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Rulers, Clerics, Radicals, Citizens

Current Trends in the Muslim World (Part 1)

THE CENTER ON LAW AND SECURITY

Founded in 2003, the Center on Law and Security is an independent, non-partisan, global center of expertise designed to promote an informed understanding of the major legal and security issues that define the post-9/11 environment. Towards that end, the Center brings together and to public attention a broad range of policy-makers, practitioners, scholars, journalists and other experts to address major issues and gaps in policy discourse and to provide concrete policy recommendations.

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Editor's Introduction

The attacks of 9/11 set in motion a whole world of new ideas and facts, questions and policy directives. Accepting the challenge of learning about this new universe of threat and security, the U.S. government and the American public have immersed themselves in the unknown and the perplexing dimensions of this new political environment. We have come to learn about threat matrixes and jihad, about terrorist cells and intelligence networks, about the history of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq and about tribal conflicts throughout the Middle East and the Persian Gulf region. At the center of much of this inquiry has been a thirst for knowledge about the history and customs of Islamic cultures and of Muslim societies.

"Current Trends in the Muslim World (Part I)" reflects on the first five years of the Center on Law and Security's programs on topics endemic to the Muslim world. In it, the reader will find a compendium of fundamental statistics and facts about daily life as well as some of the most vibrant thinking on today's political developments in the Middle East and within Islamic political organizations. Here you will encounter searing questions and authoritative analysis about democratic trends, the role of the media, the varieties of radical Islam and the historic conflicts that have led to today's clash of interests, ideologies and ideas.

The War on Terror has become the first global conflict of the 21st century. As the public enters this Age of Security, it is hoped that the *NYU Review of Law and Security* – with this volume as with its previous issues – will guide readers towards a deeper appreciation not only of the complexities and problems that face the international community but of the vast opportunities that challenge us as well.

Karen J. Greenberg,

Executive Director, Center on Law and Security

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Karim Sadjadpour, Steven Simon. *Photo by Dan Creighton*

Open Forum Series: September 26, 2007

Fever Pitch: The United States and Iran

Suzanne Maloney, Senior Fellow, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, The Brookings Institution

Karim Sadjadpour, Associate, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Prof. Gary Sick, Senior Research Scholar, Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs

Steven Simon, ***Moderator***, Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies, Council on Foreign Relations

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Steven Simon:

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There are two questions regarding Iran that have recently emerged. One is whether the Iraqi domain, the Lebanese/Palestinian theater, and the nuclear fandango are all part of some systematic Iranian challenge to American hegemony in the region, as some people believe. Does this have the makings of a systematic and methodical confrontation with the United States? In short, are these parts of a strategy that we are seeing unleashed? The second question is, what does Mahmoud Ahmadinejad have to do with any of this? Is there a system responsible for these decisions that is bigger than he is and to which he is actually perhaps marginal?

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Prof. Gary Sick:

I do not think that Iran is in the process of building a nuclear weapon. I think they are in the process of building a nuclear infrastructure which would give them that capability for negotiation purposes and, if necessary, to actually go ahead and complete a bomb. That belief is not shared by everyone, but it is not held by me alone. In regard to the possibility of a conflict, I do not think that the United States and Iran are going to go to war. That will not happen before the end of the Bush administration.

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Ahmadinejad is, in a way, a very difficult man to understand. He seems to be absolutely convinced that he has truth on his side and that he knows what he is doing. Because he will not engage and give straight answers to straight questions, but rather equivocates, wanders around, and gives elliptical responses, people are intrigued. They want to push him further. They want to see if they can get something out of him, so they keep trying. They keep asking these questions, he keeps giving the same answers, and we do not get anyplace.

I think that he is potentially dangerous in the sense that he has a single-minded view that comes from some depths of his soul – a view that is not informed very much by facts, information, or other people's opinions. He has these fixed ideas. He is convinced that he is the smartest guy in the room and that he can, in fact, debate and overcome anybody who challenges him. In that sense, he is dangerous.

I am impressed by the fact that none of the policy statements that he has made, and none of the things that he has said, represent policies that he has had anything to do with. He does not run Iran. He does not run Iran's nuclear policy. He does not run Iran's security strategy. He is, at best, a representative of that strategy and carries it to the rest of the world.

He is most dangerous not to us but to Iran itself, through the image that he projects of his country. He comes from a highly cultured, historically exceptional country with its own background and literature. But that is not the impression that he leaves. That hurts Iran. That means that when the Iranians come up with a reasonable strategy on their nuclear program, it gets wiped away because other people think only of Ahmadinejad and nothing else. That is a shame, and Iran is paying a high price for it.

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Suzanne Maloney:

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Steven Simon mentioned all of the issues at stake in respect to Iran. From the perspective of the U.S. government, it is the nuclear issue, it is terrorism, it is rejection of the peace process, and the questions of democracy and the political situation on the ground at home.

He framed it with an important overview question: do these constitute a systematic challenge to the American position in the Middle East, to American interests in the region and around the world? That is certainly the view that the Bush administration holds quite deeply and quite broadly. While there are differences in terms of how to approach and address the Iranian challenge, the sense that Iran is deliberately and systematically opposing everything that we are trying to advance in the Middle East forms the basis of the sense of urgency and priority that the administration has when it comes to Iran.

I disagree. If you were to look across the region, you would see an opportunistic foreign policy on the part if the Iranians. They did not create the environment that has enabled them to make such gains in their influence in Iraq. Although there may be disagreement as to what precipitated it, they did not create the environment in Lebanon today. Nor did they necessarily even benefit from the events of last summer, as I think one can look Hezbollah's situation today and recognize that while there are some advances there are also some new liabilities. Iran did not create the vagaries in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty nor the permissiveness of the international community in the way that that treaty has been enforced over the years that have enabled Iran to create a systematic, comprehensive, and broad-based program which now, rightfully, evokes concern in Washington.

I would continue to look at Iran as we have seen since the death of Ayatollah Khomeini (and one might argue even earlier than that) – as a regime which is responding to opportunities across the region, often creatively, often violently and assertively, but not as a regime which is inevitably revisionist, not as a regime which is trying to impose some sort of caliphate or Islamic state across the region, and not as a regime

which we cannot deal with or which is incapable of engagement and negotiation.

What I feel directly coming out of the administration is the frenzy that has enveloped Washington and which I suspect is being felt elsewhere – this frenzy that was evoked in the title of tonight's event, "Fever Pitch;" the sense that we are on the verge of some sort of very violent and serious confrontation with the Iranians. Like Gary Sick, I am quite skeptical of likelihood of a military confrontation under this administration. I saw almost no sign of an inevitable conflict during my two years at the State Department. The general thrust of administration policy has been, in a very frustrating way, a search for a diplomatic solution to the Iranian problem. I think the frenzy itself is potentially quite dangerous, and I agree that both regimes have contributed to it to some extent.

• • •

Steven raised a very good question about who Ahmadinejad is and what he represents. Gary spoke about how Ahmadinejad is not ultimately Iran's decision maker on any particular issue. Ahmadinejad, I would argue, is still important. He is not being marginalized in the way that his predecessor Mohammad Khatami has been. He matters. The issues that he represents and the approach to Iran's regional relationships and the world that he has propounded carry some weight. They certainly influence the man who is the ultimate decision maker, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei.

So we have to have a balanced view of Ahmadinejad. We have to be careful about the way we talk about him and focus on him, both in terms of substance and in terms of style when it comes to influencing Iranian opinion about him. But we also have to be careful not to discount him, not to assume, as I think that many of my Iranian friends did at the outset of his administration two years ago, that he was a rube and political unsophisticate who was going to be effectively a puppet.

He is a man who matters and, whether we like it or not, we are going to have to deal with an Iran in which his ideas and his view of the world matters. That has to be the foundation of decision making and policymaking over the next year and a half. Ultimately, I think that the Iranians have already cast their bets and decided that they are not going to come up with any sort of workable framework for dialog with this administration. They are looking ahead to 2009.

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Karim Sadjadpour:

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I find it informative to compare the institution of the Iranian clergy with the institution of the bazaar. There are a long history and a strong affinity between them, and both are known for their cunning and their piety.

In terms of the nuclear issue, it is interesting to look at the bazaar when trying to decipher Iran's negotiating posture. Young Iranians are taught never to let a merchant know whether they love one of his carpets because he would realize that he could extract a very high price for it. The Iranians see that the United States is obsessed with their nuclear carpet – the U.S. cannot stop talking about it; it is very important to them. So the Iranians say, "Okay. Pay the corresponding price for it. It deserves more than spare airplane parts or membership to the World Trade Organization."

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The second lesson from the bazaar is that there are never price tags affixed to the carpets. The merchant is not looking for a fixed price. He is looking to extract the highest price possible. One reason why it is difficult to devise an effective policy towards Iran is that they do not know exactly what they are looking for. Iran is not a dictatorship. There is no one person who makes the decision. It is a consensus-building process, and I do not think there is any consensus about which direction the country should go. I think that Ahmadinejad has a much different vision for Iran than Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani does. Ayatollah Khamenei is paralyzed with mistrust. He is so mistrustful of U.S. intentions that he cannot make a decision.

So I think the Iranians feel that they deserve to extract a very high price from the U.S. right now. I think that in 2003 and 2002, when oil prices were $20 a barrel, Iraq was still a blank slate, and there were student agitations in Iran, they would have been willing to make a nuclear compromise for far less in return.

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I am ambivalent about putting large incentives on the table. There has been a long-standing debate in Tehran between the conservative hardliners currently in power and the reformists. The conservatives have always been critical of the approach taken by Mohammad Khatami.

They essentially say, "All that this talk about a 'dialog of civilizations' has gotten for us is the 'axis of evil.' It projected a weak image of the country and did not get anything for us. We need to take a hard-line, non-compromising approach. That is what the West responds to."

That presents a problem for the Europeans and the Americans. If they were to offer major incentives to an Ahmadinejad government that were not on the table during the Khatami era, that would quite likely appear to validate the hard-liners.

It does not behoove us to publicly demonize Iran. Teddy Roosevelt said it best: "Speak softly and carry a big stick." I think that both governments are speaking loudly and carrying much smaller sticks right now because both of them are hampered.

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I would say that a U.S./Iran rapprochement is a prerequisite for domestic political reform in Iran. I do not see any hope for major domestic political reform as long as Iran remains in isolation. But if we were to change the dynamic, there would be foreign investment coming into Iran, Iranian exiles going back, and tourists going into the country strengthening the Iranian middle class. It would much more difficult for the Islamic Republic to retain the status quo.

I think of these people as a type of weed that only grows without sunlight. They thrive in isolation. It is not coincidental that whenever the U.S. and Iran are cooperating and some hope for diplomatic accommodation exits, something comes out of Tehran which aims to torpedo those efforts. The *Karine A* incident in 2002 is a good example. The U.S. and Iran were cooperating in regard to Afghanistan. Then the *Karine A* was intercepted off the coast of Gaza with 50 tons of weapons postmarked from Tehran.

There are some individuals in Iran who realize that their hold on power would slip if the country were more open and meritocratic. Right now, 85 percent of the economy is state-owned, so they have more than enough money (especially with oil prices as they are) to continue to fund the main pillars of their power – the Revolutionary Guards, the Basij, and the like. Changing that dynamic would expedite domestic reform in Iran.

Distinguished Speaker Series: April 11, 2006

Iran, Israel, and the USA

Prof. David Menashri. *Photo by Dan Creighton*

Prof. David Menashri, Director, Center for Iranian Studies, Tel Aviv University

Prof. David Menashri:

Since coming to power in 1979, the Islamic Revolution has had two major aims: to consolidate and institutionalize their rule and, more importantly, to implement Ayatollah Khomeini's ideology as the means to alleviate the general feeling of malaise in the country, to develop Iran into a prosperous country and in turn further legitimize their rule. I would say the regime has been generally successful in strengthening its hold on institutions of power, but has proved less effective, to date, in utilizing their dogma to ease the mounting problems that were the root cause of the revolution.

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I think it would be wrong to view the revolution exclusively through a religious prism. To be sure, Islamic theory encompasses all spheres of the believer's life, making no distinctions between religion, politics, and science. Thus, from a purely Islamic perspective, the economic distress, social disparities, political repression, foreign exploitation, and rapid westernization that served as the catalysts for the revolution can not be entirely separated from religion. Indeed, Iranians rose against the Shah for a variety of reasons and viewed Islam as the means to provide their children with a better life, and to lead their country to a brighter future. The revolutionary credo "Islam is the solution" best embodied this deep-rooted and multidimensional vision. Ultimately, the demise of the monarchy led to the creation of an Islamic regime led by clerics, and in that sense it was, undeniably, an Islamic revolution. If this is the accepted analysis of the roots of the revolution, then the final stabilization of the regime will not have to do so much with the degree of the return to Islam but rather with the degree to which the regime manages to solve the problems that initially caused the revolution.

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Upon coming to power, riding the wave of dramatic victory, Ayatollah Khomeini and his disciples sought to implement their revolutionary ideology but were no strangers to pure considerations of state. Faced with the responsibility of actual rule, with very few exceptions, whenever ideological convictions clashed with state interest – as prescribed by the ruling elite – pragmatic interests ultimately triumphed. Thus, although national considerations were alien to Khomeini's general principles and theory of foreign relations, his regime nonetheless chose to conduct its regional policy primarily from its perception of Iran's state interests.

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With authority comes responsibility and the Islamic regime had to find a pragmatic way to do what needed to be done. There are 70 million people to feed in Iran. Reality has to be considered, and it has been since day one. Thus, faced with harsh realities, gradually, ideology was subordinated to national interest, and actual policy succeeded in combining ideological conviction with regard for the national interest.

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Still, concerning the scope and depth of transformation, Iran's domestic political factions vary greatly. There are many trends and subgroups. I will limit myself to what I view as the two main trends competing for ascendancy (with all the differences between them). One is generally defined as "reformists," "moderates," or "pragmatists." The other is often called "conservatives," "extremists," or "radicals." While both movements have been part of the Islamic system, their differences are profound. In a nutshell, this is a contest between the revolutionary ideals of 1979 and the spirit of the 1997 reform movement. It is equally a contest between institutions of power and the emerging civil society, between the old guard and the new generation, and between the elected and the nominated institutions of power. While the reformists support greater political freedom, economic openness and social change and advocate improved ties with the outside world, and some of them even support defusing the tension with the United States, the conservatives emphasize the centrality of the initial revolutionary values and the supremacy of dogma in formulating policy. It is a profound and vigorous debate, based on important questions such as the relationship between religion and state, idealism vs. national interests, isolationism against globalization, and the preferred attitude to be adopted vis-à-vis the outside world.

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One must admit that there have been many significant pragmatic changes in Iran. When I review cultural life there – the press, book publications, the movie industry, the use of the Internet – I am impressed by the level that the Iranians have reached compared to both the pre-revolutionary era and to other countries in the Middle East today. Women's organizations and youth movements are doing splendidly. They have been suppressed from time to time but are still vibrant and very active. I gave a lecture some time ago in Jerusalem. Someone turned to me and asked, "How can one talk about even limited freedom of expression in Iran when a hundred newspapers were shut down in five years?" My instant answer was, "Show me another country in the Middle East which has a hundred liberal newspapers to shut down." I happen to read many of them. It was a real pleasure, mainly in the late 1990s. But, again, that is just one segment of society. Moreover, even when this group held power (basically between the mid-1990s until the early 2000s), they lacked the power to lead to real change. We have seen this trend diminishing since then, until they lost power altogether after the provincial elections in 2003, the parliamentary elections in 2004, and the presidential election in 2005.

For all practical purposes, the conservatives are now in complete power and advocate dogmatic adherence to Ayatollah Khomein'i's revolutionary ideology. Thus, Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi - who is considered one of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's mentors - went into great detail in providing the doctrinaire justification for suppression of dissident voices. He dismissed the spirit of leniency and indulgence as alien to Islam, and advocated use of violence, or *hoshunat*, against those who are considered enemies. In a ser-

Northern Tehran, Iran. ©*istockphoto.com/Klaas Lingbeek-van Kranen*

mon on July 23, 1999, he stated that the leaders of those acting against the Islamic regime, or who speak out against its basic tenets, or who chant slogans against the Supreme Leader should be cut by a sharp sword. He asked: Should those who want to seize the people's lives, property, chastity, and religion be treated with negligence? Those who claim that Islam does not approve violence do not understand Islam at all. Rahim Safavi, commander of the Revolutionary Guards, warned that the Guards would use violence, if necessary, to purge the unfaithful elements in the press. Viewing the West's cultural onslaught as the main threat to the regime, and recognizing the dangers of free expression, he said that the Guards would not allow attacks on the most precious ideals of the revolution. He punctuated his remarks by saying the Revolutionary Guards were ready to decapitate or cut the tongues out of those standing against the revolutionary ideals.

What makes the conservatives so powerful? For one thing, they speak in the name of Islam, thereby enjoying much influence in the community. In the Middle East, if you speak in the name of God, that is good (and not only in Muslim countries but in Israel too). Also, they enjoy the loyalty of the armed forces – the Revolutionary Guards, Army and other law-enforcement bodies. One who is supported by Islam on one side and the military on the other is secure to a large degree. In addition to the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i, the judiciary has also traditionally worked to block reformism. The Council of Guardians, the Expediency Council, and the powerful revolutionary foundations – along with a range of semi-governmental bodies – often resist reformism.

