



I.I.R.

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Laila Shawa. Children of war-children of peace from Venetia. Porter, Word into Art, Artists of the Modern Middle East, London: British Museum Press, 2006



contents

What if...in the Middle East?

An "Islamic" Bomb

The US as an offshore balancer

A nuclear Saudi Arabia

A Muslim in the White House

Turmoil in the Horn of Africa

The Muslim Brotherhood in power

Books: Ian S. Lustick, *Trapped in the War on Terror*

page 02
page 06
page 08
page 11
page 14
page 18
page 21
page 24



CENTER FOR MEDITERRANEAN & MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES

What if...

in the

Middle East



Sotiris Roussos



The current issue of the Middle East Analysis attempts to put forward a number of hypotheses as a basis for contemplating different outlooks and seemingly impossible scenarios. By presenting this imagined future course of events, we acknowledge that it is far from probable to occur, though not totally improbable. After all, 9/11 was considered highly improbable but it was proved far from impossible. Some of our hypothetical premises are more feasible than others but we believe that none of them are pure fiction. It is an exercise that study groups should undertake in order to free themselves from trivialities of everyday analyses and seek the ingenuity of the unthinkable. It is beyond any doubt that not all articles in this issue deal with unthinkable developments. However, all of them deal with extreme circumstances that are usually excluded from mainstream discussions as far as their real consequences are concerned. They point into a number of directions and perspectives of such circumstances, but they have no ambition to tackle all aspects surrounding them.



Let's take an example. The new Palestinian unity government fails to address the demands of the Quartet as far as the recognition of Israel and the adherence to previous agreements are concerned. Both the Israeli and the international blockade remain in place. The Arab states decide, however to break the blockade and to proceed with generous aid to the Palestinian government. Saudi Arabia in particular, is anxious about the rising Iranian influence in the Palestinian Territories and Egypt is concerned with its diminishing role as credible power broker in the Middle East. Moreover, Jordan feels that with Iranian assistance, extreme political Islam can be a major challenge in the domestic power struggle.

Israel, on its part, feels that the situation is ripe for taking a major step towards solving its main post 1967 dilemma as for the future of the Palestinian Territories, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. A political coalition comprised by the Kadima, the Labour and Yisrael Beitenu, together with some parts of the ultra-orthodox political groups decided a comprehensive unilateral withdrawal from all parts of the West Bank (in the model of Gaza Strip) by regrouping all Jewish settlers in the major settlement blocs behind the Fence/Wall including East Jerusalem. The move will be over in nine to twelve months and the Fence will be a provisional border. Minor land swaps will compensate for Palestinian villages within the Fence. At the same time and in view of the ongoing turbulent situation in the West Bank, Israel calls on the Arab states (Jordan and Egypt in particular) and the Quartet to take over the responsibility for law and order as well as to care about the economic sustainability of the Palestinian Territories as Israel does not recognize the Palestinian Authority as a legitimate government. Moreover, Israel cautions these Arab states that they will be held responsible in the event the Palestinians imitate Hezbollah warfare models, but, on the other hand, it maintains that it is ready to discuss with Jordanians on a certain religious status quo in the Holy Places as well as an international compensation mechanism for the Palestinian refugees.

