. Wealthy collectors would be made aware of these objects as well, and private deals arranged. Common objects, which were not destroyed in the search for more excellent ones, would also be absorbed and marketed at the street level in places such as London and Geneva. Tourism annually contributes \$15 billion to Egypt's gross domestic product of some \$216 billion. How much looted objects would bring in is unknown.

Looting tombs has a particular antiquity in Egypt. In ancient Egypt, tombs of commoners and kings were often looted just hours after the burial. The practice of sending the deceased toward the afterlife with elaborate and even lavish equipment was taken to an extreme by Egyptians. To these customs, the world owes thanks for the preponderance of items that fill museums today, which originated in the grave. Pyramids were burrowed into, subterranean chambers were mined, and mummies were torn open in search of gold, silver, and precious stones. Little seems different today. As in the past, stolen loot will fill the stomachs of Egyptians.

But another answer to why Egypt's antiquities have been targeted has to do with the relationship of past and present in Egypt. Nationalism everywhere uses the imagery of the past and the fruits of archaeology to create a narrative about the greatness of today, in particular the "nation" and its leaders. The Egyptian state has not been an exception, but there are features that make it unlike other places. For one thing, Egypt, despite its immense size and subregions, has always been a single geographical and cultural unit. It was unified under a single dynasty—really military rule that later assumed theocratic dimensions—before 3200 BCE. Egypt is a container,

Photo will not display.

Zahi Hawass, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities and longtime gatekeeper to Egypt's hallowed past, sought to downplay the extent of the plundering of the country's museums amid the revolution, arguing that nothing much had been stolen or destroyed and that people stood united against the looters.

bordered by deserts to the west and east, populated with unruly sand dwellers, and to the south in Nubia by tribes that are racially distinct.

The novelty of pharaonic antiquities was not lost on Egypt's Greco-Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic rulers. The mythical power of Egyptian hieroglyphs and their mystical knowledge were compelling, and objects from scarabs all the way up to obelisks were bought, sold, and gifted. But the Islamic era also created a new series of monuments and narratives regarding Egypt's singularity and glory. The neighborhoods of old Cairo were the Fatimid, Mamluk, and Ottoman core of the city; they contained alleys and lanes, mansions and apartments that were the settings for Naguib Mahfouz's novels. Al-Azhar seminary, Khan al-Khali bazaar, and the al-Hussein mosque were the monumental core of another authentic and distinct Egyptian culture.

That culture did not always mesh with the pharaonic past. In 1156, al-Aziz Uthman, son of Saladin, tried to demolish one of the Giza pyramids. The fourteenth-century Sufi Muhammad Saim ad-Dahr is reputed to have smashed the nose of the Great Sphinx when he saw peasants making



At the Cairo Museum, a statue of Tutankhamun astride a panther was ripped from its base but then cast to the floor when thieves discovered it was gilded and not solid gold.

offerings. After an earthquake in 1300 loosened the casing stones of the Giza pyramids, Sultan an-Nasir Nasir ad-Din al-Hassan took the opportunity a few decades later to remove them to build the mosques and fortresses of the still new city of Cairo. Symbols always vie with utility even for rulers. But the Islamic heritage of Egypt forms another important strand in the modern identity of Egypt, one that complements yet stands somewhat at odds with the more dramatic pagan monuments of the pharaohs.

Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1799 ushered in antiquarian and then scientific research. His hundreds of artists and savants spread out across the land as part of a vast scientific and military enterprise documenting things as they were on the very edge of modernity. Europeans poured into the country and by the middle of the nineteenth century the continent's museums were filled with Egyptian objects and even monuments, torn from that country with no thought for science and still less for Egyptians. A sense of viola-

tion formed a thread in the growing Egyptian national consciousness and was made more intense by the British occupation of the country in 1882. But this began the golden age of Egyptian archaeology, tourism, and the growth of the modern state. The Oriental style that shaped Cairo and Alexandria and the obvious privileging of the pharaohs was a joint European and Egyptian project. Egyptian art and literature valorized the age of the pharaoh in the poems and plays of Ahmad Shawki and Mahfouz's early novels. Like Iraq and its Mesopotamian past, and Lebanon with its Phoenician past, the achievements of Egyptian ancestors were inspiration and legitimization for the emerging greatness of the present.

DIVERGENT IDENTITIES

But the Nasserite revolution of 1952 and pan-Arabism brought contradictions into the open. Was Egypt part of the "Arab nation" or was it Egyptian? The nearly simultaneous rise of the Muslim Brotherhood brought out similar contradictions with respect to Islam. Was Egypt an Arab or Egyptian country, or part of a Muslim world that knew no earthly borders? Just what is Egypt and Egyptian nationalism?

These questions, too, have a certain antiquity. Egypt was always ruled from the core outward, but the pharaoh spent much time traveling the length of his realm paying obeisance to local deities, checking up on local authorities, and putting down rebellions. In the core today, in Cairo and its surroundings, where there is a developed upper and middle class, the answers will likely lean toward a nationalist explanation of pride and connection to the past. Egypt's pharaonic past is integral in the same way that the Cairo Museum, built in 1902, is an inextricable part of that city where a medieval Muslim core melds with the Oriental style of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries while flanked by the looming monuments of antiquity to the west, and everywhere surrounded by the ugly towers and slums of modernity. That geography points to the shape of today's problems.

As in the past, more remote areas of the Nile

State and military industries dominate, and the fate of many Egyptians is tied directly to the regime.

delta and those in Middle and Upper Egypt, which are removed from the political, cultural, and religious centers at Memphis or Cairo, were more underdeveloped, impoverished, backward, and traditional in outlook and practice. Only a few sites, such as Luxor and Thebes were patronized by the royalty and later by the modern Egyptian regimes in the name of tourism. The Bedouins of the Sinai rankled under the pharaoh's control and yearned to break free and lash out. In all these respects, little has changed today. The interpretation of nationalism and treatment of the past will likely follow this geography, at least for a while. Everywhere, however, the competing Islamic narrative looms.

Egypt at least is an integral unit. One useful contrast is with Iraq. Ancient Mesopotamia saw the land divided into Babylonia in the south and Assyria in the north. These two regions were socially and ethnically distinct, but from an early time, Mesopotamian kings created a mythological vision of unity, which they then used as justification for violently attacking and dominating their neighbors. Unity was a fiction but a divine one. The reality consisted of fractious tribes, agricultural villages, competing city-states, and violent politics. This was no less true for Saddam Hussein at-Tikriti than it was for Sargon of Akkad, the "true king," who rose from cup-bearer to the king of Kish to the king's killer, and went on to unite Mesopotamia and found a dynasty. Kings themselves were the greatest source of disorder.

In ancient Egyptian tradition, one of the greatest roles of the ruler was *ma'at*, the legitimate maintenance of order and balance. Of course, minions of the ruler recorded this pretension for posterity, but fear of chaos was pervasive, not only for the ruler but the ruled. Invasions by desert tribes, the annual floods—which could bring too much water or not enough, or bring it too early or too late in the growing season—and famine, hunger, and violence were all too real. The reward of living in a rich ecosystem is plenty with the caveat that nature is fickle. A kind of national awareness emerged in ancient Egypt, at least with respect to xenophobia to-

ward foreigners, in part through fear of chaos. The fact that the kings of Egypt were depicted literally as gods who held heaven and

earth together was another metaphysical dimension of the ancient Egyptian "nation," always backed up by military force. Piety vied with poverty and with fear. But then as now, the state was the provider. Most ancient Egyptians were bound to various royal or temple establishments. Despite any liberalization undertaken by Mubarak, state and military industries continue to dominate the Egyptian economy. The fate of many Egyptians was and is tied directly to the regime.

UNCERTAIN FUTURE

A similar sort of chaos is playing out in Egypt today. Price subsidies for food and fuel account for 7 percent of the state's budget, and more than 40 percent of Egypt's food is imported.⁸ Food inflation reached 17 percent in December 2010,⁹ and hundreds of thousands of university graduates are unable to find jobs.¹⁰ Chaos thus has many sources—an educated population shut out from prosperity and an underclass on the verge of hunger. Antiquities—identified now with the Mubarak regime and a potential source of revenue for impoverished Egyptians—have suffered from time immemorial. The upper and middle class Egyptians who locked arms to protect the Cairo Museum from the initial bout of looting are too few and spread too thin to defend even a fraction of Egypt's museums and monuments. But the rioting that has unfolded, perhaps with the regime's contrivance, has given Egyptians a clear picture of chaos. Egypt's prisons have been emptied of criminals, terrorists, and political prisoners, and

8 *Al-Masry al-Youm* (Cairo), June 8, 2010.

9 *The Egyptian Gazette* (Cairo), Jan. 18, 2011.

10 "Youth Unemployment, Existing Policies and Way Forward: Evidence from Egypt and Tunisia," The World Bank, Washington, D.C., Apr. 2008.

The practicality and wisdom of repatriating antiquities to Egypt is dubious.

reports indicate that looting of shops and homes is widespread.¹¹ The army stands as the last defender of order and balance and may yet step in to restore order, end the neo-liberal economic experiment, and defend its own prerogatives. It has done so for 5,000 years.