Additionally, the Islamic regime seems unwilling to voluntarily concede power. When the Shah faced opposition he took his family and left the country. The ayatollahs are many and don't have anywhere to go. They have another advantage in that there is no single opposition with coherent ideology and accepted leadership challenging them.

Just as significantly, issues of great concern to the United States – i.e., national security and weapons of mass destruction – would not be in the hands of the reformists even if the reformists were in power. The question is not what the intellectuals think but rather who has the actual power when it comes to major issues of national security. No matter how wonderful the civil society may be, or how many books and newspapers are being published, the prerogative on security issues is exclusively controlled by the Supreme Leader and the conservatives close to him.

One major area in which Iran's policy has remained excessively uncompromising is its inherent hostility to Israel, which remains one of the rare examples of continued adherence to dogma. In this case, so far, ideological hostility has not seemed to conflict with the pragmatic interests of the state, as defined by the regime. In the view of the Islamic regime, Israel remains the enemy of Iran and Islam, and a threat to mankind. The revolutionary goal was unequivocal: "Israel should be eliminated." The gradual pragmatism notwithstanding, when it comes to Israel, both domestic trends seem to share a more or less similar policy. When I said that the revolutionary movement has become more pragmatic, I did not mean to imply that the revolutionary leaders wake up in the morning and seek out ways to contradict their promises. They want to stick to them. They consider modifying their ideology only when there is a significant price to pay otherwise. In the case of Israel, they have not seemed to have had a good incentive thus far to change their attitude as a practical matter.

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Timeline of United States / Iranian Relations

1906: Mozaffar al-Din Shah's tyrannical behavior prompts mullahs, merchants, and tradesmen to flee Tehran, leaving the economy stagnant. The protesters demand the formation of a *Majles* (or representative assembly). When the first *Majles* is assembled, known as the Constitutional Revolution, the members appoint a committee to draft what becomes the Fundamental Law, which the shah signs right before his death in December.

1907: A longer Supplementary Fundamental Law is drafted and signed into law by Mohammad Ali Shah. The two documents serve as Iran's constitution until 1979.

1908: Large oil deposits are discovered in central Iran.

1909: The Anglo-Persian Oil Company is formed.

1915: Russia and England sign a secret treaty in which Russia is awarded control over Istanbul in exchange for British control of central Iran.

1918: Postal and printing workers form trade unions in Tehran and Tabriz.

1923: Reza Khan becomes prime minister.

1925: Reza Khan takes the name Pahlavi, from a pre-Islamic society in Iran. He has the *Majles* depose the Qajar dynasty of Shahs, and assumes the title of shah himself.

1935: Tehran University is founded. Women are permitted to attend.

1936: In imitation of Turkey's Kemal Atatürk, Reza Shah passes a law requiring women to dress in Western clothing. Some women refuse to appear in public.

1941: During World War II, the shah abdicates in response to an occupation by Great Britain and the Soviet Union. His son, Mohammad Reza, becomes shah.

1951: Nationalist and reformist leader Mohammed Mossadeq is elected prime minister; the oil industry is nationalized.

1952: The shah dismisses Mossadeq as prime minister in response to his policy initiatives. Popular reaction demands that he be reinstated.

1953: The intelligence forces of the United States and Britain cooperate to overthrow Mossadeq.

1954: An international oil consortium is formed and begins negotiations with the Iranian government. The Anglo-Persian/Anglo-Iranian Oil Company becomes British Petroleum ("BP") and takes a 40% share in the consortium. American companies take another 40% share, leaving the remaining 20% to be split between the French and the Dutch.

1961: The shah dissolves the government and appoints Ali Amini to be prime minister. Elections for the *Majles* are suspended and riots ensue. Amini and the shah proceed to rule by decree for over a year.

February, 1979: In response to protests, the shah cracks down. Exiled cleric Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini then returns to the country. The Imperial Guard attempts to suppress a rally in his favor in Tehran, and revolutionary forces mobilize. Khomeini takes control of the government on February 11.

November, 1979: The shah, in Mexico for cancer treatment, travels to the U.S.A. group called "Students Following the Line of the Imam" seizes the U.S. embassy and holds its occupants hostage.

December, 1979: A new constitution drafted by the *Majles* is ratified by popular referendum. The constitution grants significant powers to the clerical leader of Iran and includes measures for the eradication of poverty. The Islamic Nationalist party, the Azerbaijani party, the Kurdish party, and the federalist Islamic party all boycott the referendum. Khomeini is named leader.

1980: Saddam Hussein invades Iran, beginning the Iran-Iraq war.

January, 1981: The hostages held in the American embassy in Tehran are released. In exchange, the U.S. unfreezes Iran's assets and pledges that the U.S. will no longer intervene in Iran's affairs.

October, 1981: Hojjatoleslam Ali Khamene'i is elected president for the first of two four-year terms.

1986: President Reagan gives the CIA permission to sell 4,000 TOW missiles to Iran, with Israel as a go-between. The executive branch's use of the funds from the sale to support the contra rebels in Nicaragua forms the "Iran-contra affair."

1987: The United Nations Security Council passes a resolution calling for a cease-fire between Iraq and Iran. Iraq accepts, and Iran declines to respond. The U.S. Navy cruiser *Vincennes* shoots down an Iran Air passenger jet, killing 290 people. The U.S. says that the plane was mistakenly identified as a fighter plane.

1988: Iran accepts Security Council Resolution 598, ending the Iran-Iraq war.

June, 1989: Ayatollah Khomeini dies; Ayatollah Khamane'i is named supreme leader.

August, 1989: Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani is elected president for the first of two four-year terms.

1995: President Clinton imposes an economic embargo on Iran.

1997: Reformist Mohammad Khatami, supported especially by women and young people, is elected president for the first of two four-year terms. Ayatollah Khamane'i names Rafsanjani head of the Expediency Council.

2005: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, mayor of Tehran, is elected president, defeating former president Rafsanjani, who was running for a third, non-consecutive term.

August, 2006: Iran fails to suspend its uranium enrichment, violating a UN Security Council Resolution.

December, 2006: Iran hosts a controversial conference on the Holocaust; delegates include Holocaust deniers. The UN Security Council votes to impose sanctions on Iran's trade in sensitive nuclear materials and technology. Iran condemns the resolution and vows to speed up uranium enrichment work.

May, 2007: Ryan Crocker and Hassan Kazemi-Qomi, the U.S. and Iranian ambassadors to Iraq, hold the first high-level talks between the two countries in almost 30 years.

October, 2007: The U.S. announces expansive new sanctions against Iran, including its Revolutionary Guard Corps specifically.

December, 2007: A declassified National Intelligence Estimate of the U.S. intelligence agencies concludes with "high confidence" that Iran suspended the military component of its nuclear program in 2003 and with "moderate confidence" that the program had not been restarted.

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Iranian National Government Institutions

Supreme Leader: Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i. The Supreme Leader is the constitutional head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces. He appoints the head of the Judiciary and six of the twelve members of the Council of Guardians. The Assembly of Experts chooses the Supreme Leader, who serves as long as he is fit. Khamene'i follows Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who served as Supreme Leader until his death.

President: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The president, the second-highest-ranking official in Iran, appoints the Council of Ministers, the equivalent of the cabinet. Candidates for the presidency must be approved by the Council of Guardians. The president serves for four years, with a limit of two terms.

Council of Guardians: A body of 12 clerics that reviews the candidates for all national elections and all legislation passed by the *Majles*. Six of the members are selected by the Supreme Leader. The other six are selected by the judiciary and voted on by the *Majles*. The members serve for six-year terms.

Majles: A 290-member parliamentary body responsible for legislation (which must be approved by the Council of Guardians), nominating cabinet members, and impeaching ministers. Members are elected by popular vote every four years.

Assembly of Experts: An 86-member body of clerics, approved by the Council of Guardians, which selects and oversees the Supreme Leader. Former president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani is the current chair.

Head of the Judiciary: Ayatollah Mahmud Hashemi Shahroodi. The judiciary is responsible for reinforcing the Iranian legal code, which is derived from Islamic law, and for selecting half of the members of the Council of Guardians. The head of the Judiciary is appointed by the Supreme Leader.

Expediency Council: A group of prominent figures responsible for resolving disputes between the Council of Guardians and the *Majles*. Members are appointed by the president. The current Council, on which members serve for seven years, has 28 members led by former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. In October 2005, the president endowed the Council with supervisory power over all branches of government.

Council of Ministers: (Cabinet) - Appointed by the President and approved by the *Majles*.

Outside of the central institutions of government, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the *Bonyads* play significant roles in shaping and implementing policy. The IRGC serves as the ideological, technical, and military instrument of the central powers of the Islamic Republic. *Bonyads* are large, quasi-state foundations that distribute oil revenues through patronage networks and service delivery outlets, particularly for veterans' payments, social welfare, and local infrastructure.

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November 8, 2005

Colloquium on Law and Security

Prof. Noah Feldman, Rachel Bronson, Prof. Stephen Holmes. *Photo by Dan Creighton*

Rachel Bronson, Senior Fellow and Director of Middle East Studies, Council on Foreign Relations; author of *Thicker than Oil: America's Uneasy Partnership with Saudi Arabia* (Oxford University Press, 2006)

Rachel Bronson:

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There is a sense that the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia is simply all about oil; that all you have to understand is oil and then you will understand the relationship. That assumption is not true and it has never been true.

From the beginning, the relationship has been about three things. First, it has been about oil, but it has also been about two other things.

It has been about Saudi Arabia's strategic location, where it sits in the world. You just have to look at a map and see the Red Sea on one side and the Persian Gulf on the other to recognize its importance. In terms of air transit and the American air force, think about how to get to Pakistan or Central Asia from the United States. The U.S. military pushed for bases there during World War II so that we could get out to the Asian theatre.

But what I find the most fascinating is the role of religion. Writing about the Arab-Muslim states in *The New York Times* on March 3, 2005, Thomas Friedman said the U.S. cared only about whether they "keep their pumps open and prices low." Actually, during the Cold War, we were fighting the "godless communists." The fact that they were godless was actually very important to the United States. Promoting religion became a way of fighting communism, and Saudi Arabia became a natural ally in this battle. This is true from Dwight D. Eisenhower up until Ronald Reagan. The Soviets were godless, and the Saudis saw them that way. The Saudi regime has had a historic partnership with clerics in the Kingdom dating back to 1744. They did not need to be convinced that godlessness is a bad thing. They viewed the very existence of the Soviet Union's communism as an existential threat. They got on board against the Soviets very early. Unlike many of America's partners in the region, we did not have to convince them to be on the side of the United States. They joined fairly eagerly.

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I am going back 50 years because it is relevant to some of the problems we are facing now. The United States faced a real challenge in the region. Communism was very much on the rise, personified by Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser. The Egyptian-Czech Arms Deal in 1955 was the first time that the Soviet Union put weapons into countries outside of the Warsaw Pact. They had hopscotched over Europe and were directly arming a Middle Eastern proxy. Everyone was very nervous about this, certainly including the monarchs and others allied with the West. The Iraqis, the Jordanians, and the Saudis were very worried.

Nasser's presence and prestige grew and grew throughout the Fifties and Sixties. This was a period of Arab nationalism, of reaching out to the masses and public mobilization. Saudi Arabia saw what was going on and was very worried. Nasser was saying that the monarchs were like dwarves and should be overthrown. His rhetoric was very harsh. One of the things the Saudis did in response was to consciously say, in essence, "We are going to fight them with religion. We are going to take them on. We cannot compete on Arab nationalism; Egypt has the largest Arab population in the world. There is very little we can do about that, but we can challenge Nasser on religion."

The Saudis started building institutions to try to convince the Islamic world, as good Muslims, not to affiliate with Arab nationalism, but with Saudi Arabia. They start creating institutions and major universities that brought Muslims from around the Islamic community to Saudi Arabia and

Saudi stamp.

which then sent them back out. Some of the universities that became hotbeds for radicalism in the 1990s, and that pump out members of al Qaeda, date back to the Fifties and Sixties. But, at the time, that is not what they were trying to create. They were trying to establish an Islamic identity and to spread the faith in order to combat the ideological threat of Arab nationalism.

The United States saw what was going on. We were not encouraging them to do it, but it was certainly okay with us, because anything that would take on Nasser was good in our eyes. And anything that would take on the godless communists was even better.

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There is a domestic battle going on in Saudi Arabia between the pragmatists and the ideologues, which I view as a struggle for Saudi Arabia's soul. The two groups have had a natural alliance for much of Saudi Arabia's recent history. The pragmatists were fighting the godless communists and the ideologues were fighting the non-Wahhabis.

There was a real separating out in 2003. I think that the battle could probably go either way. I am a little optimistic that the pragmatists will ultimately win because I think they are in positions of power, but it is certainly not clear.

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The United States and Saudi Arabia do not have the same sort of shared strategic interests that we had during the Cold War. There will likely be friction – over oil policy, Iran policy, and Iraq. There are many issues over which the relationship could be very strained.

The relationship was collapsing throughout the Nineties. September 11th was just the bottom of it. There was a steady decline from the high point of Desert Storm in 1991 to the low point of September 2001. There is no strategic logic keeping the states together anymore. Nothing makes sense.

We used to go to the Saudis all the time and say, "Could we have money for this? Could we have money for the Contras? Could we have money for Angola?" It all made sense, and the Saudis are writing their checks. Now we are asking them to put money into home heating in North Korea and to help us with the Mexican peso bailout. It does not make sense to the Saudis.

There are many issues that will keep us together. A nuclear Iran is very troubling for both countries. In fact, the Saudis, who had been undertaking a rapprochement with the Iranians for the last half of the 1990s, are scared to death of Iran. They see a very muscular and powerful Iran. A few months ago at the Council on Foreign Relations, the Saudi Foreign Minister said, "The Iranians are coming into Iraq under your auspices."And in large part they are right.

The balance of the region has really changed, so the Saudis have to decide whether or not we have anything to offer them. I think that they are still going to need security guarantees from the United States because they are still vulnerable, and that they will ultimately continue working with us on security issues. In terms of energy, I think that the Saudis are going to want higher oil prices than we would prefer, but they won't want prices as high as $100 a barrel. That would not be good for them. They have too much invested globally and they need buyers. Their strategic location is still important. We ran Afghanistan and a good part of Iraq from Saudi Arabia.

al Masjid al Nabawi (The Prophet's Mosque), Medina, Saudi Arabia. ©*istockphoto.com/Salem*

But what it really comes down to is whether they on the right side in terms of the war on terror and in terms of proselytization. I think that, since 2003, the administration has rightly determined that they are, and therefore there are things that we can work with them on. They have accepted the FBI into the Kingdom and there does seem to be a concerted effort in stopping the proselytizing and the outward flow of radicals. There is "a fire hose of funding,"as Larry Wright calls it.

But these are now all separate issues rather than a global strategic threat. That is a challenge the United States now shares with all of its allies. We do not have this overarching strategic threat and we are going have to manage on an issue-by-issue basis. So I do think that there are things for us to work together on, but it is not going to be as easy as it has been in the past.

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Who's Who in the Saudi Royal Family

King Abdullah

King Abdulaziz

Prince Salman

King Fahd

King Khaled

Interior Minister Nayef

Prince Turki

Succession in Saudi Arabia differs from the primogeniture succession of most European monarchies, wherein the throne is passed from the king to his eldest son. In the case of the Saudi royal family, only sons of King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman al Saud, the first ruler of modern Saudi Arabia, can become king. Because al Saud was married to 22 different women and had 37 sons, this chain of succession could continue for many years. In the past, sons of al Saud have chosen the next King through consensus reached in private, negotiating demands of the family's different branches amongst themselves. King Abdullah codified this process in Saudi Basic Law, calling for a council of al Saud's sons to convene and choose a successor.

The list below is not intended to be comprehensive. Rather, it reflects an endeavor to include former heads of the Saudi state, ministers who have held their positions for many years, those who have had particular influence, and those who are potential successors to the current ruler, King Abdullah.

King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman al Saud (King, 1932-1953) was the sixteenth ruler of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the founder of the modern Saudi state. He is credited with defining the boundaries of the Kingdom through military conquests, strategic marriages, and other diplomatic tactics.

King Saud bin Abdulaziz al Saud (King, 1953-1964) Al Saud's eldest son, he abdicated the throne in 1964 and died in 1969.

King Faisal bin Abdulaziz al Saud (King, 1964-1975) Faisal was named Crown Prince when Saud was named his father's successor, and his reign ended when he was assassinated in 1975 by his nephew, Amir Faisal bin Musaid al-Saud.

King Khalid bin Abdulaziz al Saud (King, 1975-1982) King Khalid delegated much of his power to Fahd, who was Crown Prince at the time. His health was poor at the end of his brief reign, which ended upon his death in 1982.

