

MERIA

CAUSES OF ANTI-AMERICANISM IN THE ARAB WORLD: A SOCIO-POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

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This article gives an overview of the rationale given for the causes of anti-Americanism in the Arab world. The author asserts that anti-American hatred is enflamed mainly by U.S. economical, political and military support for Israel, which has enabled it to defeat and humiliate the Arabs. In addition, the author points to U.S. air strikes and sanctions against several Arab countries and its occupation of Iraq; support for certain undemocratic Arab regimes; its military bases in a number of Arab countries; and its campaign against Islam and its citizens of Arab and Islamic origin. The author concludes that if the United States wants to end this hatred it should help to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict and changes its policies towards the Arab world, including ending its occupation of Iraq, closing its military bases in the area, and encouraging freedom and democratization.

Hostility to the United States is hardly a new phenomenon, yet the multiple sources and symptoms of anti-Americanism in the Arab world make it difficult to arrive at an accurate cause. In general, though, Arabs give three main reasons for their hatred and antipathy toward America.

First, U.S. political, economic and military support of Israel, which enables Israel to defeat the Arabs and continue its occupation of their land.

Second, U.S. air strikes and sanctions against some Arab countries and its occupation of Iraq.

Third, U.S. support for a number of undemocratic Arab regimes, its military bases in several Arab countries, and according to some critics, a perceived U.S. campaign against Islam and its own citizens of Arab and Islamic origin.

Under a continuous and concentrated campaign of the Arab mass media against America, many Arabs found themselves without much choice except to hate America and Israel and their leaders, and consequently, to join or to passively support Islamic movements or terrorist organizations.

It is true that America has been trying to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 for the last 30 years. It sponsored peace treaties between Israel and both Egypt and Jordan and established military bases in some Arab countries to protect them. It is also true that America provides Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Yemen and other Arab countries with economic and military aid. America fought Iraq in 1991 at the request of Kuwait and other countries and with the participation of forces from Egypt, Syria and the GCC countries.

Yet it is also true that the Arab people saw all the above-mentioned U.S. actions as American efforts to protect Israel, as well as some Arab regimes that serve American interests. It is widely held that by these actions, the United States never intended to promote and/or sustain development, democracy, or human rights in the Arab World.

GROWING ANTI-AMERICANISM ACROSS THE WORLD

As demonstrated by the Pew Center's 2003 public opinion survey of 44 countries, in the past few years, the

United States has faced rising anti-Americanism almost all over in the world.(1) People in these countries are opposed to American unilateralism, its decision to wage war on Iraq and other countries, its Strategic Defense Initiative (commonly referred to as the 'Star Wars' program), drive for globalization, as well as its business, human rights, and environmental practices.

Hatred for America burns brightest in the Arab world and Southwest Asia, where, America's critics claim, the U.S.'s hegemonic designs are centered at present. However, the vast majority of the people in the world believe the United States does not take into account the interests of their countries when making regional or international policies.

With this in mind, the war on Iraq threatens to fuel anti-American sentiment and divides the United States from the publics of its traditional allies and new strategic friends. Huge majorities in the Arab and Islamic worlds, France, Spain, Britain, Germany and Russia opposed the use of military force against Iraq. This sentiment was evident in the huge demonstrations and rallies that took place across the globe. Anti-war activists argued that the war was motivated by a colonialist desire to control Iraqi oil, and they asserted that the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians was the greater threat to stability in the Middle East. Moreover, many Arabs believe that the real intention behind the U.S. occupation of Iraq is a desire to further Israel's security and oil supply.

The sources of Arab anti-American attitudes are complicated and cannot be explained on the basis of one single factor. Rather, there are internal and external reasons for Arab hatred of the United States, which can be divided into four groups:

1. America's support for Israel and its position on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

2. U.S. military attacks and sanctions against some Arab countries and its military bases in the Arab world.

3. U.S. support for some authoritarian Arab regimes, and its hostile policies toward Islam, and its own citizens of Arab and Muslim origin.

4. U.S. hypocritical behavior regarding democracy and human rights in the Arab world.

The following will explore the logic behind each of these arguments.

I. AMERICA'S SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL AND ITS POSITION ON THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Political Support

During the last fifty years, the United States stood beside Israel in every conflict with the Palestinians and the Arabs. There is a very obvious reason for that, namely, that America considers Israel its closest ally and the only reliable strategic partner in the Middle East. Therefore, America has provided political support for Israel at the UN Security Council, the General Assembly, and other international organizations. American political support for Israel is widely seen as being unfair and at the expense of the Arabs; consequently, this generated and continues to generate hostility against America in the Arab world.