As the Muslim Brotherhood emerges from the shadows to participate and perhaps dominate the revolution, the question of its regard for antiquity must also be raised. Egypt's Islamists also have a vision of the past. It is difficult to discern what their attitudes toward antiquities would be except indirectly. For example, Egypt's grand mufti Ali Gomaa issued a *fatwa* in 2006 banning the display of statues in homes and was joined in his condemnation by Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi. The *fatwa* was condemned by Egyptian intellectuals and even by the Muslim Brotherhood.¹²

It is also well to remember that Khalid al-Islambouli cried, "I have killed the pharaoh," after shooting Anwar Sadat on October 6, 1981.¹³ The pharaoh is not a positive Qur'anic image but a tyrant. The Luxor massacre of 1997, where sixty-two tourists were slaughtered, saw the Islamist al-Gama'a al-Islamiya attack the Temple of Hatshepsut. The modern Egyptian and Western relationship with the Egyptian past was the setting for the attack. Tourism was clearly intended to be the victim. How the Muslim Brotherhood, dedicated to Islamizing Egypt, would deal with tourism, museums, and antiquities is unclear. Certainly, in the short term, for the sake of foreign currency and appearances, little will change. But the example of Afghanistan under the Taliban is in the background. The destruction wrought on remains of the Jewish temples

in Jerusalem by the Palestinian Islamic authorities should also be mentioned.

Perhaps most telling, however, is the almost complete erasure of Islamic historical remains from the cities of Mecca and Medina, including structures associated with Muhammad.¹⁴

An Egypt dominated by the military will almost certainly seek to restore both the country's symbols and the practical mechanisms of tourism. Whether the military can ride the crocodile of popular unrest and a population empowered by social media yet lacking meaningful liberal democratic roots remains to be seen. But the religious desire to create a rupture with the past in the name of fighting idolatry is deep.

In all this, the practicality and wisdom of repatriating antiquities to Egypt is dubious. Zahi Hawass in particular has been determined in his pursuit of antiquities that were taken from Egypt over the past centuries. The Rosetta Stone, found by French engineers but taken as British war booty, tops his list. But even objects given by Egypt as gifts have come under his acquisitive eye. Cleopatra's Needle in Central Park was erected in 1881, a gift from the Khedive of Egypt. But 130 years of standing out in the rain does no obelisk good, and Hawass has demanded that it be preserved, or he will take it back. His pursuit of Egyptian objects outside of Egypt has been almost as relentless as his drive to become the face of Egyptian archaeology everywhere.

The pharaoh is gone and so is Hawass.¹⁵ In the meantime, those concerned about Egypt's past can only sit back and watch as a genuinely Egyptian transformation takes place, one in which the relationship of past and present will inevitably be redefined yet along familiar lines.



11 *The Gulf Today* (Dubai), Jan. 30, 2011.

12 *Middle East Online* (London), Apr. 3, 2006.

13 Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), p. 50.

14 "Muslims start petition to stop Saudi destruction of Mecca and 'The House of Mohammed,'" *Militant Islam Monitor*, Sept. 29, 2005.

15 *The New York Times*, Mar. 3, 2011.

All Ahmadinejad's Men

by Ali Alfoneh

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's sacking of foreign minister Manouchehr Mottaki has opened another chapter in the ongoing power struggle between the president and the supreme leader, Ali Khamene'i. Interpersonal as it may seem, this confrontation symbolizes the struggle between the Islamic Republic's old elites and Ahmadinejad's burgeoning patronage network, which challenges their authority. How has the president managed to build such a formidable power base? Who are the key members of his coterie, and will they enable their benefactor to outsmart the supreme leader to become Iran's effective ruler?

WAS KHAMENE'I THE REAL TARGET?

On December 13, 2010, while the foreign minister was on an official visit to Senegal, Ahmadinejad replaced Mottaki with Ali-Akbar Salehi, former Iran Atomic Energy Organization director.¹ Following the public outrage about dismissing a cabinet minister on a diplomatic mission, "an informed source" claimed that the government was unaware that Mottaki was abroad.² But upon release of the news that Ahmadinejad himself had ordered Mottaki to deliver a personal message to the Senegalese president,³ first vice president Mohammed-Reza Rahimi and senior assistant Mojtaba Samareh Hashemi said that Mottaki had been informed of the dismissal prior to the trip—a claim which the foreign minister denied.⁴

A model career diplomat, Mottaki was never a key player in the Islamic Republic regime and

owed his cabinet membership to Khamene'i. This, along with newly revealed information about the circumstances of his sacking, provides insights into Ahmadinejad's real target: the supreme leader.

According to *Ayandeh News*, approximately a week prior to Mottaki's dismissal, Ahmadinejad had privately complained to Khamene'i of "lack of coordination between [government] agencies and [the presidency's] restricted authority" and had voiced his resolve to replace the foreign minister. No decision was made, and Ahmadinejad did not raise the issue on his next meeting with Khamene'i on December 6, 2010. However, upon leaving the supreme leader's office, the president told one of Khamene'i's secretaries that "he had forgotten to raise the issue of Mottaki's dismissal with Ayatollah Khamene'i and asked him to inform him [Khamene'i] about it."⁵

1 Tabnak News Agency (Tehran), Dec. 13, 2010.

2 *Khabar Online* (Tehran), Dec. 19, 2010.

3 *Farda News* (Tehran), Jan. 1, 2011.

4 *Ibid.*, Dec. 19, 2010.

5 *Ayandeh News* (Tehran), Jan. 2, 2011.

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Inclusion in Ahmadinejad's network is the best career move for the Islamic Republic's elites.

Khamene'i has hitherto failed to comment on Mottaki's dismissal in public but gave the green light to various foes, such as parliamentarians and the press, to criticize Ahmadinejad.⁶ He also opened another front against the president as the judiciary announced it was investigating corruption charges against Vice President Rahimi.⁷ But as Ahmadinejad ignored the public outrage, Khamene'i took a defensive position. According to *Ayandeh News*, in a conversation "with one of the grandees," Khamene'i stressed that "Mottaki's dismissal had not been coordinated with him and that his approval had not been sought concerning appointment of the acting foreign minister [Ali-Akbar Salehi]."⁸

THE PRESIDENT'S PERMANENT PURGE

The sacking of Mottaki continues a relentless purge begun during Ahmadinejad's first term in office. Upon entering the presidential palace in 2005, he faced the same challenge encountered by all his predecessors: Though the president has the prerogative of appointing cabinet ministers, more often than not, these appointments are imposed on him by the regime's ruling elites.

Ahmadinejad, however, has moved away from the political traditions and elites of the past and has systematically purged those cabinet ministers forced on him by other groups, beginning with the roads and transportation minister, Mohammed Rahmati,⁹ whom he had inherited from his predecessor, President Mohammed Khatami. From the camp of Ayatollah Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, Ahmadinejad dismissed economy and finance

minister, Davoud Danesh-Ja'fari,¹⁰ and oil minister, Mohammed-Kazem Vaziri Hamaneh.¹¹ He even dismissed cabinet ministers

imposed on him by Khamene'i, including interior minister, Hojjat al-Eslam Mostafa Pour-Mohammedi,¹² and intelligence minister, Hojjat al-Eslam Gholam-Hossein Mohseni Ezhehi.¹³ Other ministers dismissed by Ahmadinejad were cooperatives minister, Mohammed Nazemi Ardakani;¹⁴ education minister, Mahmoud Farshidi;¹⁵ industry and mines minister, Ali-Reza Tahmasbi;¹⁶ and welfare and social security ministers, Mohammed Nazemi Ardakani¹⁷ and Parviz Kazemi.¹⁸ Mottaki's dismissal—the first purge in Ahmadinejad's second tenure—eliminates any pro-Khamene'i and pro-Ali Larijani representatives in the cabinet since the foreign minister was active in Larijani's 2005 presidential bid.¹⁹

AHMADINEJAD'S NETWORK

Ahmadinejad's history of purging, as well as his sacking of Mottaki, have demonstrated that inclusion in the president's network, rather than subservience to Khamene'i, who is either unwilling or incapable of defending his own favorites, is the best career move for the Islamic Republic's elites. Members of what Iranians call the "Party of the Wind (Hezb-e Bad)," ranging from American University professor Hamid Mowlana,²⁰ to Tehran University professor

6 *Parsineh* (Tehran), Dec. 13, 2010; Mehr News Agency (Tehran), Dec. 13, 2010; *Kayhan* (Tehran), Dec. 14, 2010.

7 *Asr-e Iran* (Tehran), Dec. 20, 2010.

8 *Ayandeh News*, Jan. 2, 2011.

9 Aftab News Agency (Tehran), July 7, 2008.

10 Fars News Agency (Tehran), Apr. 4, 2008.

11 *Now-Andish News* (Tehran), Aug. 19, 2007.

12 *Farda News*, May 17, 2008.

13 Tabnak News Agency, July 26, 2009.

14 Aftab News Agency, Oct. 28, 2006.

15 *Ibid.*, Nov. 23, 2007.

16 Fars News Agency, Aug. 8, 2007.

17 *Hamshahri* (Tehran), Nov. 18, 2006.