King Fahd bin Abdulaziz al Saud (King, 1982-2005) King Fahd coined the title "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques" in 1986. He suffered a debilitating stroke in 1995, after which Crown Prince (now King) Abdullah assumed most of his responsibilities.

King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al Saud (King, 2005 - present) King Abdullah is the Prime Minister and Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. He has no full brothers, and thus must form alliances with other factions in the family. He was previously the mayor of Mecca and commander of the National Guard.

Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz al Saud is the Crown Prince and the Deputy Prime Minister, and has been the minister of Defense since 1963. He was appointed Second Deputy Prime Minister upon King Fahd's accession to the throne in 1982, and then to his current position when King Abdullah took the throne. He is a son of King Abdulaziz Abdulrahman Al-Saud.

Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz al Saud has been Minister of the Interior since 1975. He is also a son of King Abdulaziz Abdulrahman Al-Saud, and a likely successor to Sultan as Crown Prince.

Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud has been Governor of Riyadh since 1962, and is a son of King Abdulaziz Abdulrahman al Saud.

Prince Saud al Faisal bin Abdulaziz al Saud has been Minister of Foreign Affairs since 1975. He is a son of the late King Faisal.

Prince Turki al Faisal was Director General of the National Intelligence Service from 1977-2001, and then Ambassador to the United Kingdom in 2003. He became Ambassador to the United States in 2005, and was replaced by Adel al-Jubeir in February of 2007. Prince Turki is a son of the late King Faisal.

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Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; http://www.saudiembassy.net/Country/Government/Gov.asp

Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006)

Simon Henderson, "Policy Watch #1156 New Saudi Rules on Succession: Will They Fix the Problem?" The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 25, 2006, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2526

Photos courtesy of the Saudi Information Office.

Muslim Brotherhood

Nick Fielding. *Photo by Dan Creighton*

Nick Fielding, author of *Masterminds of Terror: The Truth Behind the Most Devastating Attack the World Has Ever Seen* (Arcade Publishing, 2004)

Alexis Debat, Senior Fellow, the Nixon Center

Peter Bergen, ***Moderator***, Fellow, Center on Law and Security; CNN analyst; author of *The Osama bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of Al Qaeda's Leader* (Free Press, 2006)

Nick Fielding:

The Muslim Brotherhood is essentially reformist. It represents the best possibility in the Middle East of an organization that can both make and stick to deals. In contrast, as Condoleezza Rice alluded to in her speech at the American University in Cairo on June 20, 2005, we in the West have consistently backed Middle Eastern regimes that have repressed their citizens, especially citizens who have sought to establish some kind of Islamic state governed by Sharia law. We have either backed outright dictators and despots or sought to impose the adoption of secular, Western-style democracy. We have chosen to emphasize human rights only when it has suited pragmatic foreign-policy considerations.

I am not convinced that Western democracy will ever prevail in the Islamic world. That is about as likely to happen, in my opinion, as Shariah law being adopted in Washington or London. Most Muslims want Islam to be central to political and social life. Every move that we make to deny the centrality of Islam will drive the increasingly frustrated Muslims into the hands of the Qutbists, the al Qaedas of today and tomorrow.

I think that we have failed to understand the political landscape of Islam. The great social movements that over the last 40 years have thrown up the Brotherhood in the Middle East, the Jamiah Islamia on the Indian subcontinent, and the Khomeini revolution in Iran have not been fully understood by us here in the West. In the Islamic world, these movements are all seen as products of what is called the *Sahwa Islamia*, the Islamic Awakening, which grew out of the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate and the profound shock that event had on all Muslims. Unsure about how to replace the Ottomans, we in the West opted for kings, princes, and dictators. That age, I think it is reasonable to say, is coming to an end.

We are facing huge challenges. The monarchies in Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Jordan face an increasingly unpredictable future. Hosni Mubarak, who is king in all but name in Egypt, is 78 years old and desperately trying to create a dynasty to succeed him. If we do not adopt a more positive policy of engagement – a policy that recognizes that democracy has many different forms, and that the genuine aspirations of the majority of the populations in Islamic countries are what really matters – the hardliners will be the only ones who gain.

The Brotherhood is not an easy choice for us in the West. It remains ambiguous about its attitude toward minorities such as the Coptic Christians and others. It has departed in many ways from the more stringent aspects of the outlook first set out by Hassan al Banna, but some say its commitment to these more democratic views is suspect. It continues to act as a proselytizing religious missionary organization, despite its pretensions to political power. Ironically, the preponderance of support for the Brotherhood, stemming from the years of repression that it has undergone, may result in what amounts to a one-party state if it were to be allowed to take part in free elections in Egypt, for example. Would it share power? Would it be prepared to relinquish power if it lost in a future election?

These questions are very difficult and require discussion. I do not pretend to have the answers. But I have little doubt that the refusal to recognize the legitimate demands of the majority of Muslims for a state governed by Shariah law is the real reason for the growth of militancy in the Islamic world. The increasingly untenable support for dictators is one of the principal reasons for the radicalization of Muslims, not just in the Middle East and Islamic countries but also in the West.

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Ikwhan al Muslimeen

"Muslim Brotherhood"

Description
Sunni political movement

Current Leader
Supreme Guide Mohammed Akef, based in Cairo, Egypt

Identity & Politics
Advocates reform according to its interpretation of Islamic values.

Began in Egypt in the early 20th century by Hassan al Banna and has inspired similar movements in countries throughout the Arab world. Currently banned as a political party in Egypt. Members running as independents won 88 seats in parliament (20% of the total) in 2005.

Designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. State Department?
No.

Muslim Brotherhood and Violence
Attempted to assassinate Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1954

Leaders do not advocate violence by members although they refuse to denounce suicide bombing entirely.

Sources:
Steven Brooke and Robert Leiken, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2007

Sultan Hassan Mosque and El Rifai Mosque in Cairo, Egypt. *Photo by Jack Berger*

Egypt's 2007 Constitutional Amendments

On March 26, 2007, Egyptians confirmed amendments to 34 articles of the Constitution in a national referendum. Proposing the amendments in December, 2006, President Hosni Mubarak called them important steps towards democracy, arguing that they would boost the powers of the parliamentary assembly. The changes, however, have been criticized by a range of opposition parties.

Article 179 of the constitution has been amended to allow the president to continue to refer citizens to a military court after the country's period of emergency rule has ended. Military court referrals previously have been challenged on constitutional grounds. The Mubarak government has supported this amendment as necessary to fight terrorism.

An additional change eliminates required judicial supervision of elections. Instead, an electoral commission will oversee the polls. Critics of the government have questioned the commission's potential independence.

The revised version of Article 5 prohibits "any political activity, "within any religious frame of reference." The new language, which expands the pre-existing ban on forming political parties on religious bases, seems to prevent the formation of a political party by the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist opposition group.

Certain amendments strengthen parliament's powers over the executive. It is now easier for Parliament to dismiss a prime minister, for example. On the other hand, the Parliament itself has become more vulnerable because it can now be dissolved by the president "in the case of necessity" without a previously required referendum.

Sources:

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Michael Slackman, "Forgone Conclusion Appears to Keep Voters Home," *New York Times*, March 27, 2007

Nathan J. Brown, Michele Dunne, and Amr Hamzawy, "Egypt's Controversial Constitutional Amendments," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 23, 2007, www.carnegieendowment.org/files/egypt_constitution_webcommentary01.pdf

Re-Evaluating Radical Islamism

Maha Azzam. *Photo by Dan Creighton*

Maha Azzam, Associate Fellow, Royal Institute of International Affairs

Maha Azzam:

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A reformation of sorts has been taking place under the aegis of the radicals, who have sought to reinterpret Islam in the context of their political struggle to justify both suicide and attacks on civilians. The conservative theological establishment has counterattacked any such reinterpretation in an attempt to rob the radicals of theological legitimacy.

The glorification of an Islamic past emboldens weak political groups in the face of the political and economic demise which their societies have experienced. This is not peculiar to the Islamists. It is shared by radicals and non-radicals as a source of inspiration, and the hope that the strength of a past civilization can one day be resurrected. In its extreme forms, it is expressed in the desire for a caliphate. In more moderate forms, it is expressed in terms of unity between Muslim states, leading to economic revival and technological and scientific progress.

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Although there had been much talk about encouraging good governance in the Middle East after the first Gulf War, these responses have been somewhat half-hearted, except for security, which has been pursued with greater vigor. The problem remains that there is still little acknowledgement of the right of those in Muslim societies to opt for an Islamist alternative. This was apparent in the case of FIS in Algeria, and today of Hamas. We have never really come to terms with the fact that there may be a need to create more equitable relations between the political demands of many the world over and the United States, and the West in general.

The struggle for the Islamists has always been about the setting up of their own political system and empowerment within the international order that does not leave them weak and poor. This remains the main thrust of their political appeal – that somehow they can remove their states from backwardness and forge them into a power to be reckoned with, and create a more equitable distribution of power and wealth.

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Although inspired by politics and crises across boundaries, many activists are the product of local pressures. Domestic conditions long-ignored in the Middle East are also part of the radicalization process.

Populations have been politically disenfranchised, have experienced little respect for human rights or the rule of law, and have had to tolerate corruption from those who cannot be held accountable. They have also had to withstand military defeat and humiliation, whether at the hands of Israel or the United States. The madrasas in Pakistan and the Saudi educational curriculum may be altered but the resentment will remain unless these conditions are seriously addressed.

I would describe Islamist groups, particularly in the context of the Middle East, as groups that have primarily been engaged in a power struggle with regimes. The emphasis has been local and the resort to violence, although not systematic, nevertheless featured as a weapon against those in authority in the 20th century.

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The association between Islamism and terrorism has created deep divisions within the Islamist movement itself. The Muslim Brotherhood, the oldest and most influential of the Islamist groups, has for several decades disassociated itself from violence. This was partly due to its experience of torture in Nasser's jails and its belief that if it were to be true to the teachings of its founder, Hassan al Banna, it had to pursue a gradualist approach built on educating society and Islamizing from below.

The Brotherhood are, in some ways, on the way to winning the political struggle. Their gradualist approach has won hearts and minds. Their moderate leadership stance expressed by the late General Guide Hassan al Hudaybi that they are preachers, not judges, has resonated and won converts. It is a route that is appealing because it remains radical but non-violent.

This argument in some ways exists in parallel with the argument for greater democratization, undermining the appeal of the radicals. If the Islamists proceed and make gains through democratic channels, the main issue will not be the enshrinement and legitimization of a democratic system, but rather the enshrinement of an Islamic one, which can be voted in and out of power by other, probably Islamist, parties.

The democratic process has become increasingly appealing to Islamists as they see their potential for reaching power. As we all know, this does not mean that they find the values of Western democracies acceptable wholesale; for example, the West's legal codification of women's rights. One should keep in mind that it is the minority in the Muslim world, whether Islamist or not, who would hold views, particularly on social issues, which would be acceptable to a Western audience. In some ways, this is something that those in the West, whether policymakers or others, need to resolve and come to terms with. They can press for further rights for women and minorities but they are likely to fail if they wish to create a system in their own image.

Pursuing democratization in the Middle East is unlikely to discourage the choice of Islamist candidates but the blocking of political channels and the denial of power to Islamist parties has allowed what was once considered radical to be superseded by greater radicalization. The longer there is a delay in establishing an Islamic state, the more likely there is to be a growing radicalization outside the control of the state.

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It is conceivable that a consensus can be reached between the moderate Islamist parties, those in government as well as other legitimate political forces. The more difficult, and yet the more pressing in security terms, is how to reach a cease-fire with the militants. Despite the deep rifts, progress towards this can happen through the moderate Islamist parties taking the lead.

However, Western policies such as denying aid to a Hamas-led government only weakened those who could perhaps have some leverage over the militants.

The lack of respect for human rights and the rule of law in the Middle East has given a direct impetus to the Islamist alternative. On one level, the Shariah simply offers a legal framework which is divinely inspired and which its proponents claim will counter the abuses committed by the state and its legal system. The issue here is not only secular versus religious. It is a search for justice as opposed to repression and lack of respect for the law. Islamism and the implementation of the Shariah are about religious belief, but they are also about respect for the rule of law.

Mosque. *Photo by Jack Berger*

Notable Middle Eastern News Media

Newspapers

Aftab-e Yazd ("Sunshine of Yazd")
Country: Iran
Language: Farsi
Circulation: 100,000
Web site: http://www.aftab-yazd.com/
Notes: Reformist paper affiliated with the Association of Combatant Clerics (of which former President Mohammad Khatami is a leading member)

al Ahram ("The Pyramids")
Country: Egypt
Language: Arabic
Circulation: 900,000
Web site: www.ahram.org.eg; http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/index.htm (weekly English version)
Notes: First published in 1876, now owned by the Egyptian government. More reputable on world affairs than on Egyptian politics.

Haaretz ("The Country")
Country: Israel
Language: Hebrew
Circulation: 70,000
Web site: www.haaretz.co.il; www.haaretz.com (English)
Notes: Editorial page features many distinguished contributors and is considered very influential, although its circulation is much smaller than the other two leading Israeli papers, *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Maariv.*

al Hayat ("Life")
Country: Pan-Arabic, established in Lebanon and now published in the U.K.
Language: Arabic
Circulation: 170,000
Web site: www.daralhayat.com; http://english.daralhayat.com (English)
Notes: Owned by Prince Khalid bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz; banned by Saudi authorities in August of 2007.

Islamic Republic News Agency
Country: Iran (national news service)
Language: Farsi
Circulation: N/A
Web site: www.irna.ir; www.irna.ir/en (English)
Notes: Publishes seven different periodicals in Farsi and English. Founded in 1934 as the Pars Agency; name changed after the Islamic Revolution in 1981. IRNA is under the administration of the Ministry of National Guidance.

Jaam-e Jam ("Jam's Cup")
Country: Iran (published by the state-run Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting Organization)
Language: Farsi
Circulation: 460,000
Web site: http://www.jamejamonline.ir/; http://www.jamejamonline.ir/jamejam.asp?t=evt (English)
Notes: Conservative daily paper. The title refers to a vessel containing the world, and is an allusion to the monarch Jamshid.

Kayhan ("Universe")
Country: Iran
Language: Farsi
Circulation: 350,000
Web site: http://www.kayhannews.ir/
Notes: Persian-language daily written from a conservative viewpoint. The Supreme Leader appoints the paper's managing editor.

Maariv (an evening prayer)
Country: Israel
Language: Hebrew
Circulation: 325,000
Web site: www.nrg.co.il
Notes: Competes with *Yedioth Ahronoth* for the widest circulation in Israel (although Maariv's circulation is considerably lower than *Yedioth Ahronoth*'s). The rivalry between the two papers began in 1948, when the editor of *Yedioth Ahronoth* left to form *Maariv*.

al Quds al Arabi ("Arab Jerusalem")
Country: Published in the U.K.
Language: Arabic
Circulation: 50,000
Web site: www.alquds.co.uk
Notes: Published in London and owned by Palestinian immigrants to the U.K.

al Sharq al Awsat ("The Middle East")
Country: Published in the U.K.
Language: Arabic
Circulation: 237,000
Web site: www.asharqalawsat.com
Notes: Owned by the Saudi Research and Marketing Group (of which Faisal bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz of the Saudi royal family serves as the head of the Board of Directors)

Shargh ("East")
Country: Iran
Language: Farsi
Circulation: Currently shut-down by the government
Web site: www.sharghnewspaper.ir
Notes: Reputable opposition news source

Yedioth Ahronoth ("Latest News")
Country: Israel
Language: Hebrew
Circulation: 650,000
Web site: http://www.ynet.co.il; www.ynetnews.com (English)
Notes: Part of Yedioth Group, an Israeli media company

Television

al Arabiya ("The Arab")
Headquarters: Dubai
Language: Arabic
Viewers: 23 million
Web site: www.alarabiya.net; www.alarabiya.net/english (English)
Notes: Part of the Saudi-owned Middle East Broadcasting company (MBC), of which Prince Walid bin Talal is the largest shareholder.

Jaam-e Jam ("Jam's Cup")
Headquarters: Iran (television station of the state-run Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting Organization)
Language: Farsi
Viewers: N/A
Web site: http://www.iribnews.ir/; http://www.iribnews.ir/front_en.asp?Sec=front_en (English)
Notes: Television station of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, the state-run news agency that also owns the newspaper with the same name.
The Supreme Leader has the authority to appoint and dismiss the director of the IRIB. Jaam-e Jam is broadcast internationally as well as within Iran.

al Jazeera ("The Peninsula")
Headquarters: Qatar
Language: Arabic
Viewers: 40 million
Web site: www.aljazeera.net; http://english.aljazeera.net/English
Notes: Founded in 1996 by Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa, Emir of Qatar.

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Saudi stamp.