While the U.S. government was always involved in the efforts to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict, its positions (official and otherwise) always differed with the consensus in the Arab world. The United States, for instance, never called Zionism colonialism; and--with the exception of the 1956 Sinai campaign--it never forced an immediate Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab territories, as the Arab world demanded. Moreover, the U.S. frequently uses its veto power to block most any resolution at the UN Security Council that would

condemn what Arabs see as Israel's excessive use of force against the Palestinians.

Jibril Rajub, security advisor for Yasir Arafat, commenting on one U.S. veto of a resolution said it, "provided cover and protection to the Israeli occupation and support for the destruction and killing of the Palestinians."⁽²⁾ His statement was shown on all Arab television satellite stations and was broadcast together with a horrible scene of eight Palestinians being killed by the Israeli army in October 2003. There is no doubt that the connection between the U.S. vetoes and the Israeli attacks against the Palestinians will continue to generate hostility and terrorism against the United States throughout the Arab world as long as this conflict continues.

Economic Support

Israel is the largest recipient of U.S. aid in the world, receiving just under one-fifth of total U.S. foreign aid. Since 1949, but especially after September 1970, the U.S. has given Israel over \$85 billion dollars in aid and grants. U.S. aid is seen as an American effort to strengthen Israel's economy and as helping to fund Israel's occupation of the Palestinian and Arab territories. Israel, critics of the U.S. argue, is one of the richest countries in the area and there are many Arab and African countries that are in need of such aid more than Israel. At the same time, other Arabs argue the opposite: that without this aid Israel's economy would collapse.⁽³⁾

It is worth noting here that the United States has provided many Arab countries, including Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority and others with economic aid, however, the people saw that aid as U.S. support for the undemocratic regimes in those countries and not for real development.

Military Support

The United States provides Israel with sophisticated arms such as attack helicopters, jetfighters, and missiles that are used to target Palestinians, frequently killing innocent civilians (which most Arabs believe is done intentionally), destroying homes, stores, and other buildings, and were for many years used against Lebanon, as well as against the Iraqi Osiraq reactor in 1981 and Syria in the fall of 2003.

The United States is committed to maintaining Israel's security as well as a qualitative edge over all Arab countries, which has enabled Israel to defeat the Arab countries in some of its wars. U.S.-Israel joint arms development and sales is seen as another form of assistance to Israel, which allows it to maintain its military superiority over the Arabs. One commentator explained U.S. military aid as perhaps stemming "from a desire for Israel to continue its strategic and political dominance over the Palestinians and the region as a whole. It has long been in the U.S. interest to maintain a militarily powerful and belligerent Israel dependent upon [itself]. Real peace could undermine such a relationship."⁽⁴⁾

Some Arabs argue that without this generous American military aid, Israel would have been unable to defeat the Arab armies and continue its occupation of Arab land. President Nasser announced during the 1967 war that the American and the British were involved in attacking Egypt (though later accounts would prove this assertion false)⁽⁵⁾ and that they provided Israel with military assistance. The Arab masses, according to Abu-Odeh, "Believed that the Arab defeat was due to the Americans and British offering military assistance to Israel."⁽⁶⁾

This interpretation of the relationship between U.S. support for Israel and its victories over the Arabs has been accepted and repeated again and again by many Arab politicians, military officers and journalists during the last fifty years.

This view was strengthened by repetition in the Arab mass media, including television, radio, newspapers, seminars, rallies, thousands of sermons in mosques, and by the political elite and the regimes themselves. All those resources repeat and emphasize that U.S. support for Israel is unfair, unbalanced, racist, and the main reason for Israel's victories and humiliation of the Arabs. These resources use the Israeli air raids and bombardment of Palestinian and Lebanese territories, the killing of many civilians, and the destruction of their homes and property by U.S.-made jetfighters, helicopters, artillery and tanks to support this view. All of which generates anti-Americanism.(7)

The American occupation and similar actions in Iraq undoubtedly contributed to the anti-Americanism and anger among Arab peoples. Arab satellite stations and mass media provide 24 hour coverage of Israeli and American aggressive actions in Palestine and Iraq and commentators passionately make the link between the two cases.(8)

Here as above, it must be mentioned that the United States provides many Arab countries (such as Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Yemen) with military aid and training, while it provides sophisticated arms training and military protection to others, such as the GCC countries. But again, such aid is seen as a U.S. effort to strengthen the ability of friendly, yet undemocratic, Arab regimes to stay in power and to suppress their people, rather than to defend Arab countries or to fight Israel.