18 Aftab News Agency, Sept. 25, 2006.

19 Radio Farda (Prague), Dec. 14, 2010.

20 "President Appoints Professor Mowlana as Advisor," President of the Islamic Republic of Iran website (Tehran), Aug. 19, 2008.

Sadegh Zibakalam,²¹ who recently defected from Rafsanjani's camp with his praise of Ahmadinejad's chief of staff Esfandiar Rahim-Mashaie, are trying to join the president's ranks. This, however, is easier said than done. Bagher Alayi, Ahmadinejad's classmate at Iran University of Science and Technology (IUST) in the 1970s, recalls his colleague's university network:

They did not easily allow anyone to join their team ... They had to be completely convinced that this person thought the same way as themselves and to be convinced of his loyalty before allowing him to join their ranks. They would also make investigations, and even then would be careful.²²

Ahmadinejad has not changed much since his university days. His network is recruited from a closed circuit comprising his fellow IUST alumni, local government and security executives who served in the northwestern parts of Iran in the 1980s, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officers who received civilian academic degrees from IUST in the 1990s, those who served Ahmadinejad during his brief tenure as Tehran mayor (2003-05), along with a few family members, and some high ranking IRGC officers who seem to have a power base independent of Ahmadinejad.

AHMADINEJAD'S MENTOR AND STRATEGIST

To find the roots of Ahmadinejad's circle of trust, one must look into the political dynamics at play at Iran University of Science and Technology on the eve of the 1979 revolution. It was there that the future president's road to radical politics began and where he forged the most important friendship of his life with Samareh Hashemi, his fellow IUST student, religious mentor, and political strategist. Unlike Ahmadinejad,



The sacking of Iran's foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, on December 13, 2010, was a clear snub to Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamene'i, and opened another chapter in the ongoing power struggle between him and President Ahmadinejad.

who hails from an unprivileged family of immigrants to Tehran, Hashemi belongs to the religious upper-middle class in Kerman province, is the nephew of Islamist theoretician and prime minister, the late Mohammed-Javad Bahonar, and is also the uncle of current parliamentarian Mohammedreza Bahonar. In the immediate aftermath of the revolution, Hashemi and Ahmadinejad headed a radical Islamist student faction at IUST,²³ following the line of "the late [Ayatollah Ali] Ghoddousi, representative of the leader's deputy [Grand Ayatollah Hussein-Ali Montazeri²⁴] at the IUST," unlike the other faction which followed the "representative of the leader at the university."²⁵

Hashemi and Ahmadinejad's group suffered a major setback at the November 1979 seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran. Inspired by the late

²¹ *Mahramaneh News* (Tehran), Jan. 19, 2011.

²² *Shahrvand-e Emrouz* (Tehran), Nov. 13, 2007.

²³ *Ebtekar* (Tehran) Apr. 16, 2008.

²⁴ See, "An Ayatollah Condemns an Unjust Ruler," *Middle East Quarterly*, Spring 2010, pp. 73-6.

²⁵ *Shahrvand-e Emrouz*, Nov. 13, 2007.

The Revolutionary Guards’ participation in Iran’s economic life is a price Ahmadinejad has had to pay to remain in office.

Ayatollah Mohammed Beheshti, the Islamic Republican Party cofounder, their faction had opposed the takeover. Beheshti himself had held secret negotiations with U.S. diplomats a week before the seizure and was not interested in the release of the documents,²⁶ instead advocating the takeover of the Soviet embassy. But the seizure of the U.S. embassy and the taking of U.S. diplomats as hostages proved a tremendous success for the perpetrators. Envious of the prestige of the leftist hostage takers, Hashemi and Ahmadinejad readily aligned themselves with the rightist revolutionary faction, especially the Islamic Republican Party. They established the Office of the Consolidation of Unity Student Organization and together with the late party firebrand, Hassan Ayat, set in motion what became known as the Cultural Revolution,²⁷ namely, the closure of universities in Iran for over a year, the purge of Iranian universities of undesirable academics and students—including Marxists—and the rewriting of academic materials according to the Islamic Republic’s ideological and political doctrines.²⁸

BUILDING THE RINGS OF POWER

The Cultural Revolution did not prove the astounding success Ahmadinejad and Hashemi had hoped for, and its management was soon handed over to the Supreme Council for the Cultural Revolution. The two students abandoned university life in pursuit of further revolutionary adventures in the shadow of the Iraqi invasion of Iran in 1980, but they allegedly swore to their leftist opponents, “We will return to con-

quer the country!”²⁹

The Northwestern Ring. The path to conquest went through executive and security positions in the northwestern parts

of Iran, which at the time was in a state of civil war—either because of ethnic conflict over Kurdistan or political upheavals as a result of Grand Ayatollah Mohammed-Kazem Shariatmadari’s rivalry with Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini—which challenged central government authority. Ahmadinejad himself served as governor of Makou and Khoy and advised the governor generals of Kordestan Ardebil.³⁰ His colleagues from this era, known as the “Ardebil ring” (perhaps better called the northwestern ring), are heavily represented in Ahmadinejad’s second cabinet. These include Hashemi, who served as West Azerbaijan governor general and Kordestan’s political deputy, and who is today a senior assistant to Ahmadinejad;³¹ Esfandiari Rahim-Mashaei, Ahmadinejad’s chief of staff, who established the IRGC intelligence unit in Kurdistan and was promoted to the local security council of the West Azerbaijan province;³² first vice president Rahimi, who served as Kordestan governor general;³³ housing and urban development minister, Ali Nikzad, who was Ardebil governor general;³⁴ welfare minister and former commander of the Revolutionary Guards, Sadegh Mahsouli, who served as West Azerbaijan deputy governor in the early 1980s,³⁵ and Martyr Foundation director, Masoud Zaribafan, who is a relative of Ahmadinejad’s and served as Mahabad governor and also on the Tehran Islamic City Council when Ahmadinejad was mayor.³⁶

29 *Shahrvand-e Emrouz*, Nov. 13, 2007.

30 “Zendeginameh,” Presidency of the Islamic Republic of Iran website (Tehran), accessed Jan. 3, 2011.

31 *Hamshahri*, Apr. 14, 2009.

32 “Mashaei Yek Moemen Va Yek Modir-e Velayat-Madar Ast,” *Masha News* (Tehran), accessed Jan. 3, 2011.

33 *Mardomsalari* (Tehran), Apr. 22, 2008.

34 *Fars News Agency*, Aug. 21, 2009.

35 *Jahan News Agency* (Tehran), Nov. 8, 2009.

26 Tabnak News Agency, Apr. 23, 2008.

27 *Shahrvand-e Emrouz*, Nov. 13, 2007.

28 “Negahi Be Tarikheh-ye Showra-ye Ali-ye Enghelab-e Farhangi,” Secretariat of Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution website (Tehran), accessed Jan. 3, 2011.

The Science and Technology Ring. Following the end of the Iran-Iraq war, many former Revolutionary Guards officers pursued academic studies to prepare themselves for public office. So did Ahmadinejad and Samareh Hashemi who returned to the university. Back at IUST, they kept the university's doors wide open to friends they had made in the Guards and security services in the northwestern parts during the war. In the 1990s, the IUST developed into a veritable PhD factory for the Revolutionary Guards, which explains the over-representation of IUST and IUST/IRGC alumni in Ahmadinejad's cabinet. The list includes commerce minister,

Mehdi Ghazanfari;³⁷ industry minister, Aliakbar Mehrabian, who is also Ahmadinejad's nephew;³⁸ labor and social affairs minister, Abdel Reza Sheikholeslami;³⁹ and roads and transportation minister, Hamid Behbahani.⁴⁰

The Tehran Municipality Ring. Ahmadinejad's tenure as mayor of Tehran proved as important to his network as his university days and executive posts in northwestern Iran.⁴¹ Prominent Tehran municipality personalities of his coterie include recently sacked National Youth Organization director, Mehrdad Bazrpash;⁴² science and technology deputy, Nasrin Soltankhah;⁴³ and industry minister,



Samareh Hashemi (right), presidential "senior advisor" and deputy interior minister for political affairs, has been a close friend and collaborator of Ahmadinejad (left) since university days and played a key role in his ascendancy.

Aliakbar Mehrabian.⁴⁴ Parallel with the rise of Rahim-Mashaei came a meteoric rise by former Mashaei subordinates at the Tehran municipality during Ahmadinejad's tenure as mayor. Hamid Baghayi, Iranian cultural heritage handicrafts and tourism organization director, is the most prominent among Mashaei's protégés.⁴⁵

MEN OF THE IRGC

Apart from those guardsmen who are somehow related to Ahmadinejad, there are also a number of IRGC officers who do not seem to owe their appointments to the president's benevolence and may well be the choice of the Revolutionary Guards. The list includes former IRGC Quds Force members, cabinet secretary, Majid Doustali,⁴⁶ and defense and armed forces logistics minister, Ahmad Vahidi.⁴⁷ Apart

36 Alef News Agency (Tehran), Mar. 4, 2007.

37 Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA, Tehran), Dec. 16, 2009.

38 Ham-Mihan News Agency (Tehran), May 7, Aug. 23, 2009.

39 Jame'-ye Eslami-ye Karegaran-e Esfahan (Isfahan), Aug. 25, 2009.

40 *Hamshahri*, July 29, 2008.