OPEC Proven Crude Oil Reserves, 2006 (million barrels)

Saudi Arabia	264,251
IR Iran	138,400
Iraq	115,000
Kuwait	101,500
United Arab Emirates	97,800
Venezuela	87,035
SP Libyan AJ	41,464
Nigeria	36,220
Qatar	15,207
Algeria	12,200
Angola	9,035
Indonesia	4,370
OPEC	**922,482**

Source:
OPEC Annual Statistical Bulletin 2006 (published July 31, 2007)

Movies Playing in Theaters Around the Middle East: February 13, 2008

Abu Dhabi, UAE

Cinestar Cinema, Marina Mall - Ras al Akhdar
The Water Horse
No Country for Old Men
Martian Child
Aliens vs. Predator 2
Rambo 4
Cloverfield
Sweeney Todd
Seraphim Falls
Meet the Spartans
Enchanted

Dubai, UAE

Grand Cinecity - Al Ghurair City
Cloverfield
Sweeney Todd
Martian Child
Why Did I Get Married?
The Water Horse
Rambo 4
Aliens vs. Predator 2
Enchanted
No Country for Old Men
Rama Rama
Sunday

Egypt

Galaxy Cinema - Cairo
Al Gazira
Heya Fawda
Kalashnkov
Tabakh Al Rayes
Alvin and the Chipmunks
I Am Legend
One Missed Call

Iran

Farhang Cinema - Tehran
From Afar
Eghlima

Israel

Globus Theater, Malha Mall - Jerusalem
Elizabeth: The Golden Age
I Am Legend
I Could Never Be Your Woman
No Country For Old Men
Rambo 4
The Kingdom
Bee Movie
Atonement
Charlie Wilson's War
The Bucket List
Cloverfield

Jordan

Grand Zara - Amman
Jumper
Sydney White
Captain Abu Raed
Charlie Wilson's War
I Am Legend

Kuwait

Al Sharqia - Kuwait City
Rambo 4
The Nanny Diaries
Aliens vs. Predator 2
Enchanted
Al Jazzera
Cloverfield
The Water Horse

Lebanon

Empire CinemaCity, City Mall - Nahr el Mot, Dora, Beirut
Cloverfield
Butterfly on a Wheel
Dan in Real Life
P.S. I Love You
The Water Horse
Atonement
Rendition
Charlie Wilson's War
Wedding Daze

Oman

Ruwi Cinema - Ruwi, Muscat
Rambo 4
Bee Movie
Even Money
Fee Mahatat Masr
Matab Sinaee
Wilderness
Cloverfield
Sunday

Palestinian Authority

Al Kasaba - Ramallah
Heya Fawda
Lion and Four Cats

Saudi Arabia

No movie theaters.

Sources:
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Photo from *Captain Abu Raed.*

Hezbollah

Hala Jaber. *Photo by Dan Creighton*

Hala Jaber, correspondent, *The Sunday Times* (London); author of *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance* (Columbia University Press, 1997)

Ambassador Michael Sheehan, Distinguished Fellow, Center on Law and Security; former Deputy Commissioner for Counterterrorism, NYPD; former State Department Counterterrorism Coordinator

Peter Bergen, ***Moderator***, Fellow, Center on Law and Security; CNN analyst; author of *The Osama bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of Al Qaeda's Leader* (Free Press, 2006)

Hala Jaber:

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Many people think that Hezbollah is a non-Lebanese party; that it is a bunch of aliens that dropped into Lebanon from Mars or from Iran and is carrying out a war against Israel on behalf of the Iranians, the Syrians, or other foreign powers using Lebanon as a platform.

Hezbollah is a fully-fledged Lebanese party. It has a massive political wing. It is represented in parliament and in government, and it has a military wing. Its original raison d'être was to fight an occupation. It continues to be in Lebanon because it evolved into both a political and social party.

For many in the West, and in particular the United States, Hezbollah is a terrorist organization. For many in the Arab world, it is a resistance. For many in Lebanon, it is a political party and a resistance with which they have some political disputes.

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Michael Sheehan:

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After the Israel Defense Forces pulled out of southern Lebanon in 2000, Hezbollah started to re-examine itself. They won. Their primary reason for being, the resistance against the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon as Hala said, no longer existed. So between 2000 and 2006 they were trying to figure out what they were going to be – a political party, a terrorist group, a militia, a social movement. They were a little bit of all of the above.

Everything changed in 2006. They came across the border and kidnapped two Israelis, touching off a 43-day war.

• • •

Hezbollah clearly gained in the short term. Its popularity is way up in Lebanon and across the Islamic world, its morale is up, and it is being rearmed as we speak. It has developed a new weapon system that threatens Israel with its rockets. And so they are on a bit of a roll.

Besides Israel in a certain sense, the people of Lebanon are again the losers in all of this. My prognosis is pessimistic. I think it is going to get worse before it gets any better. There are too many incentives for people to continue to inflict instability in the region, particularly for the Iranians who have gained so much from it, and for Hezbollah. The Lebanese will continue to suffer. I think that Shebaa Farms will become the new flashpoint and we will have more of the same rather than any improvement of the situation in the years ahead.

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Peter Bergen:

Is Hezbollah part of the solution in Lebanon or part of the continuing problem?

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Michael Sheehan:

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Since the 1980s, Hezbollah has really been out of the terrorism business except for Israel. They actively support terrorism in Israel by helping to train Palestinian terrorists. Their media propaganda that exhorts that terrorism, glorifies it, and motivates it is clearly coming straight out of central Hezbollah apparatus. That is support for terrorism. That is their official position. The training is much more subtle but, in my view, is happening. So I would say, in sum, that Hezbollah is primarily a political organization, secondarily a militia resistance movement, thirdly a social movement funded by Iran, and fourthly a terrorist group. They were founded on terrorism. They have used it in the past. Right now, they have restrained its use for whatever reasons to support Palestinian terrorists against Israel.

That is basically all they do on the terrorism front. Others would argue that shooting Katyusha rockets into civilian areas is ter-

Hezbollah

"Party of God"

Description
Lebanese Shia political party; also has an armed component

Identity & Politics
Leads political oppostion

Goals are to promote political reform in Lebanon; to provide social services to the Shia community; and to defend Lebanon against incursions by Western powers, particularly the United States and Israel

Social services run by Hezbollah include orphanages, hospitals and micro-lending banks

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559, adopted in 2004, "[c]alls for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias" in Lebanon. In a statement attached to the resolution, Mohamad Issa, Lebanon's Minister of Foreign Affairs, said that there were no militias, only a national resistance movement "which appeared after the Israeli occupation and which would remain so long as Israel remained."

Designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. State Department?
Yes.

rorism. I did not say that. I did not say that kidnapping an Israeli soldier or coming across the border into Israel was terrorism. I could make the argument, but I didn't, and I didn't purposefully. I am not going to say that's terrorism – it is gray area. Hezbollah is a very complex organization. They are very sophisticated in what they do. They know their boundaries and what they can and can't get away with.

To answer the question as to whether they are part of the solution or part of the problem, I think it is irrelevant – they're there. But I would say this: they prosper when the situation in Lebanon deteriorates and that is a sad equation.

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Hala Jaber:

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They arrested, they seized, they kidnapped two Israeli soldiers from the border. At the end of the day, the damage in Lebanon, the destruction, the killing of more than 1,000 people was not created by Hezbollah – perhaps it was the overwhelming attack that came from Israel as retaliation (which they should not have done), bombing half of the country, destroying entire villages and turning them into rubble under the pretext that this was going to wipe out Hezbollah. Everybody knew that Hezbollah would not even be touched.

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Hezbollah came out the best from it because many Lebanese, even those who lost their homes, see it as the only force in the entire Middle East so far to show an ability to deter Israel, at least up to a small point. Instead of Israel being able to walk in and zoom out as it usually does, Hezbollah deterred it. Many Lebanese think that, should something happen in the future, Israel might think twice before launching another war in Lebanon.

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I think that Hezbollah is going in the same direction that been going for the past six years since it started participating in the political system. It is part of the government. It is part of parliament. It has participated in elections twice already and has won by a landslide. It has a massive social welfare system. All of these characteristics are part its identity now and will be in the future. What happened this summer was a mishap, and a very big one for many Lebanese.

Hezbollah will go back into elections and will do much better I think. It is one of the few organizations that is actually carrying on a major dialogue with the Christian entities in Lebanon, particularly one which represents 70 percent of the Christian population on the ground. They have come to many agreements between them. So I think that its future is in politics.

Poster at a checkpoint in south Lebanon. Ayatollah Ali Khameine'i & Ayatollah Khomeine'i. *Photo by Razia Ahamed*

It is not out there sitting and waiting to provoke another war or any incident that would cause more instability. There is a huge amount of reconstruction to be done. They recognize full well that the Lebanese people can not take another session of military violence and assault like they have this summer. So I think they will head more into politics, social welfare, and reconstruction.

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Whatever else one may say about Hezbollah in Lebanon, their history of corruption, if it exists at all, is minimal compared to all others – the government, the politicians, and every other group or party that exists at the moment. People sometimes come to them because they know that if Hezbollah is asked to distribute $100, for example, that $100 will go where it was intended. So they are doing more humanitarian work.

Yes, they received a lot of financial aid from Iran. They have been saying for decades that they get financial and military aid from Iran. But they actually put that money or aid into use for the Shiite community, which they regard as having been oppressed or at the bottom of the ladder for decades.

Michael Sheehan:

I agree with that, by the way. I agree that Hezbollah is a much more efficient and less corrupt organization than the Lebanese government.

Iran is funding virtually 100 percent of it. Iran is Shia and they strengthening the Shia in Lebanon. That is going to create other issues for Lebanon, which is a tenuous alliance of Shia, Sunni, Christian, and Druze peoples. Hezbollah does have a lot of credibility with the Shia population. They have a very well-run social services program. But, again, it is funded by Iran and, in my view, that does not come without any strings attached.

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Hala Jaber:

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Until this summer, the Lebanese/Israeli border over the last six years had been quieter than it had ever been before. That shows what can be achieved once some of the issues are finally resolved. Perhaps then we will not see these kinds of disturbances between the borders.

Lebanese stamp.

Hezbollah will continue to do well politically in Lebanon. It will continue to provide a lot of the aid to the people that it has. The Lebanese government (which takes the money it does have for its own personal use) cannot afford to replicate what Hezbollah has created as a social factor. Once it can, that role will be over for Hezbollah, but I do not think that is going to happen in the near future. There is a long, long way to go.

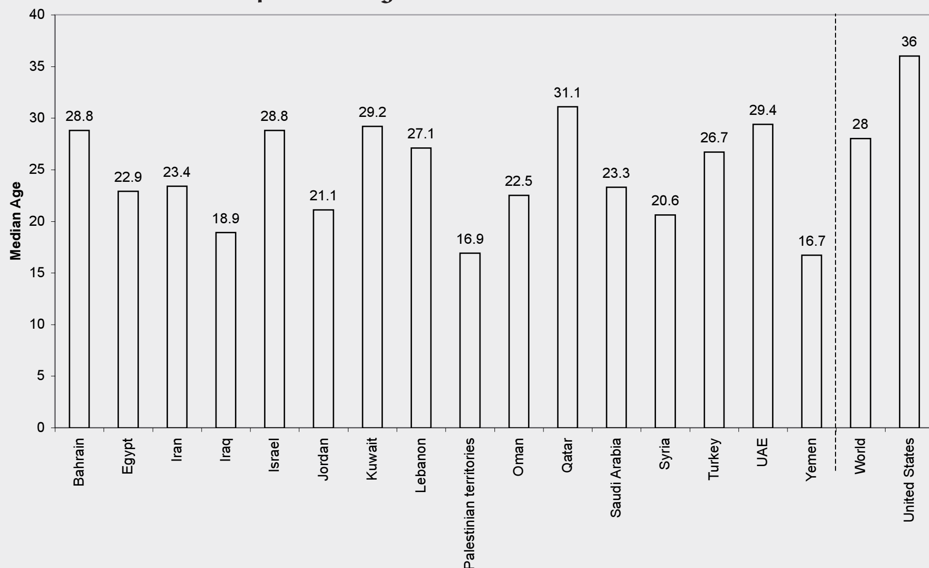
Hezbollah's military wing will continue to feel that they have to be on the defensive, or at least ready if anything should happen, until they think that Lebanese/Israeli issue is resolved once and for all. I think that is what they see as the bottom line. By "once and for all" I mean that neither country is in a state of war and perhaps have signed a peace agreement. I have no inside knowledge of when that will be. I do not know whether it will be decades or a few years from now. I do not think it will be a few months.

Michael Sheehan:

I think that Hezbollah is a revolutionary organization and a militia. Often, as those sorts of organizations mature, they either mature into regular political parties and become part of the status quo or die on the vine, or a little bit of both.

But Nasrallah is still a revolutionary. He is a very cagey politician. He does not speak widely about his vision for Lebanon because, I think, he would scare off most Lebanese. I think that most Lebanese support him now but certainly would not want him to be in charge of the country. I think that he very much understands that, and understands also that there were more than Shia in the streets of Beirut. He reached across lines, through all of Lebanon, in facing down the Israelis. Yet I think that most Lebanese would be somewhat uncomfortable with the notion of Nasrallah's and Hezbollah's vision, which is a very conservative fundamentalist Shia vision, in charge of the state.

Jerusalem (Wailing Wall, Dome of the Rock).
©istockphoto.com/Steven Allan



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Hezbollah *(continued)*

Hezbollah and Violence

Truck bombings of U.S. Marines at their barracks in Beirut, 1983

Hijacking of TWA flight #847, 1985

Bombing of Israeli embassy in Argentina, 1992 (involvement denied by Hezbollah)

Bombing of a Jewish community center in Argentina, 1994 (involvement denied by Hezbollah)

Kidnapping and killing of U.S. Lt. Colonel William Higgins, 1998

Seizure of two Israeli soldiers from a border post in northern Israel and involvement in the ensuing Lebanon/Israel conflict, 2006

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Glossary of Arabic Terms*

English/Arabic keyboard. ©*istockphoto.com/Paul Cowan*

Abu: "Father," also used as "father of." For example, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is often referred to as "Abu Mazen," meaning "father of Mazen."

Eid: A feast or celebration. Examples include Eid al Adha, which takes place during Dhu al Hijja (the month of pilgrimage), and Eid al Fitr, which takes place after the month of Ramadan.

Fatwa: A ruling issued by an Islamic cleric, typically in response to a specific question about reconciling Islamic doctrine with daily life.

Hajj: A pilgrimage to Mecca that takes place during Dhu'l Hijja, the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar (the Hijri Calendar). The Hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam, replicates Muhammad's return to Mecca, the place of his birth, after ten years in Medina. Pilgrims reenact a series of events in the lives of the prophets Abraham, Hagar, and Ishmael.

Hamas: An acronym for al "Harakat al Muqawama al Islamiya," or "Islamic Resistance Movement," and the title of a Palestinian political body designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. government.

Hezbollah: "Party of God;" the title of a Lebanese political body designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. government.

Imam: A leader; one who stands in front. The term often refers to the cleric who leads Friday prayers. In Sunni terminology it can refer to the leader of Muslims, embodied in the caliph. In Shia terminology it can mean an Islamic jurist or the successor of Muhammad intended to lead all Muslims. "Mullah," a term used primarily in Iran and Central Asia, overlaps in meaning with "imam." The word "mullah" specifically refers to Islamic jurists but can also be used to describe anyone with an Islamic education.

Insha'allah: "If God wills it."

Intifada: A shudder or awakening. When used in English, it commonly refers to Palestinian uprisings against Israeli rule in 1987 and 2000. In Arabic, it is used more generally but can add political connotations. The Cedar Revolution in Lebanon in 2005, for example, was called the "Intifada of Independence."

Jihad: Derived from the verb "to strive," the exact definition of what constitutes "jihad" is controversial. The term is often used to refer to a divine war against infidels. It can also describe an internal struggle to live a more pious life or the work of converting others to Islam.

Iraqi stamp.

Khaleej: "Gulf." The term often refers to what English-speakers call the "Persian Gulf" and Arabic-speakers call the "Arabian Gulf," or "al Khaleej al Arabi."

Kunya: A name that adults take after they have children. It is typically composed by pairing "Abu" ("father of") or "Umm" ("mother of") with the name of one's eldest son. In some places it is customary to take a *kunya* in anticipation of having a son.

Madrassa: "School." In non-Arabic-speaking countries, the term generally refers to a school associated with a mosque. The term can be used secularly (as in "*madrassa ibtiday-ea*" or "primary school") or to refer to schools with some degree of religious curricula.

Mahdi: "Guided one." In Islam, the Mahdi – one expected to arrive on earth and usher in an era of purity – is similar to the Judeo-Christian Messiah. Sunni and Shia understandings of the Mahdi differ. The Mahdi is mentioned in Hadith but not the Koran.

Ma sha'allah: A phrase used to express appreciation for God's work. If someone were to say that he has three children, for example, "*ma sha'allah*" would be the appropriate response.

al Qaeda: "The base," and the name of the terrorist organization run by Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zwahiri.

al Quds: "Holiness," and the Arabic word for Jerusalem.

Ramadan: The ninth month of the Hijri calendar, during which Muslims fast each day from sunup until sundown.

Salafi: A person belonging to an Islamic school of thought that advocates a return to the way of life at the time of the Prophet Mohammad. "Salaf" translates as "ancestors," and the Salafi's belief is called "Salafiyya."

Shariah: Islamic law, derived from the Qur'an, Sunnah, and Hadith.

Tawhid: Belief in the oneness of God.