U.S. Policies toward the Arab- Israeli Conflict

The Arab perception of the American position is that it is completely supportive of Israel,(9) and that America always adopts Israel's point of view in this conflict. Many Arabs see the U.S. war and occupation of Iraq as part of a U.S.

effort to protect Israel as well as to obtain oil for itself.(10)

On the first count, Arab political figures say that the U.S. administration condemns the killing of Israelis by Palestinian but not the other way around.(11) They add that the United States uses double standards when dealing with the question of nuclear weapons in Israel and the Arab world since the United States has never brought Israel's capabilities to the attention of the UN nor initiated sanctions against Israel for its unconventional weapons programs, though it has done both against Arab states.(12) The Arab public sees U.S. positions in the Arab-Israeli conflict as biased and feels the U.S. government is not an honest broker in the conflict.(13)

The question that the Arabs have continuously asked themselves for the last half-century is why the United States provides Israel with such generous political, economic and military support. The answer that has been given to them is that the West and especially America created Israel and that Israel was their only reliable strategic alliance against the Soviet bloc during the Cold War and is still their outpost in their efforts to control the area.

What is not mentioned is that America is also committed to the security and existence of many Arab regimes and provides them with military and economic aid. But the Arab people don't appreciate U.S. economic and military aid to those countries because they believe that U.S. aid simply supports those undemocratic regimes and not the countries' people. Of course, Arab regimes and Arab media do not discuss U.S. aid to their own countries very much, and this has led many to think that a large part of this aid eventually ends up in the private accounts of corrupt members of the regimes.

II. U.S. POLICIES AND BEHAVIOR TOWARD SOME ARAB COUNTRIES

U.S. Attacks and Sanctions Against Some Arab Countries

The United States has pursued what were perceived to be hostile and aggressive policies towards many Arab countries, such as its air strikes against Libya, Sudan and Iraq, which resulted in the deaths of many innocent Arab civilians. This is in addition to its invasion and occupation of Iraq on false premises, its political and economic sanctions against Iraq, Libya, Syria and Sudan, and its allegedly inhuman treatment of Arab and Muslim prisoners--especially in Camp X-ray, the Guantanamo Bay detention center. The scene of heavily chained prisoners led and guarded by armed soldiers with their heads pushed down was portrayed as outrageous and cruel.

This is also in addition to reports of the American government's discrimination against its own Arab and Muslim citizens, especially after the September 11th attacks. Thousands of Arabs and Muslims were reported to have been detained or mistreated due solely to their ethnicity or religion, which was perceived as the result of a racist policy. The Arab media reported that, as a result of this policy, thousands of Arabs quit their studies or work and returned to their countries preaching anti-Americanism. U.S. embassies in the Arab world refused to give visas to many Arab citizens and there was reportedly mistreatment of Arabs at U.S. airports. The United States was also said to be carrying out "media campaigns against Islam."(14)

It is worth noting here that U.S. involvement in the Iraq issue in the 1990s came as a response to a request from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries, who then invited the U.S. armed forces into their respective countries. Egyptian, Syrian, and GCC

units fought under the leadership of U.S. forces in the 1991 war against Iraq, and the GCC countries financed a majority of that war.(15) U.S. sanctions against Iraq, it is claimed, were enacted on behalf of the GCC countries in order to weaken the Iraqi regime and to reduce its threat to those countries. In return, the GCC countries provided America with bases and logistical support to fly over Iraq during the 1990s.

U.S. Military Bases in Some Arab Countries

The presence of U.S. military bases in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, and Bahrain--as well as regular military training and exercises with Egypt, Jordan and Morocco--is viewed as a new American colonialism and a way to strengthen American control over Arab oil. In addition, this new American colonialism is believed to seek control over Arab political and economic affairs in order to secure American domination of the Middle East. America has used those bases on a number of occasions, such as its invasion of Afghanistan, the ten years it enforced the no-fly zone over Iraq, and later to invade and occupy Iraq. Similarly, one frequent claim is that America supports the ruling regimes in the region, securing their loyalty to America by training troops loyal to the regime and by sharing intelligence.