41 For a survey of Ahmadinejad's tenure as Tehran mayor, see Frederic Tellier, "The Iranian Moment," *Policy Focus*, no. 52, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington, D.C., Feb. 2006.

42 Ham-Mihan News Agency, May 10, 2009.

43 Fars News Agency, Sept. 21, 2009.

44 Ham-Mihan News Agency, Aug. 23, 2009.

45 "Baghayi: Beravid Khaneh-ye Mashaei Ra Bebinid." *Mahramaneh News*, Jan. 11, 2011.

46 "Tabarshenasi-ye Koudetachian." *Enghelab-e Eslami Dar Tab'id* (Paris), accessed Dec. 8, 2009.

47 Tabnak News Agency, Sept. 1, 2009.

The Revolutionary Guards' power will only grow as the civilian politicians continue their war of attrition.

from Hashemi, Mehrabian, Mahsouli, and Sheikh al-Eslami mentioned above, other former IRGC officers in Ahmadinejad's second cabinet include communications and information technology minister, Reza Taghipour Anvari;⁴⁸ cooperatives minister, Mohammed Abbasi;⁴⁹ culture and Islamic guidance minister, Mohammed Hosseini;⁵⁰ education minister, Hamidreza Hajibabayi;⁵¹ energy minister, Majid Namjou;⁵² interior minister, Mohammed-Mostafa Najjar;⁵³ oil minister, Masoud Mirkazemi;⁵⁴ and science and higher education minister, Kamran Daneshjou.⁵⁵

The strong cabinet presence of former IRGC officers who have a shorter acquaintance with Ahmadinejad, and who neither belong to the northwestern ring nor owe their civilian academic degrees to Ahmadinejad and Hashemi, has important implications. It suggests that Ahmadinejad has had to reciprocate the IRGC's contribution to his reelection. Increased IRGC participation in the country's economic life and its seizure of publicly-owned economic enterprises—such as Iran Telecommunications in

the largest trade in the history of the Tehran Stock Exchange⁵⁶—is another price Ahmadinejad has had to pay to remain in office.

CONCLUSION

Ahmadinejad's sacking of Mottaki is the latest example of his systematic purge of political rivals and their replacement with his own protégés, so as to make the cabinet cohesive and relatively easy to control. At the same time, this patronage network excludes members of powerful elites who have ruled Iran since 1979, and who will consequently feel free to criticize the president since they are not involved in the decision-making process.

No less importantly, the move constitutes yet another public snub to Khamene'i, who seems unwilling and unable to protect his own protégés, thus opening the door to his further weakening. Is Khamene'i ready for a showdown with Ahmadinejad, or will he continue to watch his prestige crumble amidst his rival's provocations? Regardless of the outcome of the power struggle between the two, a third party could be the ultimate victor: the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, whose power will only grow as the civilian politicians continue their war of attrition.



48 "Mo'arrefi-ye Mohandes Reza Taghipour Be 'Onvan-e Vazire Ertebatat Be Majles," Ministry of Information Technology and Communication website (Tehran), Aug. 21, 2009.

49 *Hamshahri*, Mar. 25, 2007.

50 *Jam-e Jam* (Tehran) Aug. 29, 2009.

51 "Hamidreza Hajibabayi Kist?" Kanoun-e Farhangian-e Esfahan website (Isfahan), Nov. 13, 2009.

52 Tabnak News Agency, Nov. 8, 2009.

53 *Hamshahri*, Mar. 25, 2008.

54 *Ibid.*, Apr. 4, 2007.

55 Fars News Agency, Aug. 21, 2009.

56 Ali Alfoneh, "The Revolutionary Guards' Looting of Iran's Economy," *Middle East Outlook*, American Enterprise Institute, Washington, D.C., June 2010.

Lebanon's Islamist Stronghold

by Hilal Khashan

Syrian president Bashar al-Assad has apparently retained the hope of a military return to Lebanon from where he summarily withdrew in 2005 following the Rafiq Hariri assassination. In a 2008 interview with a Lebanese newspaper, he accused the northern city of Tripoli of becoming a base for Islamists who posed a direct threat to Syria's security.¹ More recently, Rifat Eid, head of Tripoli's Alawite Arab Democratic Party, described the city as the "Lebanese Kandahar."²

These charges could not be further from the truth. Far from posing a threat to its immediate neighborhood, let alone to Syrian security, Tripoli's hopelessly fragmented Salafi movement is primarily non-combative, its more militant groups having long been defeated and pacified. Its devout and conservative nature notwithstanding, this movement is very much a cathartic reaction to the city's prolonged political marginalization and economic deprivation. To exaggerate the threat of Tripoli's Salafis is tantamount to fattening the sheep before the slaughter.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

From its founding by the Phoenician seafarers in the eighth century BCE to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, Tripoli maintained its status as one of the foremost cities in the eastern Mediterranean. During the Arab-Islamic era, its port was second only to Alexandria's, serving at different periods as the economic life-line of Aleppo, Damascus, and Baghdad.

This privileged status came to an abrupt

end in the wake of World War I when Tripoli's inclusion in Lebanon—against the will of its Muslim population, which would rather have been included in Syria—instantly marginalized the city. In its place, Beirut rose to prominence as the capital of the new political entity and the major site of its economy. Likewise, for some Maronite nationalists, Tripoli's inclusion in Lebanon threatened the slight Christian majority reported by the 1932 population census. The leader of the National Bloc, Emile Edde, for example, demanded the incorporation of Tripoli and its environs into Syria in order to preserve Maronite political predominance.³

For their part, the French, who created mod-

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1 *Al-Bayraq* (Beirut), Sept. 30, 2008.

2 *Asharq al-Awsat* (London), Oct. 7, 2010.

3 Meir Zamir, *Lebanon's Quest: The Road to Statehood 1926-1939* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1997), p. 107.

**Between 1983 and 1985,
Sheikh Said Shaaban
transformed the city into
an Islamic emirate.**

ern Lebanon as an essentially Christian state, had little interest in maintaining the leading political, social, and commercial standing of predominantly Sunni Tripoli, and the city's economic suppression during the French mandate (1920-43) became a tacit policy of the Lebanese state after independence. Still, Tripoli managed to reemerge as a provincial hub, unencumbered by the stress of the country's Beirut-based divisive confessional politics, serving the economic, educational, medical, and commercial needs of northern Lebanon and northwestern Syria. This, however, was not due to government policy but rather to private investments by northern Lebanese and the influx of Syrian capital after the introduction of nationalization measures in that country.

**FROM RELIGIOUS AND
CULTURAL TOLERANCE
TO JIHADISM**

Tripoli is often referred to as the seat of Lebanon's multifaceted Salafi trend, whose genesis coincides with the withdrawal of the last French mandate troops from the country in 1946. Home to the first Salafi reformer Rashid Rida (1865-1935), this profoundly conservative and devout city remained a rare oasis of religious and cultural diversity until the mid-1970s. This was a place where, despite infrequent social, interfaith interaction, Christian missionary schools proliferated and central roads and boulevards bore decidedly Christian names such as Nuns Street, Churches Street, Archbishop Street, and Saint Elias Street.⁴ In Tripoli, Islamic religiosity tolerated the existence of Lebanon's only gambling club (known as Cheval Blanc Casino) long before the opening of Casino du Liban in 1959. Taverns and cabarets stood alongside mosques and religious institutes without a hitch.

4 *Ash-Shiraa* (Beirut), Nov. 7, 2010.

The advent of religious organizations on a considerable scale during the 1950s and 1960s did not radicalize Tripoli or re-

duce its toleration of religious and cultural diversity. Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood launched its activities in the city in 1956 under the name of Ibadurrahman (Servants of God). In 1964, Fathi Yakan transformed the group into al-Jama'a al-Islamiya (Islamic Group), which operated as a non-dissident and charitable movement. However, the repercussions of the 1967 Six-Day War with Israel altered the city's collective psyche and swayed it toward Islamism. This coincided with the militarization of the Lebanese Maronites, who were heartened by Israel's stunning victory as they sought to stem the growing tide of armed Palestinian groups. Lebanon was now on the fast track to civil war.