Takfir: A concept similar excommunication but that does not necessarily entail a formal process. Any person pronouncing another as an infidel is committing an act of takfir.

Ulama: Religious scholars educated in a traditional manner (the singular form is alim).

Umm: "Mother," also used as "mother of."

Ummah: The community of Muslims.

Umra: A pilgrimage to Mecca that follows the same pattern as the Hajj but, unlike the Hajj, may take place at any time during the year.

Wasta: Personal pull, influence, or connections.

* Each Arabic word might have several alternative English spellings. The terms in the glossary are alphabetized according to the English transliterations used here.

Sources of Islam

Qur'an: The holy book of Islam, said to be given by God to the Prophet Muhammad in a series of revelations. The word "Qur'an" means recitation. Parts of the Qur'an were recorded during the Prophet's lifetime, and it was completely transcribed within twenty years of his death. It is the most authoritative source in Islam, and is only considered authentic in Arabic.

Hadith: An aggregation of biographical accounts of the Prophet and his companions. Hadith were transmitted orally for 200 years and then gradually transcribed. The authenticity of some Hadith is now a source of careful scholarly examination.

Sunnah: The words and deeds of Muhammad, which establish normative standards of conduct for Muslims. The Sunnah is embodied in the collection of authentic Hadith reports.

Arabic Names

Names in the Arab world follow a specific pattern. A person will have their individual given name, a name taken from either their father or grandfather, and also a family name. The family name may come from their tribal affiliation, place where they were born, or other attributes. They may also take a *kunya*, which means either "mother" ("*umm*") or "father " ("*abu*").

Abu Musab al Zarqawi's name illustrates a *kunya*. "Abu Musab" means "father of Musab." "Zarqawi" indicates that he is from Zarqa, Jordan.

The name Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab indicates several things. Muhammad, for the Prophet Muhammad, is his given name. "*Ibn*," meaning "son," shows that his father is named Abd al Wahhab.

"*Abd*" means servant. "*Wahab*," one of 99 Arabic names for God, literally means "bestower." The full translation of Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab, then, is Muhammad, son of Abd al Wahab, Servant of the Bestower.

Tram stop, Alexandria, Egypt. ©*istockphoto.com/Holger Mette*

Is al Qaeda the Product of Saudi Arabia's Politics and Wahhabi Religious Ideology?

Prof. Bernard Haykel. *Photo by Dan Creighton*

Prof. Bernard Haykel, Associate Professor of Islamic Law and Politics, New York University

Prof. Bernard Haykel:

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Al Qaeda is a Salafi political movement. So what is Salafism? I'm going to use Salafism and Wahhabism interchangeably – to be a Wahhabi and to be a Salafi is the same thing, because the Wahhabis have essentially co-opted the Salafi term for themselves and constitute a subset of the global Salafi movement. A Salafi is someone who is obsessed with certain theological views; namely, an obsession with the idea of God's oneness. This is something called *tawhid*. Salafis condemn anyone who deviates from that oneness.

Typically and historically, they have been bothered about things such as requests at gravesites. Visiting the gravesite of a saint and asking for something, something like good health, is considered to be stripping God away from one of His attributes, namely that only God can heal. You cannot ask it of any mortal whether alive or dead, and they are willing to fight and engage in violence over such issues.

They also hate Shiites, unquestionably. They consider Shiites heretics, outside the pale of Islam. There is a debate as to whether you can kill them wholesale or only their elites and scholars.

• • •

If you look at al Qaeda's creed, which you can find on the Internet, it is absolutely Wahhabi or Salafi in its orientation. Half of the tenets that they believe, something like 15 out of 30, involve excommunication; the concept of excommunicating fellow Muslims who do not agree with their view of the world. This is a practice called *takfir*. It is something that the Wahhabis historically were very fond of doing and have engaged in wantonly, and they have combined this practice of *takfir* with a political agenda.

They are not, however, linked to the Muslim Brotherhood in terms of intellectual genealogy, as many have argued, except in perhaps one respect. The theology and the creed of the Muslim Brotherhood is not really a Salafi one. The Muslim Brothers typically do not have problems with Shiites. They do not have problems with certain forms of Sufism. In fact, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hasan al-Banna, an Egyptian, was alleged to be a Sufi himself, and to have been influenced by Sufism. What the Muslim Brotherhood gives al Qaeda, though, is something quite distinct, and this is something that it has given to many other Muslims, both in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. It is a form of political consciousness, and also an analytical, conceptual, and terminological framework within which to discuss politics nationally and globally.

A typical Wahhabi, for instance, would never have had anything to say about Americans, or about America's politics or western imperialism. He would be bothered, however, about Americans being present in Saudi Arabia, and we have lots of poetry from Wahhabis who vilify the Americans who came to work for Aramco (the Arabian American Oil Company that discovered oil in Saudi Arabia in 1930s and '40s), but you don't actually have wholesale discourses on politics. They just don't do that.

They are more obsessed with the acts of individuals – whether you visit graves, whether you pray, how you perform your ablutions, whether you speak to non-Muslims, and so on. The Muslim Brotherhood is not like that. It does have a political agenda, and more importantly a framework in which to talk about politics. This is something that has been adopted by al Qaeda and others.

There is, in fact, a combination at least at the political ideological level, but not in terms of theology. We are talking about a very purist, very puritanical religious movement that is theologically minded and takes theology very seriously – so seriously that there are few analogs in Western Europe or in America.

• • •

On one end of the Wahhabi spectrum is a group that is very much like the Amish, in a town called Buraydah. They do not drive cars, they ride horses. They do not use electricity. They refuse to use identity cards or to be photographed. They reject the state, but they don't do anything about it. They live in a kind of primitive commune fashion. Then there is a group that gives its allegiance to the Saudi royal family, and obeys, blindly, what the Saudi royal family says, because they consider the royal family – and the king specifically – to be the legitimate ruler of a Muslim state. In Arabic, this person is called a *Wali al-Amr*. There is a group beyond them, who are actually desperate to reform the politics of Saudi Arabia and the Muslim world, but who refuse to engage in violence. I would describe them as nonviolent reformers or activists.

Then there is al Qaeda. These are people who not only want to reform Saudi Arabia and the world but who want to do so through violent means. They are advocates of violence at a very individualistic level.

Their argument is quite simple: The Muslim world is under attack by a barbarian force (meaning us). There is a complete disjuncture in the balance of forces and weaponry between the West and the Muslim world. Because the Muslim world is being attacked, certain rules from Islamic law immediately come into play. If there is a defensive jihad and an armed struggle to defend Muslim territory, the duty is individual upon all Muslims – certainly upon the Muslims of the area that is being attacked and then spreading out in concentric circles so that each and every Muslim is duty-bound to repel the aggressor.

The argument is that the Americans were in control of Saudi Arabia. They had an occupying force, and the rulers of the Muslim world, especially the Saudi rulers, are lackeys and accomplices of the West. They are servants of the West and apostates. Because they are in alliance with the West, they are not to be considered Muslims. A very important principle in Wahhabi and in al Qaeda ideology is a notion called *al-wala'wa-l-bara*'. This means associating yourself with Muslims and disassociating yourself from non-Muslims.

They take this doctrine very seriously and argue that the Saudi ruler does not practice this concept of *wala' wa-l-bara'*; he does not disassociate himself from the Americans, and is in alliance with the Americans. Therefore he is an apostate, and rebellion is incumbent on the Saudi people, and on all Muslims, to remove this person from power and to establish another order, a virtuous order, in which Islamic law and this principle will be applied.

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The argument that economic deprivation is what leads to the radicalization of people such as the members of al Qaeda is entirely spurious. It just does not hold water empirically. Al Qaeda is represented in Saudi Arabia largely by middle- to upper-middle-class people.

If you go to the southern provinces of Saudi Arabia, such places as Asir and Jizan, where 15 of the 19 9/11 hijackers are from, it is a fairly wealthy place, and the families of the hijackers are wealthy families.

Autocracy is not an explanation for the al Qaeda phenomenon either – in other words, that the Arab regimes, or certain Arab regimes, brutalize their populations, leading to this form of Islam. I do not think that is true for Saudi Arabia. It may be true for places like Egypt, it is certainly true for places like Syria, but not Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is not a regime that brutalizes its population. It is actually a fairly benign place by regional standards.

I think that al Qaeda is explained much more by ideology. Ideas are important. Wala wa-l-bara' is important if you take it seriously. Issues that have to do with humiliation are also a factor. If you feel humiliated, even if you are not personally humiliated in Saudi Arabia but you feel somehow humiliated as a member of the global Muslim community, that does make you more receptive of this ideology. American policies have certainly fed this feeling of Muslim humiliation since 9/11.

The Sunni-Shia Divide

The Sunni-Shia divide originated over a dispute over the succession of the Prophet Muhammed. The Shia asserted that Ali, Muhammed's son-in-law, was the only legitimate successor to the Prophet Mohammed and should serve as the first Caliph (the term "Shia" derives from "*Shi'at Ali*," or "the party of Ali"). The Shia believe that the Prophet intended for members of his own family to succeed him as leaders of the Muslim community.

Upon Muhammed's death, however, the Muslim community in Medina instead chose Muhammad's ally Abu Bakr. Ali later became the fourth Caliph in 656. He then fought several wars to retain his position. He was ultimately killed in 661 and succeeded by his chief opponent, Mu'awiyah.

Ali's son Husayn later refused to recognize the legitimacy of Mu'awiyah's son as Caliph. The citizens of Ali's former capital – the town of Kufah in present-day Iraq – invited Husayn to become a rival Caliph. Husayn and his supporters were shortly thereafter killed in the battle of Karbala in 680.

Over time those who supported Ali in and around Kufah grew into a distinct collection of sects asserting the legitimate authority of Ali's lineal descendants. The largest Shia sect, the Imami, recognize the succession of twelve 'Alid claimants to the Caliphate, beginning with Ali himself. They believe that the twelfth such Imam disappeared but will eventually return as the *Mahdi* to bring justice to the world.

Sources:

Encyclopædia Britannica 2008, "*Ali*," Encyclopædia Britannica Online, http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-260781

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Suicide Terrorism

Shia Demographics in the Middle East by Percent of Total National Population

Country	Shia
Iran	89 - 90%
Azerbaijan	59 - 75%
Bahrain	58 - 75%
Iraq	60 - 65%
Lebanon	34 - 45%
Yemen	40%
Kuwait	25 - 35%
Pakistan	20%
Turkey	20 - 30%
Afghanistan	9 - 19%
Qatar	10 -16%
Syria	11 - 16%
UAE	6 -16%
Saudi Arabia	10%
Tajikistan	5%
Jordan	2 - 5%

Note: The ranges in the chart above represent differing estimates among multiple sources.

The Shia are divided into multiple different branches, with the majority being Imami. The countries in which the majority of the Shia belong to other branches are Syria, Turkey, and Yemen. In Syria, the majority of the Shia are Alawites. In Turkey, 70% of the Shia are Alevi (a Sufi branch of Shi'ism). In Yemen, around 90% of the Shia are Zaydi and the others mostly Ismaili.

Sources:

CIA, *2008 World Factbook*

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Robert Pape. *Photo by Deb Rothenberg*

Peter Bergen, Fellow, The New American Foundation; CNN terrorism analyst; author of *The Osama bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of Al Qaeda's Leader* (Free Press, 2006)

Farhad Khosrokhavar, Professor, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris, author of *Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs* (Pluto Press, 2005)

Robert Pape, Professor, University of Chicago; author of *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (Random House, 2005)

Prof. Stephen Holmes, ***Moderator***, Professor, New York University Law School, author of "Al-Qaeda, September 11, 2001" in *Making Sense of Suicide Missions*, Diego Gambetta ed. (Oxford University Press, 2005)

Robert Pape:

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Suicide terrorism has been rising around the world but there is great confusion about why. Since many attacks, including 9/11, have been perpetrated by Muslim suicide terrorists, many people have presumed that Islamic fundamentalism must be the obvious central cause. This presumption has fueled the belief that future 9/11s can only be avoided by wholesale transformation of Muslim societies, which was a core reason for the broad public support of our invasion of Iraq. This presumed connection between terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism is misleading, however, and may be encouraging domestic and foreign policies that are likely to exacerbate America's situation.

Over the last few years, I have compiled the first complete database of every suicide terrorist attack around the world from 1980 to early 2004, and I have recently updated it for Iraq through December 2005.

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The data shows that Islamic fundamentalism is not as closely associated with suicide terrorism as many people think. Overall, from 1980 to the end of 2003, there were 315 completed suicide terrorist attacks around the world. The world leader is the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka -- a Marxist group, a secular group, a Hindu group. They have done more suicide terrorist attacks than either Hamas or Islamic Jihad. Further, at least 30 percent of Muslim suicide attacks are by secular groups such as the PKK, which is a Kurdish terrorist group in Turkey. Overall, at least 50 percent of all suicide terrorist attacks around the world are not associated with Islamic fundamentalism.

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To explain suicide terrorism, I have analyzed the phenomenon at three levels in my book, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. It seeks to explain why suicide terrorism makes sense for terrorist organizations (the strategic logic), why it gains mass support (the social logic), and what motives drive individuals to do it (the individual logic). Each level of analysis is important, because suicide terrorism is conducted by non-state actors who lack the coercive apparatus of a state to compel either the surrounding society or individual members to support their operations. I am going to focus only on the strategic logic, partly because of time constraints and partly because it is the logic that unifies the other two.

What nearly all suicide terrorist attacks have in common is not religion but rather a specific secular and strategic goal – namely, to coerce a democratic state to withdraw military forces. I do not mean advisors with side arms. I mean the withdrawal of tanks, fighter aircraft, and armored personnel carriers from territory that the terrorists consider to be their homeland or that they prize greatly. From Lebanon to Israel, Sri Lanka, Kashmir, and Chechnya, the main goal of every suicide terrorist campaign since 1980

has been the establishment or maintenance of self-determination for territory that the terrorists prize. Religion is rarely the root cause, although it is often used as a tool by terrorist organizations in recruiting and in other ways to serve the broader strategic objective.

Three patterns in the data support my conclusions. The first concerns the timing of suicide terrorist attacks. Suicide terrorism rarely occurs as an isolated or random event, as it would if it were merely the product of an evil ideology independent of circumstance. Instead, the attacks tend to occur in clusters that look very much like campaigns. Specifically, 301 of the 315 occur in coherent, organized, strategic campaigns that terrorist groups design for specific political, secular goals. Only five percent are random or isolated events.

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Second, while I am not saying that foreign occupation or the threat of foreign occupation is a sufficient condition for suicide terrorism, a military presence or the control of territory appears to be a necessary condition. The third pattern concerns target selection. If suicide terrorism is a calculated, coercive strategy, one might expect that this strategy would be applied to target states that are generally considered to be the most vulnerable to punishment. Rightly or wrongly, democracies are viewed as soft and especially vulnerable to coercive punishment. They have also been the target state of every suicide terrorist campaign since 1980. So the bottom line is that the timing, goals, and societies targeted by suicide terrorism suggest that it is a coherent strategy designed to cause democratic states to abandon the occupation or military control of territory.

Al Qaeda fits the pattern. We have long known that a major goal of Osama bin Laden's has been to compel the United States to leave the Arabian Peninsula, but not how this goal relates to his ability to recruit suicide terrorists to kill us.

My research is the first to collect the complete set of all al Qaeda suicide attackers; that is, the 71 individuals from 1995 to early 2004 who actually killed themselves to carry out attacks for bin Laden. Of these 71, we know the name, nationality, and other demographic data of 67. The largest group from a single country, 34, comes from Saudi Arabia. The majority are from the Persian Gulf, where the United States first began to station combat forces in 1990. It is important to underscore that the United States had never stationed combat forces on the Arabian Peninsula before then -- advisors, yes, but not tanks, fighter aircraft, or APCs, going all the way back to World War II.

Notice where the suicide attackers are *not* coming from:

- Iran, which has an Islamic fundamentalist population of 70 million people. It is three times the size of Saudi Arabia but has produced no al Qaeda suicide attackers.
- Sudan, which has a population almost the same size as Saudi Arabia. The philosophy of its government is a brand of Islamic fundamentalism so congenial to Osama Bin Laden that he chose to live there for three years in the 1990s, yet it has produced no suicide terrorists.
- Pakistan, the largest Islamic fundamentalist country on the planet, with 149 million people. It has produced two.

If Islamic fundamentalism were driving the threat, we should be seeing suicide terrorists jumping out of Iran, Sudan, and Pakistan. Instead, we see a different pattern. I am not saying that there is no transnational support for al Qaeda, but it is crucial to see that the presence of foreign American and Western combat troops on the Arabian Peninsula is bin Laden's best mobilization appeal.

Since we have data on the complete set of al Qaeda suicide attackers, we can asses the effect of American military policy. With only one exception, all of the al Qaeda suicide terrorists from 1995 to 2004 were from various Sunni-majority countries. Hence, we can compare the rate at which they come from Sunni countries with American combat presence and Sunni countries without. They are over 10 times more likely to come from a Sunni country *with* American combat forces than without. This is difficult for me to say, and I supported having those troops there in the 1990s, but this means that American military policy was likely the pivotal factor leading to 9/11. Although Islamic fundamentalism may have mattered somewhat, the stationing of tens of thousands of American combat troops on the Arabian Peninsula during the 1990s probably increased the risk of al Qaeda suicide attacks against Americans, including 9/11, over ten times.