Rami Khouri, a well-known analyst in the region, stated the suspicion succinctly, "There is a sense by many ordinary people and politicians that the moves against Iraq are an effort to redraw the map for the strategic interests of the United States and Israel."(16) Similar arguments have been made by Usama bin Ladin, who said that the existence of U.S. military bases in Saudi Arabia, especially near Mecca, violated Islamic law, which forbids any non-Muslims from entering that sacred area. He called for jihad against the United States stating as his primary reason, "The very presence of the

United States occupying the Land of Islam in the holiest of places in the Arabian Peninsula where America is plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, and humiliating its people."(17)

It is worth noting once again that the U.S. bases and training exercises came in response to requests from some Arab countries and thus do not constitute imperialist actions. Nevertheless, many Arabs argue that the establishment of U.S. bases is intended to provide support and protection for Israel, some friendly Arab regimes, and to secure American interests in those countries.

U.S. Attacks against Islam and the Clash of Civilization Thesis

In his well-known "clash of civilizations" thesis, Samuel Huntington argues that cultural and religious differences are a major cause of international conflict in the post-Cold War era and asserts that Islam in particular encourages Muslim aggressiveness toward non-Muslim peoples. According to Huntington, "Some Westerners have argued that the West does not have problems with Islam but only with violent Islamic extremists.... But evidence to support [this assertion] is lacking ... The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam."(18)

Although the administration of President George W. Bush insists that the U.S. war on terrorism is not a war on Islam, this is not what is reported in the Arab media, in speeches by Arab leaders, and in the minds of many Arabs. For example, Bashar al-Asad, the Syrian leader, told the 10th Islamic Summit Conference in Malaysia that the September 2001 attacks on the United States:

Provided the opportunity and pretext for a group of fanatics and ill-intentioned people [who were

part of U.S. administration] to attack human values and principles.... Those fanatics revealed their brutal vision of human society and started to market the principle of force instead of dialogue, oppression instead of justice and racism instead of tolerance. They even began to create an ugly illusory enemy which they called 'Islam,' and made it appear as if it is Islam [was responsible] while Islam is completely innocent of it.(19)

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Muhammad went on to say, "We, the whole Muslim umma [community], are treated with contempt and dishonor. Our religion is denigrated. Our holy places desecrated. Our countries are occupied." All Muslims were suffering 'oppression and humiliation' with their religion accused of promoting terrorism.(20)

These ideas are given credence by the statements of some U.S. religious figures, which are widely reported in the Arab media. For example, Rev. Franklin Graham said of Islam, "I believe it's a very evil and wicked religion."(21) Fox News Network talk-show host Bill O'Reilly denounced the teaching of "our enemy's religion" and compared the assignment of a text on Islam in an American university to teaching Mein Kampf in 1941.(22) After September 11th, many journalists, television presenters, academics, and members of Congress attacked Islam or portrayed Arabs as terrorists.(23)

However, some Western polls concluded, "Islamic attachments have relatively little explanatory power so far as political attitudes are concerned. There is at best a weak relationship between the degree of religious piety or strength of Islamic attachment on the one hand and, on the other, attitudes either about war and peace or about democracy."(24) In

other words, those individuals for whom religion is most important are no less likely than others to favor compromise with the United States, democracy, human rights and so forth. In Jordan, over 90 percent of university students believe that there is no contradiction between Islamic teachings and democracy or human rights.(25)

When the United States asks for changes in the Arab media or educational system, some Arabs respond that this is part of the "Bush-Sharon" effort to dominate the region. They see American efforts to modernize Arab curriculums and textbooks as a "deliberate U.S. policy to impose American-Israeli culture on the Arab world and to destroy Arab culture." (26)

III. U.S. SUPPORT FOR SOME ARAB REGIMES AND HYPOCRITICAL BEHAVIOR

U.S. Support for Some Authoritarian Arab Regimes

The ways in which U.S. policies are explained to the people might be convenient to some Arab regimes, diverting the anger of the masses onto America instead of toward the many political and economic problems in their countries. The paradox here is why America has never challenged these hostile Arab regimes' positions. Why does the U.S. government continue to support those regimes that advocate anti-Americanism?