**CIVIL WAR AND
RELIGIOUS MOBILIZATION**

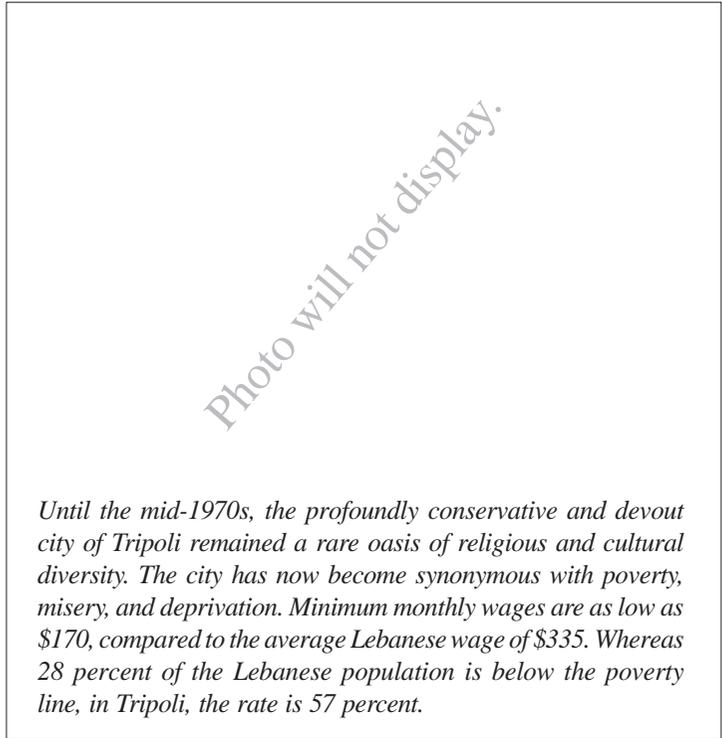
Tripoli had its share of the civil war, which raged in Lebanon from 1975 to 1989. Initial setbacks at the hands of the Syrian-supported Maronite Mirada militia of then-president Suleiman Franjiyye and the inability of Tripoli's small pan-Arab and leftist parties successfully to confront them on the battlefield, encouraged the rise of jihadist movements. Sheikh Salim ash-Shahhal, who in 1947 had founded the country's first Salafi movement al-Jama'a Muslimun (literally meaning "the group is Muslim"), transformed it into a modest military force in 1976 under the name of Nuwwat al-Jaysh al-Islami (Nucleus of the Islamic Army). Other small groups such as al-Muqawama ash-Shaabiya (Popular Resistance), Harakat Lubnan al-Arabi (Movement for Arab Lebanon) and Jundullah (Warriors of God) splintered from al-Jama'a al-Islamiya and joined Tripoli's burgeoning Harakat at-Tawhid al-Islami (Islamic Unity Movement) under the leadership of Sheikh Said Shaaban, who eventually transformed the city into an Islamic emirate between 1983 and 1985.⁵

Outward manifestations of modernity disappeared with the imposition of a total ban on the sale of alcoholic beverages as well as the shuttering of movie theaters, European-style roadside cafes, and tennis and golf courts.

Shaaban took advantage of the rising pan-Islamist sentiment among Tripoli's religious and conservative population. He received a major boost from the success of the Islamic revolution in Iran, with which he identified, and from whose financial largesse he benefitted. He also relied heavily on the financial and military support of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, which maintained a strong military presence in Tripoli, especially in nearby Nahr al-Barid and al-Baddawi Palestinian refugee camps. During

Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, Yakan created two guerrilla movements to combat the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF): al-Mujahideen (The Jihadists) in Tripoli and al-Fajr (Dawn) in Sidon.

The Israeli eviction of the Palestine Liberation Organization from southern Lebanon and Beirut in 1982 and the Syrian expulsion of Fatah guerrillas from Tripoli in 1983 were followed in 1985 by a withering assault by Syrian allies against at-Tawhid forces, which ended in destroying the movement's military machine. The anti-at-Tawhid coalition included the Baath Party, the Communist Party, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, and the Alawite Arab Democratic Party. Syrian intelligence operatives and Lebanese Alawites raided at-Tawhid's stronghold in Bab at-Tibbane and massacred some six hundred Sunnis.⁶ This singular incident caused an



Until the mid-1970s, the profoundly conservative and devout city of Tripoli remained a rare oasis of religious and cultural diversity. The city has now become synonymous with poverty, misery, and deprivation. Minimum monthly wages are as low as \$170, compared to the average Lebanese wage of \$335. Whereas 28 percent of the Lebanese population is below the poverty line, in Tripoli, the rate is 57 percent.

enduring schism between Tripoli and the Syrian regime and served as an impetus for the subsequent emergence of extremely radical jihadist groups, especially Usbat an-Nur (Partisans of the Divine Light) of Sheikh Hisham ash-Sharidi, assassinated by Fatah operatives in 1991.⁷ The more lethal Islamist Abdulkarim as-Saadi took over the group and reintroduced it as Usbat al-Ansar (The Partisans League).

SAUDI VS. HEZBOLLAH RADICALIZING

Embittered by the 1985 events, Tripoli's Salafi movement gathered momentum with the end of the civil war, which prompted many northern Lebanese clerics to return from Saudi Arabia where they had been schooled in radical Wahhabi-type religious training. In 1995, these Islamists killed Nizar Halabi, head of the pro-

⁵ *Asharq al-Awsat*, May 25, 2007.

⁶ *Al-Mustaqbal* (Beirut), Dec. 5, 2007.

⁷ *Asharq al-Awsat*, May 25, 2007.



The destruction of the Islamist group, Fatah al-Islam, by the Lebanese army in the Nahr al-Barid Palestinian refugee camp in May to September 2007 delivered a crippling blow to the radical Salafī movement in the Tripoli area.

Syrian and Sufi-inspired Jam'iyat al-Mashari al-Khayriya al-Islamiya (Association of Islamic Charitable Projects, known as the Ahabash), triggering a harsh government response. Many Islamists fled to the Dinniye Mountain east of Tripoli and regrouped into a 300-man strong radical movement.⁸ Their excommunicatory ideology toward moderate Muslims and rejection of non-Muslims in line with the religious edicts of Ibn Taymiyah, the famously radical medieval scholar, outraged the government and invited its wrath. In January 2000, the Lebanese army routed the group, killed its leader Bassam al-Kanj, and apprehended dozens of combatants. Others sought refuge in Ein al-Hilwa Palestinian refugee camp near Sidon.⁹

The Lebanese authorities pardoned jailed Salafis shortly after the assassination of former prime minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005. In fact, Saad Hariri, who succeeded his slain father as leader of the Future Trend movement, opened up to radical Sunni movements with the prodding of Riyadh, which wanted to ensure that Sunnis

were capable of standing up to the Iranian-backed Shiite Hezbollah.¹⁰ Salafi movements sprang up in Tripoli's poor neighborhoods such as Bab at-Tibbane, as-Suwayqa, Abi Samra, and at-Tal. The sight of heavily bearded, armed young men and turbaned Salafis striding in alleys made the once bustling city austere and unwelcoming.¹¹

The Hariri assassination amounted to a coup that blunted the Saudis' thrust into Lebanon and reaffirmed the preeminence of the Syrian-Hezbollah entente. Riyadh's response came in the form of arming Tripoli's Salafis so as to allow them to stand up to

Hezbollah. As noted by the Lebanese daily *al-Akhbar*, "the regional underpinnings of Tripoli's surging jihadist Salafists are directly linked to the conflict between Damascus and Riyadh over controlling Lebanon." Indeed, while being bankrolled by Qatar, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates, "every single activity by any Salafi movement is doomed to failure if it doesn't receive Saudi support."¹² Saudi aid is presently funneled through the ministry of religious endowments and a number of private associations whose activities are closely monitored by the government.¹³ Philanthropic associations promoting jihad, such as al-Haramain, have been discontinued after the 9/11 attacks.

The ease with which Hezbollah managed to defeat Hariri's al-Mustaqbal militia in Beirut in 2008 convinced the Saudi leadership that they could not rely on northern Lebanese Salafis, who formed the backbone of the prime

8 *Now Lebanon* (Beirut), accessed Feb. 7, 2011.

9 *Al-Markazia* (Beirut), accessed Dec. 2, 2010.

10 *Al-Akhbar* (Beirut), June 8, 2010.

11 Author interview with Rashid Jamali, former head of the Tripoli municipality, Tripoli, Dec. 18, 2010.

12 *Al-Akhbar*, Sept. 5, Oct. 21, 2010.

13 King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives, Riyadh, accessed Feb. 5, 2011.

The Hariri assassination blunted the Saudis' thrust into Lebanon and reaffirmed the preeminence of the Syrian-Hezbollah entente.

minister's militia, to serve as a countervailing military force to Hezbollah.¹⁴ They have thus curtailed most of their military assistance and contented themselves with

promoting as-Salafiya al-Ilmiya, or official Salafi, that eschews involvement in politics. So did the other Gulf Cooperation Council states, which support Tripoli's as-Salafiya al-Irja'iya,¹⁵ the Salafi preaching group that separates belief and action and limits itself to the former.

The destruction of Fatah al-Islam by the Lebanese army in the Nahr al-Barid Palestinian refugee camp in May to September 2007 delivered a crippling blow to as-Salafiya al-Jihadiya (Jihadist Salafi), whose remnants had gone underground into sleeper cells. Having made its debut in the refugee camp in 2006, Fatah al-Islam doubled its initial strength of 150 fighters within less than a year as the army intelligence's persecution of young, northern Lebanese Sunnis, who asked for weapons to counter the Shiite power surge, drove them into the arms of the newly-established militant group. The growth, however, of this millennial movement was preventable. Fatah al-Islam's rise attests to the clumsiness of Lebanese army intelligence and the heavy army and civilian toll during the Nahr al-Barid fighting.

Lebanese Salafis lay the blame on Hezbollah for refusing to involve them in confronting the IDF and its South Lebanon Army surrogate, accusing Hezbollah of pretentiously labeling itself "al-Muqawama al-Islamiya" (Islamic Resistance).¹⁶ In response to the denial of their access to the anti-Israel military campaign, the Salafis directed their energies against the national government.