This does not mean that we should blame ourselves for the deaths of 3,000 of our citizens on 9/11. Suicide terrorism is murder, and there is nothing that our forces did when they were stationed on the Arabian Peninsula that would justify the murder of our civilians. However, that should not cause us to overlook the fact that bin Laden's best mobilization appeal, which would help him recruit suicide terrorists better than anything else (not the only thing, but better than anything else), is the presence of American and Western combat forces on the Arabian Peninsula. Not all al Qaeda suicide terrorists came from Sunni Muslim countries. Two thirds did and one third did not. One third is transnational in nature. However, if we look at those who are transnational, we can see that the presence of Western combat forces on the Arabian Peninsula is a powerful motivating factor.

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Our counterterrorism strategy has been based on a faulty premise – that suicide terrorism is mainly the product of an evil ideology called Islamic fundamentalism. Although there are multiple causes, the data shows that the main cause is not an evil ideology independent from circumstance, but the sustained presence of American and Western combat forces on the Arabian Peninsula. The U.S. had 12,000 combat troops there on 9/11 – 5,000 in Saudi Arabia and 7,000 in other countries on the rim. Today, we have over 140,000 combat forces in Iraq and the rest of the Arabian Peninsula. American combat presence and suicide terrorism, both by al Qaeda and in Iraq, have increased side by side.

This does not mean that we should merely cut and run from the region. We have a vital interest in the Persian Gulf because of oil. Oil is the reason that the Persian Gulf and Iraq are not Vietnam, and we have to act to secure that interest. Instead, I have been offering three points to the Bush administration.

First, al Qaeda must be our top priority. While Iran and North Korea are important, it is al Qaeda that is actively planning to kill us. We have lost sight of that over the last three years.

Second, we should not expect democracy in Iraq to be a panacea that will end suicide terrorism so long as American combat forces remain stationed there. We should begin to draw down our combat forces in the next year and transfer responsibility for the security of Iraq to the Iraqi government

as we begin to draw down.

Third, over the next three years we should shift to our traditional strategy of offshore balancing for securing our oil interests in the Persian Gulf. During the 1970s and '80s, we secured our oil interests in the Gulf without stationing a single combat soldier on the Arabian Peninsula. Instead, we formed an alliance with Iraq and Saudi Arabia. We also stationed numerous aircraft carriers off the coast of the peninsula, and air power is more powerful today than it was 30 years ago. Finally, we maintained an infrastructure of bases without troops, so that we could rapidly deploy hundreds of thousands of ground troops to the peninsula in a crisis.

That strategy worked splendidly to reverse Saddam Hussein's aggression against Kuwait in 1990. It is again our best strategy for securing our interest in oil and preventing the rise of a new generation of suicide terrorists from coming after us. It is a strategy that we can maintain not just for a year or two, holding on by our fingernails, but for decades. That is what we are going to need, because even the best estimates do not foresee our getting rid of our addiction to oil anytime soon. Over the last 10 years, our enemies have been dying to win. But, with the right strategy, it is America that's poised for victory.

Peter Bergen:

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It is of course a fact that the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia was the principal reason that al Qaeda launched its attacks against the United Sates, but we have drawn down our presence in Saudi Arabia to effectively nothing now. That does not seem to have stopped al Qaeda's campaign against the United States, or the West in general.

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I do think that Islam remains a very important factor here. I would like to sketch out a couple of examples that demonstrate why it is hard to say these attacks are related to territory, or are some sort of nationalist response, but are instead motivated by Islamic fundamentalism. These are the attacks that al Qaeda and its affiliates have conducted against Israeli and Jewish targets since 9/11.

It was always puzzling to me why al Qaeda, which called itself the World Islamic Front against the Crusaders and the Jews, never attacked Israeli or Jewish targets before 9/11. I think part of that is that these groups believe their own propaganda.

Minarets. *Photo by Jack Berger*

They really believe that the Pentagon was staffed entirely by Jews, so from al Qaeda's perspective, the attack on the Pentagon was actually an anti-Jewish attack as much as it was an anti-American attack. But, be that as it may, al Qaeda and its affiliates have conducted a systematic campaign against Jewish and Israeli targets after 9/11. These are not directed at getting Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. These are simply religiously motivated, anti-Semitic attacks.

I'll give you several examples of such suicide attacks. One was the directed at a Jewish community center in Casablanca, Morocco. There have been two synagogue attacks in Istanbul, an attack on an Israeli-owned hotel in Mombasa, and an attack on a Tunisian synagogue which killed 17 Germans. So, while Bob has done an incredibly valuable job of collecting all this data, I do not think we should underestimate the importance of Islamic fundamentalism.

There is an interesting example which may cut all sorts of different ways. Afghanistan had had no suicide attacks more or less in the post-9/11 era, despite the fact that there was a U.S. occupation there. In the last six months, however, we have seen 25 suicide attacks there. I think part of that is copycatting what has gone on in Iraq. Who are doing these attacks? If Bob is correct, the people engaging in these attacks should be Afghans. After all, it is their country that is being occupied by the United States. According to Carlotta Gall's very good article in *The New York Times* on February 15, 2006, most of these suicide attacks are being conducted by Pakistanis. The U.S., however, does not presently have troops in Pakistan.

I think that part of the research that we need to do is in finding out who is conducting the suicide operations in Afghanistan. If Bob is right, they should all be Afghans. If Bob is wrong, it will turn out that they are mostly Pakistanis. Maybe we could even split the difference, because a lot of Pakistanis are actually Afghans who grew up in refugee camps and who have Pakistani passports.

Farhad Khosrokhavar:

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I think that there is a major problem in that some kinds of fundamentalism within Islam end up in radicalization and possibly terrorism, while other kinds do not. There is a question as to whether we should look at fundamentalism as a kind of footstep toward radicalization or not. My personal view is that, in most cases, fundamentalism prohibits radicalization, although in some cases it pushes the other way. It is not true that fundamentalism, as such, is somehow encouraging radicalization.

My experience in many European countries – based on anthropology, on interviews, on descriptions of intentionality rather than gathering statistical data – shows that it is a much more complex phenomenon. It involves the intersection of many levels.

First of all, there needs to be some kind of personal experience of rejection, of racism, of Islam-phobia as a condition for radicalization. In 160 two-hour prison interviews conducted over two years, the people I spoke to referred to some kind of existential experience related to Islam-phobia and racism.

The second level is political, dealing with the sorts of things that happen in Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and in many other Muslim countries on a daily basis. The crisis of Muslim societies is very important.

Their identification with this ummah (which is partially an imaginary ummah,

because it never existed historically the way it does now) is much more important than their identification with other British, French, Dutch, or Danish citizens. Through a kind of symbolic and imaginary construction of this new ummah, it becomes much more important than ties to citizens of their own countries. Many people from the second or third generation in Europe told me that the suffering of the ummah all over the world, and in their own countries, was decisive in their determination to become a martyrist and jihadist.

In that respect, the fact that people might suffer through jihadism in their own country, for instance in England, through explosions seem to them not to be important. In many European countries, there is weakening of the national identity and the strengthened idea of a kind of universal ummah. This is all constructed on the basis of TV, the Internet, and an identity antithetical to the societies to which they factually belong.

Most of the people in Europe who identify with this kind of ummah do not speak Arabic, and do not know the Koran – or at least they don't before being radicalized. Then they try to learn Arabic, they try to have some kind of legitimization through sacred texts and so on. So the process of radicalization in many ways precedes the process of Islamization, and this whole construction is related to the crisis within European societies.

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Robert Pape:
As to whether our withdrawal from Saudi Arabia should end the problem, it would if we took an extremely narrow view of our military forces. It is important to remember that our forces are not weak. They are the precise military that conquered Baghdad in three weeks. If we have 140,000 combat troops in Iraq, how long would it take for them to get to Riyadh?

Our going into Iraq fulfilled one of bin Laden's most powerful prophecies. He gave a sermon in 1996 called "The American Occupation of the Arabian Peninsula," which ran to 40 single-spaced pages when it was published. In section one, he laid out all of our combat operations on the peninsula. He went on to say (and remember that this was in 1996) that the U.S. will conquer Iraq, break it into three pieces, and then do the same to the rest of the Arabian Peninsula. I am sorry to say that we have fulfilled that prophecy.

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Critique of the Nationalist Explanation of Suicide Terrorism Campaigns

Peter Bergen. *Photo by Dan Creighton*

The claim that suicide terrorism campaigns are generally nationalist struggles, as articulated by Robert Pape in his book *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, does not match the evidence when it comes to Iraq and Pakistan. There, where suicide bombings are on the increase, having reached record levels in 2007, the evidence suggests that occupation of a foreign country has less to do with the suicide attacks than other factors, most prominently religion.

Mohamed Hafez, the author of the authoritative 2007 study *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*, has found that of the 139 known suicide bombers in Iraq, 53 were from Saudi Arabia and only 18 were Iraqi. The rest came from other Arab countries and even Europe. Hafez's findings were backed up by the October, 2007, discovery of a trove of al Qaeda in Iraq documents recovered by the US military in Sinjar, close to the Syrian border. The documents provide a record of foreign fighters who had traveled to Iraq since August 2006. According to a careful analysis by West Point's Combating Terrorism Center, more than half of the 606 foreign fighters whose biographies were detailed in the documents were listed as aspiring suicide bombers. The Sinjar documents also confirmed Hafez's findings that Saudis were playing a prominent role in al Qaeda in Iraq and its suicide operations. Forty-one percent of the fighters in the Sinjar documents were Saudi.

Other researchers have also published findings indicating that the suicide attackers in Iraq are overwhelmingly foreigners. The Israeli terrorism specialist Reuven Paz, using information posted on al Qaeda-linked Web sites between October, 2004, and March, 2004, found that 23 of the 33 suicide attacks listed were conducted by Saudis and only one by an Iraqi. Similarly, in June, 2005, the SITE Institute of Washington, D.C., found by tracking both jihadist Web sites and media reports that 104 of the 199 Sunni extremists who had died in Iraq either in suicide attacks or in action against coalition or Iraqi forces were from Saudi Arabia and only 21 from Iraq.

And so, the most extensive suicide campaign in history – more than 860 suicide attacks since 2003 – is being conducted in Iraq almost entirely by *foreigners* animated by the deeply-held religious belief that they must liberate a Muslim land from the "infidel" occupiers. Those suicide attackers see themselves as acting on behalf of the *umma* (the global community of Muslim believers), a supranational concept that does not recognize national boundaries. In short, the suicide attackers in Iraq are as far from being nationalists as is possible to imagine. The bulk of them traveled to Iraq, a country they had never even previously visited, to commit suicide. The only explanation for this is the rationale that the jihadist terrorists themselves offer – that they are doing this for God and Islam.

Just as the suicide campaign in Iraq does not correspond to a one-size-fits-all explanation for suicide terrorism as an invariably nationalist response to foreign occupation, nor do recent events in Pakistan. In 2007 Pakistan suffered some 60 suicide attacks, most of them launched by the Pakistani Taliban and/or al Qaeda. Many of them were directed against the Pakistani state, which they consider to be infidel because of its collaboration with the United States in the "war on terror." The perpetrators of these suicide attacks have usually been Pakistanis and the targets have, in the main, been Pakistani politicians, policemen, government officials and army units. The Pakistani government is clearly not "occupying" Pakistan, so nationalism cannot be the motivating principle.

Immanuel Kant observed that "out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made." This aphorism should be a warning to those who imagine that universal laws govern the actions of men. In fact, there is no single law that governs why men do what they do, not least suicide bombers.

– Peter Bergen

Conversation with Lawrence Wright

Lawrence Wright, Steven Simon. *Photo by Susan Cook*

Lawrence Wright, Fellow, Center on Law and Security; staff writer, *The New Yorker*; author of *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (Knopf, 2006)

Steven Simon, ***Moderator***, Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies, Council on Foreign Relations

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Lawrence Wright:

Osama bin Laden is a great spin doctor. He has been able to take the legend of the Arab Afghans – which were a completely negligible factor in Afghanistan, in fact an obstruction – and elevate them into this mythic force.

He always loved this sort of adventure. He loved the American television shows *Bonanza* and *Fury*, and he was kind of a cowboy of the desert. So he had that side of him, that dashing side. But he took the image of the Arab Afghan struggle and returned home the most unlikely hero. He hadn't won any battles. He had stood off the Soviets in Jaji, but it was not a glorious victory. The Soviets were already retreating. All of the other battles had been catastrophes. Yet he came home and cloaked himself in glory.

He really is a puzzling figure in Saudi Arabia, where there is the royal family and then there is everybody else. The others might be rich people but they are not royal. They do not have streets named after them; they do not have hospitals named after them. But suddenly here is this wealthy, young Saudi who is Saudi Arabia's first celebrity. They just did not know what to do with him.

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One of the things that surprised me about al Qaeda and its creation is that it did not begin as a terrorist group. It was created as a kind of Muslim foreign legion, an Arab foreign legion to be specific, an anti-communist militia.

Bin Laden wanted to pursue the Soviets out of Afghanistan and fight the communist government in Yemen. Those were his two big targets, and he would have been our nominal ally in those efforts. Al Qaeda changed over time. It has evolved. I think it is evolving still. We have seen from its early days until now that it has been an amazingly nimble and reactive organization.

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Steven Simon:

How does he make the transition from this Saudi hero to businessman, farmer, rancher, and terrorist financier in Khartoum?

Lawrence Wright:

It really started with Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. This was a very telling moment because Saudi Arabia was also endangered. You have to pause for a moment to think about the sheer gall of bin Laden and about his delusional capacity. He went in to talk to Prince Sultan, the defense minister, offering al Qaeda to defend the kingdom. He said that they could bring in 100,000 unemployed Saudi youth, give them jobs, and defend their country. He said that they could use the Caterpillars, bulldozers, and his father's construction company against a million-man Iraqi army with one of the largest tank corps in the world.

Well of course the defense minister laughed him out of the office. It was a very insulting moment. In retrospect, I think I did not put as much weight on that moment as I should have, because oftentimes we give bin Laden too much credit for his canniness or whatever. But think about the grandeur – the delusional capacity – of that, the image of digging trenches along there and putting a bunch of unemployed kids on the perimeter with al Qaeda in the lead, which must have had all of 20 or 30 people in it at that time.

So that was a humiliating moment; "humiliation" being one of his key words.

Then there is the fact that the Saudis turned to America. Well who else were they going to turn to? But the strict Wahhabis like bin Laden always remember the hadith, the saying of the Prophet ascribed to his deathbed, "Let there be no two religions in Arabia," although there were many Christians and Jews in Arabia at the time of his death. But this is an injunction that lives in the heart of many Saudis, not just bin Laden. The risk that the royal family took in inviting Christians and Jews – and even more galling, women – to come defend their kingdom was pretty great.

That is the moment when bin Laden turned against the royal family. I have been reading these ideologues recently, and Abu Musab al Suri writes about how he wanted to attack the royal family. The ideologues in al Qaeda responded, "You won't get the popular support for that, but if you attack America you will expose their dependency, their cravenness, their weakness."

Well, bin Laden fell out of favor with the royal family and he was kind of confined to quarters. He asked for permission to leave the country and he fled to Sudan. From 1992 to 1996 he was in Sudan, and it was, I think, the real cradle of al Qaeda the terrorist organization.

Sudan had opened the doors to any Muslim, and that meant that any Muslim who could not go anywhere else would go to Khartoum, including recent Muslims like Carlos the Jackal. He became a Muslim because it was a good time to go to Khartoum. He would hang out in the Hilton, and Abu Nidal and all these different terrorist groups had their offices there. Bin Laden set up shop, and he had some money, and they had a lot of needs.

This was like the Catholic expression, "the near occasion of sin" – that is, just putting yourself in a position to cross the line is as if you have already committed the sin. So he was in Khartoum, and he was surrounded by terrorists from all over the Middle East. It was a dangerous situation. It was a tempting situation but he himself was a business man. He opened up a number of businesses. He was probably Sudan's largest landowner, because the government paid for his construction of roads and such by giving him land. He had one plot that of more than a million acres. He would walk

al Qaeda

"The Base"

Description
Terrorist organization; represents an extreme interpretation of fundamentalist, Salafi Islam

Current Leaders
Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri, likely based near the Afghanistan–Pakistan border.

Identity & Politics
Espouses a broad philosophy of violent jihad with a wide range of potential targets, primarily Western civilian targets. Besides their antipathy to the West, al Qaeda is also anti-Shia.

Seeks to revive the Islamic caliphate

Maintained a relationship with the Taliban government of Afghanistan prior to the American military campaign in 2001

Their philosophy, and sometimes their name, has been adopted by numerous other groups across the Middle East and the Islamic world

Designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. State Department? Yes.

around Khartoum with sunflowers that he had grown and he would say, "This should be in the Guinness Book of World Records." That really seemed to be an aspiration of his. It is not an exaggeration to say that al Qaeda had become an agricultural organization. But there were several things that were tipping the scale.