The only logical explanation for the U.S. position, it is commonly believed among Arabs, is that the United States believes that the alternative to the present governments would be Islamist regimes. This mistaken support of the status quo increases anti-Americanism by associating the United States with the current rulers. An alternative would be to press the regimes for real and gradual change toward democracy. Fortunately, the U.S. government has begun to realize

its mistake and has started to develop a new policy.(27)

But another source of anti-Americanism has been America's support for some authoritarian Arab regimes that are unpopular with their own people. The United States provides those regimes with a large amount of economic and military aid, which helps them stay in power. The United States has never linked its aid to a process of democratization and therefore, this aid was never seen as aid for the people. U.S. economic aid is very much needed in many Arab countries but it should be directed to socio-economic development and not used for security or for buying useless arms and military hardware. Daoud Kuttab has argued: "When the average Arab citizen tries to reconcile his desire for domestic freedom, his feelings of frustration at home, American support for his government, and the increasing presence of Western culture he is caught in the middle. It is easier to lash out at a distant America than to risk raising one's voice against the local dictators." He added that popular Arabs' support for America "will be hard to muster until Arabs are able to live as they wish, without oppression and without restrictions. Once Arabs are able to voice concerns about their own government without fear of reprisals, their focus will turn inward."(28)

Indeed, the United States can do much to help the Arab people to achieve this goal by solving the Arab-Israeli conflict, withdrawing its forces from the region, and linking America's aid to democratization programs and improvement of human rights. It should replace its military aid with economic assistance, uncover Arab regimes' secret accounts in Europe and U.S. banks and press them to use them in development. The continuation of the status quo in which millions of Arabs are oppressed and powerless is the main reason for the Islamization of the Arab masses, who can

only join Islamic organizations or become more religious since political parties, political participation, free press and speech are forbidden. Arab regimes can deny their people democracy, but cannot prevent them from joining Islamic organizations or becoming more religious, since to do so would be interpreted as hostility towards Islam.

Since the September 11th attacks, many Arab countries have suffered a regression in their level of human rights and political participation. According to Khouri, the repression "is widely seen by Arab citizens as their states' preferred means of participating in the war against terrorism, given most Arab states' very high reliance on American military and/or economic assistance. This has tended to heighten anti-American sentiments at popular levels and within political elites."(29)

Hazhir Teimourian argues that anti-Western feeling throughout the Arab world mainly reflects the Arab people's discontent with their governments. He believes that they see their "governments as [the] most corrupt and authoritarian, and because [the] U.S. gives billions of cash every year to some Arab regimes, the public opinion assumes those regimes are [lackies] of the United States."(30)

Of course, the United States does have common interests with some Arab regimes and has supported them in return for guaranteeing U.S. influence and interests in the area. As one former U.S. government official put it:

Perhaps most perverse of all, we allow the moderate Arab states to deflect domestic criticism on to the U.S. and so breed anti-Americanism because, they tell us, this makes it easier for them to rule which ensures that we get their support on regional issues.... These regimes are corrupt, despotic, and unresponsive to

their peoples' aspirations and there is a near universal view in the region that the United States keeps these regimes in power because they serve our purposes.(31)

It is in this context that the new policy of pledging support for democracy in the post-2001 era emerged.

At the same time, however, anti-American sentiments spread through thousands of editorials, seminars, lectures, interviews and articles. Articles with titles like "An Answer to George Bush's question: 'Do the Arabs hate America or do they hate America's policies?'" and "Who is the Victim? Between America's Missiles and Sharon's Tanks, " where the U.S. policy in Afghanistan and Iraq were compared to the policies of Ariel Sharon.(32) An article in a leading Egyptian opposition newspaper claimed, "The United States deals with Egypt like a schoolchild, where the United States is the teacher, both preparing the exam and grading it."(33)

American Hypocritical Behavior Toward the Arab World

U.S. government officials frequently speak about democracy and human rights, but their actions often do not support either democracy or human rights in the Arab world. Rather, democracy is undermined by the American support for some Arab repressive regimes. Furthermore, the U.S. government never pressed Arab regimes to become democratic nor to respect human rights. Arabs say America would never call for democratization because those undemocratic regimes are the best agents of America's interests. They sell oil at prices said to be determined mainly by America, open their countries for U.S. military bases, facilitate American control and domination over the Arab

Worlds' economic resources (including oil), and convert the Arab world into a huge consumer market for U.S. products.(34) In addition, Arab governments are purported to make unnecessary large arms deals worth billions of dollars, which allegedly give them a capacity to suppress the people rather than use the money for socio-economic development.