In support of Hezbollah during the 2006

summer war against Israel, Yakan, the leader of the Tripoli-based Islamic Group, established the Islamic Action Front that included five pro-Syrian

Sunni Islamic groups: the two factions of Tripoli's at-Tawhid movement of Hashem Minqara and Bilal Shaaban, al-Fajr forces of Abdullah at-Tiryaqi, Abdel Nasser Jabri's Islamic group in Beirut, and Zuhair Jaid in the Shuf Mountains. The front disintegrated shortly after Yakan's death when cofounder Hashem Minqara deemed it no longer viable because some of its leaders were simply using it for political and financial gain.¹⁷

When the fighting raged in Tripoli in May 2008 between Sunnis and Alawites, the founder of the Salafi movement, Dai al-Islam ash-Shahhal, exhorted "all committed Lebanese Muslim young men to prepare psychologically and logistically to embark upon a new period [of armed resistance]." He made it clear that he was not looking for volunteers from abroad but "direly needed financial assistance."¹⁸ Later, as the final showdown loomed large in connection with the Hariri assassination indictments, Shahhal warned Hezbollah against "inciting Sunni fratricide in order to render the sect politically irrelevant."¹⁹ Yet for all his exertions, he failed to persuade the Saudis to resume their financial support for rebuilding the Salafis' military machine.

POVERTY-STRICKEN SALAFIS

Tripoli has no place on the Lebanese economic, developmental, and tourist map as its name "has become synonymous with poverty, misery, and deprivation."²⁰ With free medical

14 *Al-Akhbar*, Oct. 21, 2010.

15 Hana Ulayan, "At-Tayyarat al-Wahabiyya fish Shamal: bayna an-Nahj ad-Dini wal Maghnatis as-Sisyasi," *Harakat at-Tawhid al-Islami-Majlis al-Qiyada* website, Dec. 16, 2010.

16 In March 1978, Israel invaded southern Lebanon, established a narrow security zone, and created the Southern Lebanese Army (SLA). It dismantled the SLA and unilaterally withdrew from the security zone in May 2000.

17 *Al-Akhbar*, Dec. 1, 2009.

18 *Asharq al-Awsat*, May 13, 2008.

19 *As-Safir* (Beirut), Jan. 2, 2010.

20 Talal Khuja, "Tarablus bayna al-Qal'a al-Mughlaqa wa-l-Madina al-Maftuha," *Middle East Transparent* website, Oct. 27, 2010.

**Militancy is not entrenched
as in Islamist societies like
Yemen or Somalia.**

services virtually nonexistent, and minimum monthly wages often as low as \$170, compared to the average Lebanese wage of \$335; with a youth unemployment rate of 45 percent and a truancy rate that exceeds 20 percent, it is not difficult to understand why Tripoli is such an ideal breeding ground for Salafis. Whereas 28 percent of the Lebanese population is below the poverty line, in Tripoli it is 57 percent.²¹ Annual per capita expenditure in Lebanon averages \$2,700, but in Tripoli it is \$1,700—compared to \$4,300 in Beirut. With 9,700 persons per square kilometer, it is overcrowded.²²

Tripoli's economic decline dates back to the 1970s when the city suffered a number of severe blows: Iraq's construction of the Basra offshore oil terminal and the Kirkuk pipeline terminal in Turkey's Ceyhan rendered Tripoli's terminal useless. The city's decaying oil refinery, which previously provided about 40 percent of Lebanon's annual refined oil needs, was permanently shut down in 1993. Its full rehabilitation at an estimated cost of \$300 million can save the country up to \$ 1.2 billion from the importation of refined oil derivatives.²³ Nevertheless, there is a long-standing Lebanese policy against government investment in the city. In addition, Beirut receives 83 percent of Lebanon's total banking credit compared to Tripoli's 2 percent.²⁴

Since 1975, Tripoli has lost 80 percent of its economy. Forty percent was lost in 1989 alone as a result of the Assad government's decision to allow the Syrian private sector to import from the international market. While the civil war cut off Tripoli from its traditional northern Lebanese, Christian market, the Syrians severed all economic and social ties between the city and the cities of Homs, Hama, and Tartus. The scarcity of employment opportuni-

ties has negatively shaped the worldview of many of Tripoli's young men and motivated them to seek salvation in religious extremism.

GLIMMER OF HOPE

Representatives from six moderate, northern Lebanese Salafi movements disapproved of Fatah al-Islam's militancy that culminated in the May 2007 all-out confrontation with the Lebanese army. The joint statement they issued underlined that Shari'a (Islamic law) stresses, among other things, the preservation of the pillars of dignified human living that include religion, family honor, personal safety, and pecuniary assets. The unequivocal statement called for an immediate end to the fighting, eviction of the radicals from the Nahr al-Barid refugee camp, and promotion of allegiance to state authority.²⁵ Combating jihadists remind many Tripoli residents, including benign Salafis, of the three dark years of terror when at-Tawhid reigned supreme in the city. Their religiosity notwithstanding, most Tripoli residents are averse to the imposition of Shari'a rule in the city.²⁶

People in Tripoli's depressed areas have little faith in the government and exhibit unmistakable disenchantment with the willingness of the Lebanese political system to redeem them.²⁷ The city may be a bastion of the Salafi movement, but its roots are essentially non-belligerent. Militancy is not entrenched as in some Shiite neighborhoods in Lebanon or in Islamist societies like Yemen or Somalia. Deconstructing the phenomenon of Tripoli's Islamic radicalism is clearly a function of integrating it economically and culturally in the Lebanese political system. It is quite remarkable that the city has not turned far worse after more than ninety years of deliberate marginalization.



21 *Ash-Shiraa*, Nov. 1, 2010.

22 Author interview with Jamali.

23 *Al-Liwaa* (Beirut), Jan. 10, 2011.

24 Makram Sader, "Tatawur al-Qita al-Masrifi 1990-2010," Association of Banks in Lebanon, Beirut, Dec. 2010.

25 *Now Lebanon*, May 22, 2007.

26 Lebanese prime minister Najib Mikati's website, accessed Feb. 7, 2011.

27 Author interview with Jamali.

Brief Reviews

The Arab Public Sphere in Israel: Media Space and Cultural Resistance. By Amal Jamal. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009. 182 pp. \$24.95, paper.

The problems with this book begin with the title as the book is not at all about “the Arab public sphere.” It is a superficial review of the differences between the Hebrew and Arabic media operating in Israel, one overflowing with bias and anti-Israeli bile.

Jamal, an Israeli Druze from the Galilee area, is one of a minority of Druze intellectuals who identify themselves as Palestinian Arabs. Thus his aim throughout is to twist things to conform to his conspiracist take on Israeli society, in which Tel Aviv plots to manipulate the minds of its Arab citizens and subjugate them by means of media control.

Relying on two unscientific surveys, Jamal essentially shows that Arabs read and listen to the Hebrew media less than do Jews, who in turn listen to and follow the Arabic media less than do Arabs. This conclusion is not only trivial but self-evident. But Jamal is not content with printing a few tables and statistics taken from surveys.

His agenda is apparent everywhere in the book in his choice of rhetoric:

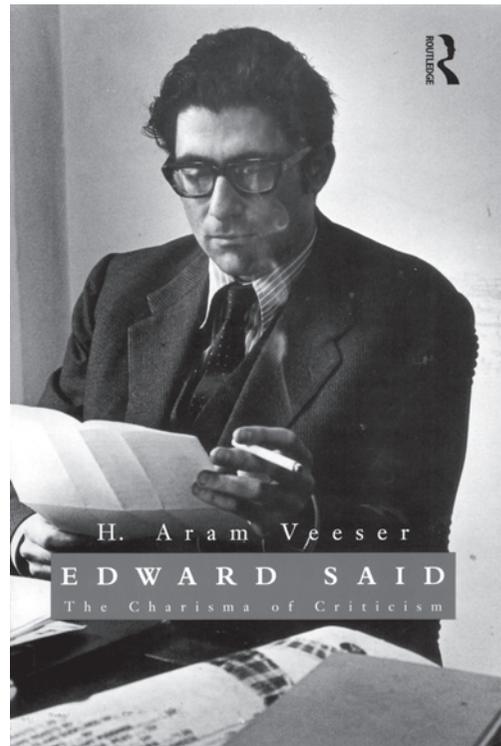
He uses the term “hegemonial” with regularity while Israel has a “ferocious military government” engaged in “cultural imperialism” via its “media policy” against its “Palestinian” minority. Pity the poor reader who does not realize that the Israeli government does not control any of the country’s Arabic media. With no sense of his own self-contradiction, he insists that Jerusalem is obsessed with the control and surveillance of the Arab media, but at the same time, faults it for ignoring Arab opinion and the Arabic media altogether.

The book is most notable for what it attempts to hide: Israel is the only place in the Middle East where Arabs enjoy a free press, so free it is often openly seditious. The Israeli me-

dia, for the most part, are owned by the private sector, which is predominantly leftist. Besides, the explosion of Internet technology and countless Arab and Arabic blogs from inside and outside Israel, make his claims about “control of the media” and “mind control through the media” simply laughable.

Jamal’s book is an ideological assault against Israel disguised as an academic exploration that ill-serves his readers and mocks his academic pretensions.