One is the extreme paranoia that infected this group. When there was the famine in Somalia, and American troops among others arrived to help alleviate the chaos and distribute food, al Qaeda saw that as an act of encirclement – that they were physically threatened. They saw it was a way of closing in on them, an organization that no practically no American knew about at the time. They saw that as a real threat, and they thought that they would have to strike back.

Another telling moment happened while Ayman al Zawahiri was waging war on Egypt, and he was a thorough-going terrorist. This is his line of work, and he bombed the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad in 1995. Bin Laden did not want that to happen. Many Arab Afghans were there in Pakistan. They had sanctuary. They were married to Pakistani women in many cases. They were part of the community. They settled down. But Zawahiri had a lot of men and a lot of operatives there, and he used them. It really became a trademark of al Qaeda, suicide bombers taking out the Egyptian embassy. The Pakistani government lost all patience with the Arab Afghans and they rounded them up. They put them in a dance hall in Peshawar, and they were going to deport them to their home countries. Bin Laden showed up with airline tickets to Sudan for 300 people. Some of these guys were hardened terrorists. They had crossed the line. And moreover they were really more committed to Zawahiri than they were to bin Laden, but bin Laden's generosity brought them to Sudan, no doubt at Zawahiri's urging. That was another key moment I think.

Finally, there was bin Laden's personal bitterness when America urged the Sudanese authorities to expel him, and it was at a time when we didn't have an indictment on bin Laden; we really could not do anything with him ourselves. On the way out the door the Sudanese picked his pockets, seven million dollars or whatever it was. The Saudis had cut him off in 1994. They cut off his allowance from the bin Laden family. His businesses were not making any money but he had vast investments. When he left, the Sudanese government divvied him up among themselves, spoils of war. Abu Rida al Suri, who was his business manager, told me that when bin Laden left Khartoum he was worth about $50,000, but the intelligence guy who had the al Qaeda file in Khartoum said, "He left here with nothing." So there was a personal grudge. It was only a couple of months after bin Laden got to Afghanistan in 1996 that he declared war on the United States.

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I sometimes think that when Zawahiri spotted bin Laden it was like Colonel Parker seeing Elvis for the first time. He's thinking, "I can use this kid. He's rich. He's charismatic," and these were qualities that Zawahiri notably did not have. But bin Laden had no direction and he had no organization. So Zawahiri just grafted al Jihad onto bin Laden and they called it al Qaeda. So in my view that's how the organization came together.

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I think that we are going to see periods where Islamists win elections, and that seems inevitable, and perhaps would be inevitable even in Egypt. But I do think that it is important for them to be responsible for their rhetoric. I believe that democracy is an inherently moderating force (although democratic movements can also be corrupt and autocratic). I think that this is going to be a generational struggle; I think it's going to be really messy.

al Qaeda *(continued)*

al Qaeda and Major Acts of Violence
Simultaneous bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, 1998

Bombing of the *U.S.S. Cole* in Aden, Yemen, 2000

9/11 attacks, 2001

Simultaneous bombings of the London public transport system, 2005

Note: Al Qaeda has taken credit for each of these attacks; this list does not include all attacks attributed to al Qaeda and affiliated groups

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Cable News Network, "Yemeni pair charged in USS Cole bombing," May 15, 2003, http://www.cnn.com/2003/LAW/05/15/cole.bombing.charges/index.html

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The radical Islamists are not interested in government. They are only interested in purification of their religion – even the Muslim Brotherhood; their main fixation is on the hijab. They have not developed deep political roots. If you were to sit down and talk to Mr. Zawahiri or Mr. bin Laden and say, "Okay, so you got hold of Egypt. Now what? What are you going to do about joblessness? What are you going to do about the environment? What is your economic model, by the way? I never heard you say anything about whether you are a Keynesian or a Marxist," you would find that they have never thought about these things. So exposing the shallowness, the ineptitude, of these movements I think is essential to beginning to create a deeper and richer democratic dialogue in that part of the world.

Distinguished Speaker Series: October 26, 2006

Conversation with Rory Stewart

Rory Stewart. *Photo by Dan Creighton*

Rory Stewart, author of *The Prince of the Marshes: And Other Occupational Hazards of a Year in Iraq* (Harcourt, 2006)

Rory Stewart:

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Iraq had been hollowed out under Saddam Hussein. Power had been dragged into the center. At a local level, people were extremely reluctant to take political responsibility.

In April 2004, a man came into my office who was an elected councilor from al Rafai, a town of 150,000 people in northern Dhi Qar. He had been elected in a ration card election system that had been quite good – there had been a high turnout and people had been happy. Ten mostly non-tribal, non-political technocrats had been elected to the council. But two days before he came to visit me, a militia group of four led by a 28 year-old cleric stormed into his office, abducted him, and tortured him. He came for justice.

I contacted the Iraqi police, of whom there were 450 in al Rafai. They refused to act. I contacted the Italian military. They sent in two army personnel carriers. The cleric, Sheikh Ali Zeidi, stood in the street and fired a rocket propelled grenade at them. They went away.

Rather than getting depressed, I thought that we would look for a political solution. We knew these people well. I had just written a 45-page paper on the tribes of al Rafai. I could sit down and we would work this out. So we got together in a room – the headmaster of the big high school, the imam of the mosque, the Sheikh of the Beni Rikaab, the Sheikh of Shweilat, the police chief, the mayor, and other sort of dignitaries. I began by saying, "This is a disgrace. You've had an election, a good election, and you are letting a 28 year-old cleric with four or five friends bust in, abduct your councilors, and torture them."

"We're going to have to hand Sheikh Ali Zeidi over to justice," I said, "What are we going to do about it? What do you recommend that we do about the problem in al Rafai?" The headmaster suggested a new election. I told him that I thought there wouldn't be much point in that, because the same thing would happen again. Sheikh Talib of the Beni Rikaab had been telling me for the previous six months that he could maintain security if I were to give him cash, weapons, and ammunition.

"This is your chance," I said, "What do you need?"

"I can't touch Ali Zeidi. He is not from my tribe." The imam of the mosque finished the meeting by saying, "Mr. Rory, Sheikh Ali Zeidi has had a difficult life. His father died when he was young. His brother has just been killed. Can we not just forget about it?"

Everybody in that room understood what I was talking about. Everybody in that room understood the language of the rule of law and justice and understood the problems of impunity. The issue is not conceptual; it was that none of them had any faith in the system. They could not see the point of handing Sheikh Ali Zeidi over to justice. They were not interested in defending the council. None of them, in fact, wanted to be the mayor themselves. Even Sheikh Ali Zeidi, having kicked the councilors out of the office, sat around for a few hours and then wandered off again.

Somewhere in all of these critiques leveled against the nation builders, somewhere in the vision of these ideal Machiavellian princes who are failing to do their jobs, is an obsession with our moral obligation, an obsession with what we ought to be doing.

When I told the British government last year not to put troops into Helmand Province in southern Afghanistan (where I now live) because that would spark an insurgency, they said, "Surely you're not saying that we should stand by and do nothing. Surely you're not saying that we should tolerate a situation in this province in which the government is corrupt, in which the police fails to keep security, in which drug-growing is rampant, in which the Taliban appears to be resurgent, and in which the local population is extremely unhappy and abused. Surely you're not saying we should just leave that situation. We ought to do something."

My response to that, as indeed it is to the situation in Iraq, is that ought implies can. We should spend more time asking what we are actually able to do. Machiavelli says, as you'll remember from The Prince, "Many have imagined principalities and republics that have never been seen or known to exist. And those that persist in trying to do what they think they ought to do, rather than doing what they can, will undermine their power rather than maintain it."

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If you talk to the predominantly middle class, English-speaking, secular Iraqis with whom the coalition intended to deal – the kind of people that the coalition employed as translators, the kind of people represented by Ahmad Chalabi – you would hear the classic answer that you would have heard in the Middle East and the Islamic world since the First World War; that the forces of tribe and religion are fundamentally retrograde. It does not matter whether you are talking about Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in Turkey, Amanullah Khan in Afghanistan, the Shah in Iran or Abdul Karim Qasim in Iraq. In each case, these men set out to say, "We have a modernizing agenda, we are technocratic, we are nationalists. We may be anti-colonial, but we are also turning against these reactionary forces of tribe and religion."

After the invasion of Iraq, it turned out that they had been much more successful in eradicating tribes than they had been in eradicating religion. The tribal Sheikhs are unable to act while Sheikh Ali Zeidi, the 28 year-old cleric who I mentioned earlier, was able to storm into the building, abduct people, and torture them with impunity.

Middle-class, educated Iraqis, who are predominantly urban, like middle-class, educated Afghans, are reluctant to acknowledge how conservatively religious the urban poor and those in particularly rural communities are. We were told again and again, "Forget about Moktada al Sadr. Nobody supports him. This man is a 30 year-old, semi-educated, semi-literate hick. People only like him because of his father. He is not even properly qualified as an

ayatollah. The only people who support him are the illiterate poor. You do not even need to deal with him."

As a result, Paul Bremer issued an arrest warrant for him and we fought a counterinsurgency campaign against him for six months. When the election was held in my province, his party took three times as many votes as the next nearest party.

In the January 2005 elections, 85 percent of the vote in southern Iraq went to three parties – the Dawa Party, the Sciri Party (standing for "Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq") and its Badr Brigades, and the Sadrists. Despite the many differences between them, all three are extremely conservative Shi'a Islamist parties, with illegal militias that firebomb internet cafes and music shops.

In April 2004, one of the militias shot a woman in the streets of Basra for wearing jeans, at which point the elected governor of Basra came out and defended the militia. The month before, Dr. Kifiyah (whom I and my American colleague had employed as the head of the women's center in Amara) was shot dead while walking on her way to work. A man who I talk a lot about in my book was dragged from his car and executed in the street in July 2006, simply because he was a 27 year-old who happened to have started a children's magazine and had spent too much time talking to people like me. There was nothing to be done because the governor, the police chief, the entire provincial council, and all of the elected officials come from these Islamist parties.

Most of the middle-class Iraqis were so horrified that when I was back in Basra in the middle of 2005, everybody said, "This is all corruption. There cannot have been proper secret ballots. Sistani must have rigged the process. However, we have learned our lesson, and you'll find that everybody will vote for the secular, nationalist parties in the October elections. Nobody likes these medieval clerics."

When the October elections came, the share of the vote for these three Islamist groups increased from 85 to 90 percent in southern Iraq. So how important is religion? It is the only game in town. The fundamental problem for the administration, as we discovered when we began to work in Iraq, is that the only powerful, effective, representative politicians prepared to work alongside the coalition in Iraq were members of extreme conservative Islamist parties. That remains the problem today.

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Conference: January 24, 2007

Excerpts from Iraq, Iran, and Beyond: America Faces the Future

Lawrence Wright:
If the United States were to pull back from Iraq, the psychological effect on al Qaeda and radical Islam would be profound. People have been talking about how we have not been attacked here since 9/11, and saying that we must be doing something right.

The real reason we haven't been attacked is that al Qaeda was essentially a zombie for three years, until we invaded Iraq and reawakened this creature. It is much more potent now. It is focused on Iraq, but we would be crazy to think that there is not going to be an immense amount of blowback when all of the jihadis who are going into Iraq begin to leave. Many of them are going to be focusing their efforts on us and our allies, and they will be much more emboldened if they feel like they have been victorious in Iraq.

Prof. Barnett Rubin:
Afghanistan is but one case in which the categories that our government, public, and press bring to bear on the understanding of situations – derived from our interests and our understanding of what has happened to us – deprive us of the ability to understand whom we are working with and what they are trying to do.

That is, September 11th was described as an attack on freedom. Our enemies were the enemies of freedom, and everybody had to be either with us or with the terrorists. The fact is, not everybody in the world analyzes their own political dilemma in terms of whether they are with us or with the terrorists. Nor do they agree with the terrorists. They have their own interests, but they see that by in some way being with us, however partially, they can get resources with which to accomplish their other goals.

Salameh Nematt:
If I were to predict, I would say that the situation will look much better in nine months, not only because of the 20,000 troops being sent in the surge, but because of the way that all of the troops, all 140,000, will be used. They will be used differently than before. That is what General David Petraeus has been talking about, and I think this is important. He might not want to spell out publicly his plan for fear of giving advance notice to the insurgents, but I believe that the insurgents are getting fed up.

There is insurgency fatigue in Iraq. We only see what happens on the American side. In a democracy you have to be transparent, because the government is held accountable to the people. This is not the case on the side of the insurgents. The majority of the Sunnis in Iraq now are fed up with al Qaeda. They feel that al Qaeda is driving them to hell.

Max Boot:
I am afraid that if we do start pulling troops out, however we portray this in the news media, whether we call it redeployment or whatever we call it, the reality that would come through to the Iraqis is that we would be withdrawing, we would be conceding defeat, giving up. We might see an acceleration of the collapse of the country which is already going on, and that would lead us to some of the dire consequences of precipitous withdrawal which the Iraqi Study Group itself warned about.

Prof. Fawaz Gerges:
The region is boiling, not just in Iraq, but also in Lebanon, the Gulf countries, Sudan, Libya, and Egypt. I think that what Washington views as "clarifying moments," in the words of the president and Condoleezza Rice, are in fact deepening and widening internal fault lines that are basically shaking Middle Eastern societies to their very foundations.

George Packer. *Photo by Dan Creighton*

Distinguished Speaker Series: March 30, 2007

The Fate of America's Iraqi Allies

George Packer, Staff Writer, *The New Yorker*; author of *The Assassin's Gate: America in Iraq* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2006)

George Packer:

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In the fall of 2006, I began to hear from friends in Iraq that it was becoming impossible to go on living there. The sectarian violence in Baghdad was so widespread and almost indiscriminant that no one felt safe anywhere. They were trying to leave but leaving was very difficult for several reasons.

The Iraqi passports issued after the fall of Saddam Hussein were being invalidated by Western governments. If you had your brand new, shiny post-Saddam passport, which you thought was going to be your ticket to travel around the world, you could forget about it. The Jordanians were closing their borders to Iraqis between the ages of 15 and 35, especially men and especially Shia. The Syrians were also cracking down on their hitherto open-door policy. Other than Sweden, no Western countries, including the United States, were letting in any more than just a tiny handful of Iraqis. So, they were trapped in the hell of Baghdad.

There are close to two million Iraqis displaced within Iraq and two million more have become refugees in the surrounding countries. That means that about one out of every seven Iraqis has been displaced. It has been a hidden crisis for a few reasons. The U.S. and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees policies were to treat them as temporarily displaced people who would return as soon as the situation in Iraq was stabilized. That was accurate in 2003 and 2004. Iraqis would leave, wait to see if things would calm down in their city or their neighborhood, and then they would go back. But by 2005, and certainly 2006, they were not returning or expecting things to stabilize anytime in the next five or 10 years.

They were refugees but were not regarded as such. They were essentially considered to be people living with relatives in Damascus and Amman – two million people living with relatives. There are no camps. They are an urban and largely middle-class refugee population filling the apartment blocks and the housing in Syria and Jordan especially. It is almost impossible for them to work and their kids for the most part are not going to school. They are a sort of growth on those cities and countries. They are not being absorbed or resettled out and are quickly wearing out their welcome. It is a huge and yet somewhat hidden and paralyzed refugee problem.

I went to the Middle East in January because I was particularly interested in the cases of Iraqis who were trying to leave or had left the country because of their affiliation with us. For obvious reasons, I felt that we, as Americans, had an especial obligation to them. There are many of them but they are hard to get to. This was a really difficult reporting experience because if you go to Baghdad now and try to meet and talk to Iraqis the way I used to – for four or five hours, in order to get the whole story of the last four years – there is nowhere to do it. You can't go their houses. They do not want to come to the Green Zone because it is too dangerous to be seen going there. Where do you do it?

We improvised. In several cases we met in a deserted hotel on the east bank of the Tigris River called the Palestine Hotel. It used to be a buzzing hive of journalists and Iraqis looking for work with Westerners. In the old days, it was like a scene out of *Casablanca*. It was a really interesting place, full of intrigue, and the Mukhabarat still had some of its agents hanging around the lobby.

When I went there in January 2007, to have these interviews, it could not have been more deserted. There were no paying guests. There were two Arab TV stations in some of the upper floors; you didn't see them. There were a couple of guys in leather jackets in the lobby who looked a little sinister to me. There was one desk clerk who signed people in as if business were as usual. There was a restaurant that had no light and no heat, but it did have a waiter and a cook. We even managed to get a plate of food after about an hour. There was a quite sinister feeling of abandonment and of emptiness. That was the atmosphere in Baghdad after four years of war.

An Iraqi from southern Iraq insisted that we meet in Kurdistan. There was nowhere in the rest of Iraq where he would meet. He was going to go all the way from the south to Erbil to have two or three days of conversation. That is how far out of his way he was willing to go in order to tell me his story. Others I met in Amman and Damascus.

Iraqi stamp.