This hypocritical behavior is said to be reflected in a U.S. invasion of Iraq to "liberate" those people while a regime in Kuwait was reinstated without the U.S. demanding major democratic reforms, or America defending Saudi Arabia without asking that government to widen political participation to include the masses, or the U.S. not objecting to a military coup in Algeria against the Islamist party after it won the elections. Aside from all this, the dominant view in the Arab world is that U.S. foreign policy regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict is shaped by the pro-Israel lobby.(35)

ARAB ANTI-AMERICANISM AS A NEW PHENOMENON

A number of recent opinion surveys in Arab and Islamic countries provide a look at the views of ordinary men and women, and at the factors shaping these attitudes and values. Until recently, there has been very little serious political attitude research conducted in the Arab world, which has made it difficult to challenge stereotypes about Arab public opinion. In more recent surveys, however, there emerges a consistent pattern of a "strong dislike for American foreign policy but much more nuanced, and often-quite positive, attitudes toward American society and culture and toward the American people." This confirms what Americans visiting the Arabic world often hear in one-on-one conversations, summarized by one researcher as: "When you return to the U.S., give my love to the American people and tell your president to go to hell!"(36)

A Zogby poll conducted in spring 2002 confirms this notion and shows that "men and women in different age groups have favorable opinions about U.S. education, freedom, and democracy [while] almost no respondents have a favorable attitude toward U.S. policy..."(37) Monem also asserted a similar view:

Ask anyone in Egypt what country they would like to visit, and they will probably say America. Ask them what movie they would like to see and it will probably be an American film. Ask them what school they would like to attend and they will name an American university. They may disagree violently with American policies, but they don't hate America. This is the paradox.(38)

Ussama Makdisi argues that "anti-Americanism is a recent phenomenon fueled by American foreign policy, not an epochal confrontation of civilizations. While there are certainly those in both the United States and the Arab world who believe in a clash of civilizations and who invest politically in such beliefs, history belies them." Over the course of the twentieth century, and especially after the Cold War, U.S. policies toward the Arab world are said to have changed profoundly.(39)

But Arab hostility is primarily directed at specific U.S. policies, not at America or the American people. Thousands of Americans work and travel in the Arab world and the majority of Americans enjoy the experience, have Arab friends, and rarely suffered personal harm, at least until U.S. direct military intervention in the region began in the early 1990s.

Furthermore, large numbers of Arabs wish to migrate, study, or work in America. The Zogby poll shows favorable attitudes were expressed by

substantial numbers of Arab respondents when asked not only about American education and freedom, but also about American science, movies and television, and the American people in general. By contrast, judgments about virtually all aspects of U.S. Middle East policy were very unfavorable. This means that antipathy toward America does not flow from cultural dissonance: "it is based not on who Americans are perceived to be but on what they are perceived to do."(40)

Khouri argues "the rising anti-Americanism is driven almost exclusively by cumulative frustration and anger with the substance and style of American foreign policy in the area, and not by any imagined opposition to basic American values of freedom, democracy, equality and tolerance."(41) Samer Shehata argues that Anti-Americanism is "not primarily about American culture or values (what the United States is), but about the way the United States conducts itself in the region and the world (what the United States does)." He added, "Arab perceptions of America have become more negative as a result of the U.S. war on Iraq, Washington's almost total support for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, [and enactment of] new policies directed at Arab and Muslim immigrants and visitors to the United States."(42)

CONCLUSION

Anti-American sentiment in the Arab world has become an important issue in U.S.-Arab relations and a major concern for both sides. There are however, different views and explanations regarding the roots and causes of this phenomenon. A key aspect is the continuing frustration that plagues the majority of the Arab peoples as a result of the continuation of the status quo; and this same frustration is undoubtedly a factor in terrorism.

Many Arabs see U.S. economic, political and military aid to Israel and its biased policies towards the Arab-Israeli conflict as the main cause of anti-American sentiment in the Arab world. Still, this article argues that there are other causes as well, such as aggressive American policies towards the Arab world, including air strikes and sanctions against several Arab countries and its occupation of Iraq, as well as its military bases in a number of Arab countries. Lastly, American economic and military aid to several Arab countries is seen as an American effort to enable some undemocratic regimes to continue their rule and suppress their people, rather than the U.S. intending to help development, democracy, or improve the social and economic well being of those countries' citizens.

This paper has argued that Arab sentiments are neither fixed nor static, nor are they irrational. Rather, Arab attitudes of anti-Americanism are primarily a result of U.S. support to Israel and American hostile policies toward the Arab world, and if those policies change so will Arab perceptions and attitudes. It suggests that solving the Arab-Israeli conflict, ending the U.S. occupation of Iraq, closing its military bases in the Arab world, ending its military support to some Arab authoritarian regimes and pressing for democratization in the Arab world would end anti-Americanism among the Arabs.

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NOTES

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