Steven Plaut
University of Haifa



Edward Said: The Charisma of Criticism. By H. Aram Veesser. New York: Routledge, 2010. 260 pp. \$39.95.

In this hagiography of the late Edward Said, Veesser, of the English department at City Col-

lege of New York, purports to present the man behind the myth, a devotee of Savile Row tailors who, at the same time, allegedly chastised the West and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) with equal gusto.

To his credit, Veesser unmasks several contradictions within the character of his icon, acknowledging, for example, that despite his wish to “preserve a distance” from the PLO, Said eventually supported it. The author sees this somehow as a “political error” in which Said stole “victory from youthful fighters” and, by cooperating with the PLO, mistakenly handed it to “corrupt old men.” Never mind that these “youthful fighters” were financially and morally supported in their butchery of Israeli civilians by the “old men”; Said’s change of heart was a “tragic irony” that came a “decade too late.”

Veesser dilates upon Said’s magnum opus, *Orientalism*, but critical examination is absent. Throughout his life’s work, Said substituted one stereotype for another. Indeed, European influence in the Middle East and North Africa did exist for a few hundred years, but before, during, and, to some degree, after the influence of Europeans began to be felt, it was the Ottoman Empire, another active and aggressive colonial power, which had the greatest influence in the region.

Thus Said’s true legacy is one of defending Islamic imperialism and indulging in politicized rhetoric heavy with accusations and resentment, an appraisal not shared by Veesser. Said’s work was intellectually shallow and several of his assertions about his background are apparently fraudulent.¹ One is never quite sure whether his support for Arab violence was due to tribalism, insecurity about his origins, or to his undoubted capacity for self-pity, an unattractive characteristic not rendered invisible by the cut of a Savile Row suit.

Reut R. Cohen
Van Nuys, Calif.

1 Justus Reid Weiner, “‘My Beautiful Old House’ and Other Fabrications by Edward Said,” *Commentary*, Sept. 1999.

The Goldstone Report: The Legacy of the Landmark UN Investigation of the Gaza Conflict. Edited by Adam Horowitz, Lizzy Ratner, and Philip Weiss. New York: Nation Books, 2011. 480 pp. \$18.95, paper.

Ever since its release in September 2009, the Goldstone “Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict” has been the catalyst for contentious debate over the legitimacy of the Jewish state. With the overwhelming thrust of the report condemning Israel for war crimes and crimes against humanity, it is invoked by the boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel and drives a lawfare campaign against the country’s leaders, using the law and legal systems for strategic political ends. Supporters of Israel from across the political spectrum have criticized the mission for its biased mandate, lack of objectivity, and duplicitous methodology. With the report already thoroughly scrutinized and dissected, is there anything significant to add?

There is, but readers will not find it in this book.

There is nothing, for example, about the challenges to the assumption that the vast majority of Gazan fatalities were civilian. The authors never mention reports indicating that many of those killed in Gaza were young men who fit the age and gender profile of combatants. Indeed, Hamas’s recent revelations confirming many combatants among the fatalities underscore these findings, confirm Israel’s original estimates, and invalidate the Goldstone report’s central thesis that Israel was intentionally targeting civilians.

But the authors, all journalists, find no room for facts that might undermine the underlying assumptions of the report. Instead, they devote the bulk of the book to reprinting large sections of the report, interspersed with excerpts from witness testimonies although this material is readily available in its entirety online. There is no serious attempt to probe the report or analyze its shortcomings. The last quarter of the book consists of eleven selected essays, written by prominent anti-Israel activists or emotional pro-Palestinian advocates, with one ex-

ception. Their arguments are tiresomely familiar: “The real purpose of the 2005 withdrawal of Jewish settlements in Gaza was to consolidate Israel’s continued occupation”; “Israeli forces deliberately targeted civilians and civilian objects”; “None of the Goldstone Mission’s major factual findings have been successfully refuted,” etc. Actually such claims have been widely disputed, but these arguments are not included.

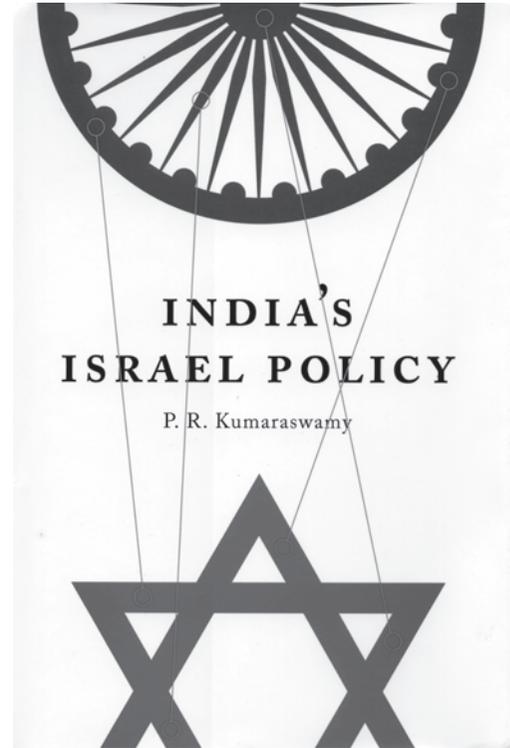
The single negative assessment—a reprint of an article by Moshe Halbertal—contains thoughtful if relatively mild criticism but is immediately followed by an attempt to discredit it. Its inclusion does not succeed in masking the book’s overt, political agenda—to bolster the pro-BDS-delegitimize-Israel position.

Ricki Hollander
CAMERA

India’s Israel Policy. By P.R. Kumaraswamy. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010. 376 pp. \$55.

India’s bilateral, under-explored relationship with Israel is wrapped in myths that Kumaraswamy, associate professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, debunks in his authoritative study. He also answers a number of questions: Why did India wait for far-reaching international changes before modifying its policy of non-recognition toward Israel? Is there a pattern in India’s new-found relationship with Israel? How relevant has the role played by the domestic Muslim population been in shaping India’s Israel policy?

Kumaraswamy covers the period 1920-92, dividing it into four phases: (1) India’s nationalist struggle and an unfavorable disposition toward Jewish political aspirations in Palestine; (2) the formation of the state of Israel in May 1948 and Prime Minister Nehru’s assurances in March 1952 of normalized relations with Israel; (3) the decision in 1952 to defer recognition of Israel while Delhi’s attitude toward Jerusalem hardened; (4) Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao’s reversal of the traditional policy and establishment of full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992.



Kumaraswamy demonstrates the relationship’s complexities with its public and private realms frequently diverging. New Delhi’s non-recognition of Israel in 1949 did not prevent it from seeking agricultural assistance from the Jewish state. Nor did public denunciations of Israel prevent Nehru from seeking military assistance from David Ben-Gurion in 1962 during the Sino-Indian conflict. The lack of diplomatic relations between the two countries did not prevent India’s external intelligence arm—the Research and Analysis Wing—from sending its personnel to Israel for specialized training, especially following the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984.

Kumaraswamy’s chronological divisions could use some fine-tuning. As the author himself notes, the groundwork to establish diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992 was prepared during the tenure of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who undertook a number of significant, conciliatory initiatives toward Israel. Thus the rather long third phase (1952-92) should perhaps have been divided further.

Additionally, while the author does examine the role of international factors on the bilateral relationship between Delhi and Jerusalem, he treats them as too minor a factor. As one of the first countries to escape the yoke of colonialism, India sought to burnish its “anti-imperialist” credentials. In the period following the Suez crisis, when Israel worked together with former colonial powers Britain and France, New Delhi was compelled to adopt an anti-Israeli stance so it could be seen as a leader of the anti-imperialist forces. The study would have benefited from an expansion on this international context and how the external environment constrained New Delhi’s foreign policy in its bilateral ties with Israel.

Despite this minor critique, the book remains the definitive account of bilateral relations between India and Israel and serves as the authoritative study on the subject.

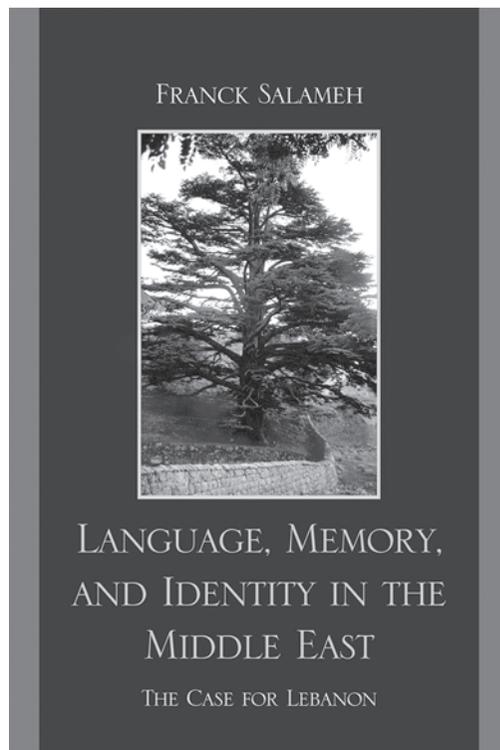
Hussein Solomon

University of the Free State, South Africa

Language, Memory, and Identity in the Middle East: The Case for Lebanon. By Franck Salameh. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010. 289 pp. \$80.