What I heard was a tale of high hopes early on – which was their motive for going to work for the Americans in the first place – and a gradual slide into disappointment and even a sense of being betrayed. Basically, they were never trusted. When their lives were in jeopardy and they came to the embassy, or to the contractor who hired interpreters for the military, or to the agency that they worked for like USAID and asked for help they were basically told that they could quit. It was a shocking experience for me because even as they told me

Soldier in sandstorm, Iraq. ©*istockphoto.com/Bryan Myhr*

this they did not feel the kind of blanket hatred that I was beginning to feel for the people whom they had trusted.

There were always individuals who really tried to help them, who tried to push the system in their favor, whether to get them a visa, to get them housing in the Green Zone, to get them a weapons permit, or to get them a badge that would allow them to bypass the long line and get into the Green Zone quickly (which is something for which Iraqis had been asking for two-and-a-half years without getting an answer). There were always individuals trying and these Iraqis were full of love for them, almost in a way that seemed beyond their desserts.

But institutionally we have completely failed them. When I went to the embassy, no one would speak on the record about this issue. No one. I got one statement from the embassy spokesman which said, essentially, "Our Iraqi employees, like all Iraqis, must deal with a challenging security environment in Baghdad. President Bush and Prime Minister Maliki have a security plan that is designed to improve security as well as service." It was just insulting boilerplate. I began to get a little angry, and pushed, and finally got an interview with two high officials who would not be quoted by name. What they gave me was also boilerplate. They mentioned that they had held a Thanksgiving dinner for the Iraqis the previous November. They also mentioned that they had raised the Iraqis' pay, which was true and not inconsiderable, but also suggested a sense that the Iraqis' lives were not all that expensive. But when the conversation turned to issues of security, immigration, and evacuation – and, to me, the ultimate question: what will happen to these people when we leave Iraq? – there were no answers at all.

I had never felt such shame. Throughout this war there have been moments when I was shocked or saddened by incompetence or by some form of cruel treatment, but this was such institutional failure in a case that I thought was morally as simple as can be. The lack of an effort to answer me suggested either that they were unaware or resigned to the fact that there was going to be no effort made for these Iraqis.

The office where this interview was held was in a classified section of the embassy. To get to it, you have to pass through three security doors that lock behind you, leaving you in a little bubble until the next door unlocks. It was like the TV show *Get Smart*. By the time we reached the final office, I felt as though there was no light or air of Baghdad left. It had all been sealed off behind us. We were now in a completely hermetic environment. There were no Iraqis either because it was a secure area. I think that provides some clue to the non-answers I was given.

This story is of the people of the entire war, which is why I wanted to write about it. The people I talked to at the embassy were perfectly decent. I knew that they were not bad, and in fact I could see that they were a little conscience-troubled while I was talking to them. That the United States nonetheless continues to ignore the peril in which their Iraqi employees found themselves has something to do with the fact that the people at the embassy were sealed off. They had such poor "intel," as they say, that they couldn't *imagine*.

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Paul Barrett. *Photo by Deb Rothenberg*

Distinguished Speaker Series: February 16, 2007

Conversation with Paul Barrett

Paul Barrett, Assistant Managing Editor, *BusinessWeek*; author of *American Islam: The Struggle for the Soul of a Religion* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007)

Paul Barrett:

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Muslim organizations and many individuals in the United States have condemned terrorism, and they have condemned it over and over again. Having said that, these same Muslim organizations and many (although not all) of the prominent Muslim figures in this country who have made such condemnations often couch them in terms that tend to either dilute the statements or undercut them in such a way that I think many other listeners, particularly non-Muslims, cancel the statements out. They do not take the statements seriously because they see terrorism condemned in a very general way without reference to specific events at the moment – a bombing in Israel, or someplace in Europe, or what have you.

Why would Muslim organizations couch their statements that way? Why not just say it without qualification? The answer is not because of al Qaeda. They condemn al Qaeda and 9/11 without qualification. For the most part, there are two answers: Hamas and Hezbollah. Muslim organizations, generally speaking, do not want to and will not condemn Hamas and Hezbollah.

They may not agree with everything Hamas and Hezbollah stand for. Most of them certainly do not agree with theocratic agendas, with the desire to replace secular states with entirely religious societies and so forth. But the enemy of their enemy is their friend. Many American Muslims see Israel as the enemy. Having seen decades of conflict between Israel and Arab nations, with Arab nations frequently getting the worst of it, they are not inclined to criticize organizations, even radical ones, that can give Israel a black eye.

It would be a tremendous leap forward if people could talk about that a little bit more, if people who disagree passionately about Hamas and Hezbollah and their causes could say, "We agree to disagree about that stuff. Let's put that the one side and talk about a lot of other things and see if we can passionately agree about other things. Let's let the scholars and the wise people sort out the Israeli-Arab conflict."

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There are people of extremely good faith and conscience on both sides of the line who want to move forward. There are others who cannot bear even to talk until the other side gives on the central issue, who say "Israel is entirely illegitimate, and you have to say that out loud before I'll talk to you" or "I won't talk to you until there isn't a single Arab who does something that offends me."

If that's the gap, then it will never be bridged. I have no expertise in this, but it is my humble opinion from having talked to many people on both sides that the next stage in communication between Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States needs to be conversation about things other than Israel and other than the Palestinians.

People have a tremendous amount in common. I recently wrote an Op-Ed for the *Los Angeles Times* that my editor cleverly titled "Reporting on Muslims While Jewish." I concluded the Op-Ed with a vignette about how I have at times found myself not so much looking through a window at a foreign scene as looking at a mirror of scenes from my own life. I describe having dinner a number of times with an Indian immigrant family in Morgantown, West Virginia, of all places – the type of food, the body language, the woman hosting me saying, "Have more, have more." I could see my late grandmother standing on my shoulder smiling and saying, "Exactly. Eat more."

Many Muslim Americans, especially immigrants, are obsessed with education. They are obsessed with the material accomplishments of the next generation – if the next generation does not outdo the current generation, the whole family is going to be an embarrassment.These are my people, too!

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Photo by Jack Berger

Daniel Freifeld. *Photo by Dan Creighton*

Student Presentation: April 24, 2007

Inside the Islamic Republic

Daniel Freifeld, Student, New York University School of Law

Daniel Freifeld:

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After the victories of reformist president Khatami in 1997 and reformist candidates in the parliamentary elections of 2000, the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i, saw that parliament and the presidency were controlled by people who, while always keeping a friendly tone towards him, had a largely different ideology about how the state should be run.The Supreme Leader looked, and he saw that parliament and the presidency were controlled by people who, while always keeping a friendly tone towards him, had a largely different ideology about how the state should be run. Khamenei fought back, and he fought back hard. He started a kind of concerted campaign of closing down newspapers and banning candidates from running, including in the 2004 elections. He also militarized politics.

He looked around and saw all these figures that he didn't think he could trust running various ministries, and, more importantly, nuclear programs and business interests. He put Revolutionary Guardsmen in all of these positions. He increased the role of Iran/Iraq war veterans in government, where they had been before but without an especially powerful role.

We can only assume that he did this to prepare for the 2005 election, where he did not want to see a reformist elected again. He did everything he could possibly do.

In the 2005 election, which brought Ahmadinejad to power, something like 1,000 candidates applied to run and only six or so were ultimately approved. This is debatable, but I believe that Khamenei intended for Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani to win. He wanted the reformist vote divided between two candidates. He wanted a conservative candidate out there to change the language a little bit and bring it closer to the roots of the revolution. But in the end, the winner was supposed to be Rafsanjani, although many people believe otherwise.

I believe this largely because Ahmadinejad ran such a dark horse campaign. He was the mayor of Tehran but relatively unknown as a national figure. He was not a cleric. He was the first serious non-clerical candidate. He banked on people voting for a candidate rather than on the levers of power. The Islamic part of this regime is very suspicious of people in general. There are many quotes from Ayatollah Khomenei saying that the people cannot be trusted, that they are deficient. One of the earlier fears about a powerful executive was that it would return to the country to a dictatorship. If anybody could play on the passions and the emotions of people, they would see a dictatorship return, and only the religious authorities, the sort of philosopher-kings, could be trusted as intermediaries between God and the people in his faith.

Ahmadinejad, taking a page from Khatami's book, went very local with this election. He only talked about bread-and-butter issues. He did not say anything about Israel, about nuclear rights, or even a significant amount about the war going on in Iraq next door (in 2005). He just said, essentially, "I am going to put money on your table. I am going to end corruption. I am going to re-distribute wealth. I am going to increase your role and your stake in this system so that everyone can live a little bit better."

He did this very much using the language of Khomenei and indicting an undefined clerical class for the same crimes as the Shah: exploiting oil wealth for personal gain, rising corruption, and the widening gap between rich and poor. But he did not use pictures of Khomenei. He did not make it about religion, but about the sort of spirit that Ahmedinejad rightly thought that people would want to see.

The key to understanding Ahmadinejad is that his formative years were not the revolution but very much the Iran/Iraq war. This war in which he participated saw unspeakable destruction, human waves walking onto mine fields to expose mines, chemical weapons, and civilian targets readily exploited. It was incredibly hard war to fight in. Accordingly, the people who ran this war from the Revolutionary Guard standpoint were heavily indoctrinated in revolutionary rhetoric. They were taught that the revolution has no borders, that it is a righteous conflict between the oppressed and the oppressors and is an ongoing process. It won't end until we topple the decadent Islamic regimes in the region and until we humble the United States or beat back the Great Satan.

So he does not sit there and say, "Well, what did we have with the Shah before, and what are we trying to do to stay in power now with our new system?" He very much believes that this revolution is ongoing.

Incidentally, when the British sailors were captured in March 2007, his supporters were yelling, "*engelab sevom*," or, "third revolution!" The first revolution was ousting the Shah, the second revolution was taking the U.S. embassy, and the third revolution was capturing these sailors. This indicates that they did not think this was going to be an affair lasting a couple of weeks but rather another momentous step in this ongoing revolution.

Once in office, he appointed many of his colleagues from the Revolutionary Guard. The average age of his ministers is 49, and this is in a country that is run by many aging clerics. Pictures of the Assembly of Experts and these different governmental bodies are fascinating to look at because everyone running the country is older than 70. After Ahmandinejad's appointments of non-clerical, heavily revolutionary veterans of the Iran/Iraq war, the average age is 50.

Ahmadinejad immediately used two strategies: he started using the language of Khomenei and being revolutionary to outflank the Supreme Leader, and he started courting conflicts with the world.

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New Works by the Center on Law and Security's Faculty and Fellows

Michael Sheehan and Lawrence Wright at "Today's Terrorist Threat: An Assessment," Sept. 20, 2007. *Photo by Dan Creighton*

Peter Bergen
"Al Qaeda: Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," *Mother Jones*, October 18, 2007 (with Paul Cruickshank)

Sidney Blumenthal
The Strange Death of Republican America: Chronicles of a Collapsing Party (Union Square Press, 2008)

Executive Producer, *Taxi to the Dark Side* (Academy Award, Best Documentary Feature)

Paul Cruickshank
"Al Qaeda: Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," *Mother Jones*, October 18, 2007 (with Peter Bergen)

Amos Elon
"Olmert & Israel: The Change," *New York Review of Books*, February 14, 2008

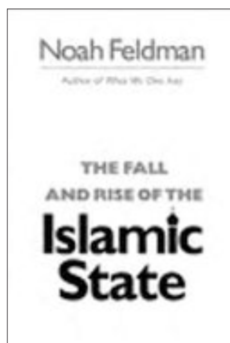
Noah Feldman
The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State (Princeton University Press, 2008)

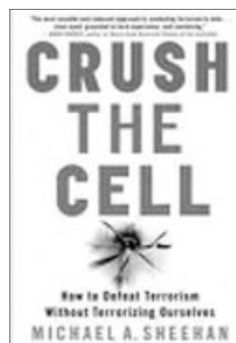
Barton Gellman
Angler: The Cheney Vice Presidency (Penguin Press, 2008)

"Angler: The Cheney Vice Presidency" (Series in *The Washington Post*, June 24-27, 2007) (with Jo Becker) (George Polk Award, Political Reporting; Pulitzer Prize, National Reporting)

- "A Different Understanding With the President"
- "Pushing the Envelope on Presidential Power"
- "A Strong Push From Backstage"
- "Leaving No Tracks"

Karen J. Greenberg
The Enemy Combatant Papers: American Justice, the Courts, and the War on Terror (with Joshua L. Dratel) (Cambridge University Press, 2008)





Stephen Holmes
The Matador's Cape: America's Reckless Response to Terror (Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Tara McKelvey
Monstering: Inside America's Policy of Secret Interrogations and Torture in the Terror War (Carroll & Graf, 2007)

Dana Priest
Continuing series in *The Washington Post* on veterans' care at Walter Reed Army Medical Center (Pulitzer Prize, Public Service, with Anne Hull and Michel du Cille)

Nir Rosen
"Al Qaeda in Lebanon: The Iraq War Spreads," *Boston Review*, January/February 2008

"The Myth of the Surge," *Rolling Stone*, March 6, 2008

"Scapegoats in an Unwelcoming Land," *The Washington Post*, December 16, 2007

Michael Sheehan
Crush the Cell: How to Defeat Terrorism without Terrorizing Ourselves (Crown, 2008)

Lawrence Wright
"The Spymaster," *The New Yorker*, January 21, 2008

Playwright/Performer, *My Trip to al-Qaeda*

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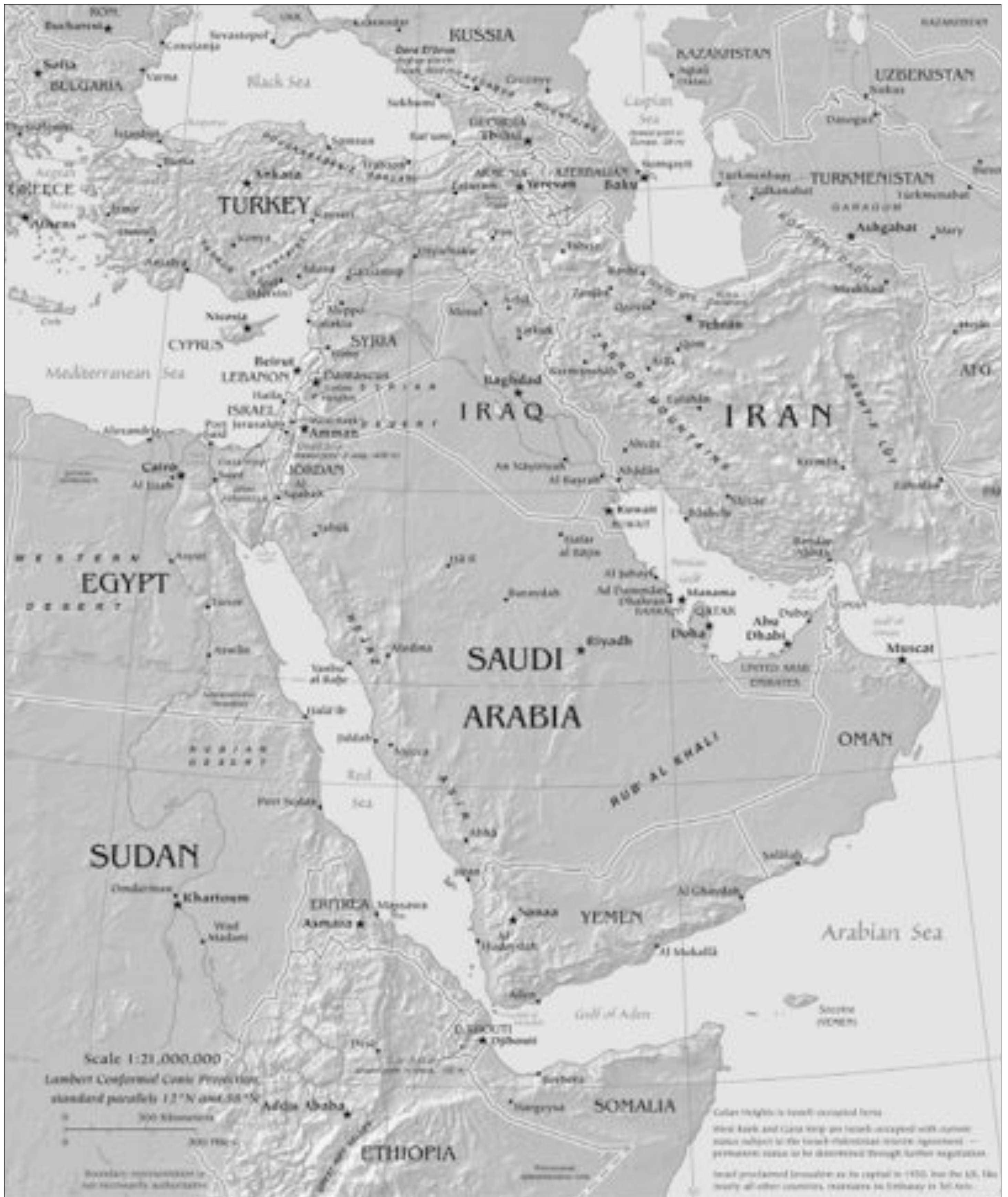
Map of the Middle East



CIA, *2008 World Factbook*

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