Most books on Lebanon crafted with sympathy and discernment are exercises in exploring the spirit of this singular country and its people. Salameh, a language professor at Boston College, demonstrates a unique approach to understanding that singularity. The essence of his thesis is that language—one rooted in the distant past and leavened with a multiplicity of more contemporary influences—continues to leave its imprint both on how the Lebanese communicate in the popular domain but also on what makes Lebanon the extraordinary human venture it is.

Salameh attempts to solve this puzzle by contending that there is no “single homogenous Arab cultural mass” but a diversity of ethnicities, languages, and peoples across the Middle East. In fact, Arabic, the supposed glue that holds together this disparate mass of humanity, “is a dead language.” No Arab really speaks Arabic: Different peoples in their respective countries speak Egyptian, Tunisian, Moroccan, or Lebanese.



There is no cohesive Arab nation, no collective Arab memory, and thus no living “pure” Arabic language.

The case of Lebanon’s language and its authenticity was elevated to a sacred mission by Saïd Akl, poet, linguist, and philosopher, who assumes a central role in Salameh’s narrative. He paints a vivid human portrait of the great man (born in 1912 and still living) who, among other things, proposed a Lebanese alphabet to replace the Arabic, thus liberating the spoken language from its Arabic moorings, much like the decision by Atatürk to write Turkish in Latin characters. For Akl, that alphabet is nothing more than a Phoenician creation, so that introducing Latinized characters into Lebanon would actually be an act of cultural recovery. For most Muslims and Arabs, however, it would be a separatist rebellion and viewed as a declaration of war against the Arab world.

The sub-text of the language controversy then is the struggle of a Christian community in Lebanon to survive and flourish in the Muslim

Middle East that is experiencing a sweeping Islamist tidal wave. Also, the debate as to whether the Lebanese are really Arabs has yet to be resolved. Akl and other intellectuals—for instance, Charles Corm and Michel Chiha—hammered away at the notion that the Lebanese are not Arabs at all. For them, and now for Salameh, the neighborhood norms of Islam and Arabic have no authority to overwhelm or suppress the specific features of Lebanon.

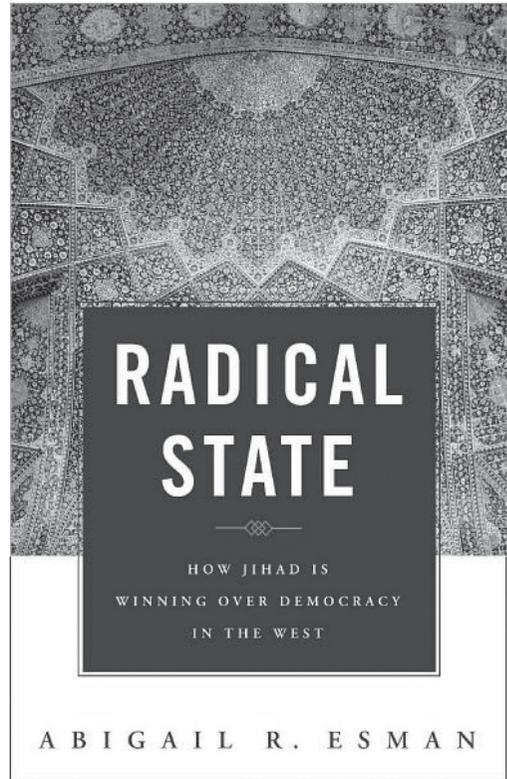
Salameh’s meticulous research makes for a most worthy book that makes a significant contribution to the literature. His study elucidates a core aspect of national identity with repercussions for all the Arabic-speaking countries. The author questions a conventional and sanctified concept of an Arab world which, battered and bruised by internecine political rivalries and animosities, is as desiccated as a Middle Eastern desert in the heat of summer.

Mordechai Nisan
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Radical State: How Jihad Is Winning over Democracy in the West. By Abigail R. Esman. Santa Barbara: Praeger Security International, 2010. 245 pp. \$34.95.

With an artful interweaving of the Netherlands’ past thirty years, plus her own experiences as a resident there, and personalized accounts of interactions with prominent Dutch leaders in politics, art, and academia, Esman offers a clear and powerfully evocative account of the process whereby Islamist political agitators, violent Muslim criminals, and Muslim terrorist ideologues are, step by step, bringing about the demise of a Western democracy.

Her book charts the descent of both Dutch society and government into a self-intensifying spiral of increasing submission to Muslim intolerance. Honor killings, genital mutilation, child and forced marriages, violence against homosexuals, the silencing of criticism through intimidation and murder, and a meteoric rise in high-profile incidents of anti-Semitism all combine to transform what was once one of the most stable and



tolerant nations in Europe into a dark and inhospitable home for non-Muslim Dutch.

Perhaps as threatening as the events themselves are the responses, or lack thereof, from Dutch leaders. Esman skillfully examines the government’s inept and counterproductive legislation and the refusal of many in positions of leadership in media, academia, and education to deal with these Muslim-inspired, socio-religious dynamics. Muslim threats to Dutch civil liberties and democracy are unquestionably a dire menace, but the way in which Dutch officials dismiss these threats is itself of even greater concern.

She concludes that tolerance of intolerance is not tolerance but appeasement, and appeasement emboldens the aggressor. Thus Holland’s decades-long forbearance with intolerant Islamists has resulted in the growth of a young, radicalized, Muslim population that is pushing the Netherlands into a form of national and cultural suicide.

Esman’s message concerns not just the Neth-

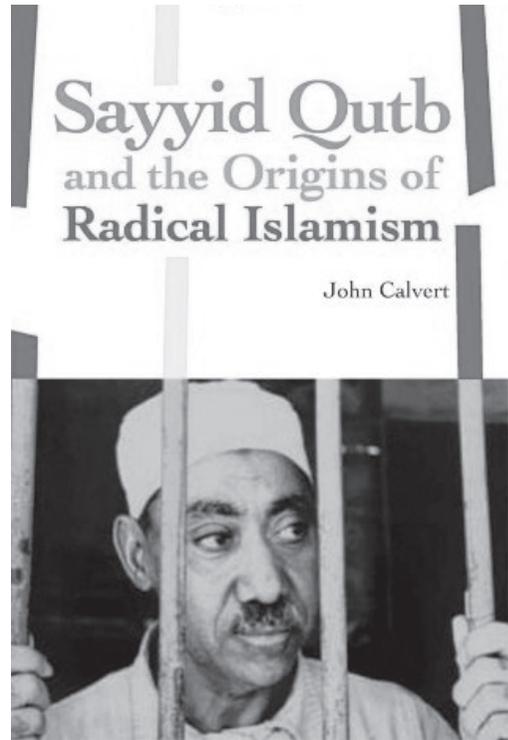
erlands but, as her title suggests, the West as a whole.

David Meir-Levi
Scholars for Peace in the Middle East

Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism.
By John Calvert. London: Hurst & Co., 2010. 377 pp. \$29.50.

Undoubtedly, the Egyptian radical Sayyid Qutb (1906-66) has been one of the most influential thinkers in the history of Islamism. It is therefore surprising that despite the frequency and volume of references made to him, this is the first comprehensive biography of him in English. Calvert, an associate professor of history at Creighton University, Nebraska, has produced a biography that is lively, sensitive, and methodical, and represents a landmark study of serious value to students, academics, and general readers alike.

Qutb lived through eventful times, and Calvert's study is as much a political history of modern Egypt through the prism of Sayyid Qutb as it is a biography of the man and a study of his thought. A rare intellectual within the movement, Qutb is a figure whose life narrative is every bit as important as his ideological output. "I preferred the clamour of the storm to the silence of tranquility," he once maintained, but he said this when he was a prominent literary critic—long before he became an Islamist radical. Qutb's radical articulation of Islamist ideology during his final years usually receives the most attention, but Calvert places such thinking within the wider context of Qutb's life as a whole and details how it evolved to this final incarnation. Qutb laid the foundations for Islamism's most extreme manifestations following his execution. Still, Calvert is careful to observe that Qutb himself would have been horrified by the Islamist excommunication of self-proclaimed Muslims and the resulting wanton slaughter and indifference to noncombatant status witnessed today. True, Qutb popularized the condemnation of Muslims in the culture and civilization around him as living in a state of "ignorance" or "barbarism" comparable to the pre-Islamic era. However, he never characterized them



as "infidels" as his successors did. Likewise, though he was clearly a dissenter who endorsed revolutionary violence, his radicalism was not stagnant but was a position he embraced gradually following years of systematic abuse.

Civil servant, literary critic, revolutionary icon, Qur'anic commentator, persecuted dissenter, feted martyr: Calvert's biography captures the many faces of Qutb. For his followers, Qutb's persecution by Nasser's regime is an ordeal comparable to the trials of Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855) or Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328). Yet Qutb was not a cleric, and the literalist heirs of Ibn Hanbal and Ibn Taymiyya have frequently denounced Qutb's figurative and spiritual readings of Islamic scripture as deviant. Examining the breadth of Qutb's prolific writings, Calvert concludes that it is the ambiguity of Qutb's thought that is the key to his dangerous legacy.

Richard Phelps
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