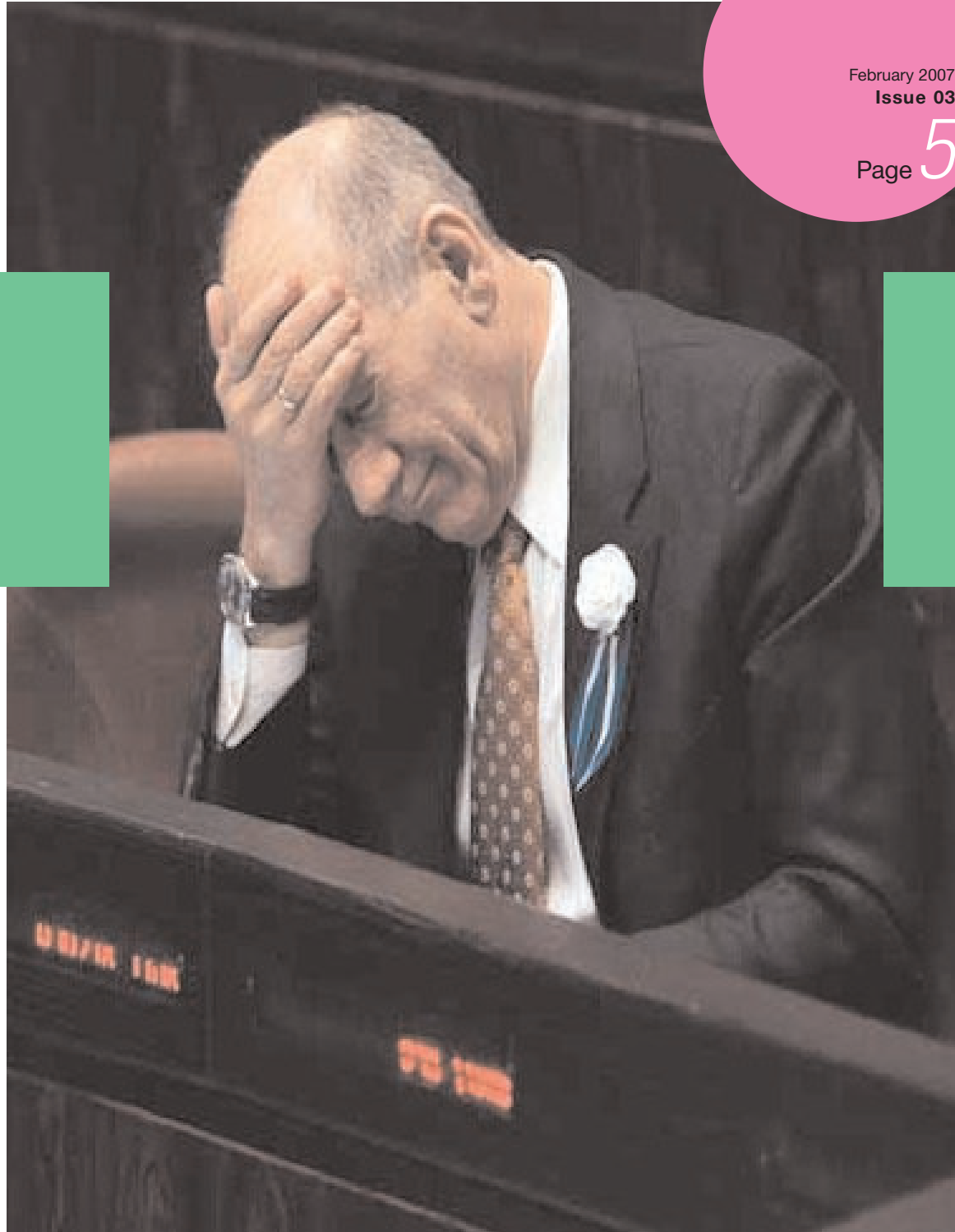
What could be the outcome of such a situation? The Palestinians seem to be left out of the deal and thus reject the decision furiously. The plan attempts to turn the clock back in 1967 and even earlier. East Jerusalem is for ever lost to Israel and the dream of an independent Palestinian state, the banner of Palestinian radical nationalism ever since 1967, lies shattered. Hamas vows to continue the struggle for Jerusalem and Palestine with all means available. The Arab states flatly reject the Israeli plan and refuse to take over political, economic and security responsibility in the West Bank and Gaza. They are, however, anxious about the possible repercussions of Palestinian attacks on Israeli targets and Israeli retaliation. They are also afraid of a possible eruption of Iraqi-style violence in the Territories with hardly manageable consequences for Jordan in particular.

The European Union is caught unaware. The EU and UN initial response is to stress the necessity for a two-state solution as a result of negotiations and not unilateral action. They also caution Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the Arab states to show restraint. Russia follows the Arab line, but without exercising any pressure on Israel.

The USA, though it had carried out some preliminary discussions with Israel on the matter, had not grasped the imminence of the Israeli plans. Hence, it has to re-adjust its policies in order to avoid a return to the Arab-Israeli conflict of the 1960s and 1970s. It puts immense pressure on Jordan and Egypt to find a solution on the Palestinian Authority before the completion of Israel's withdrawal. Egypt seems rather unwilling to follow US requests, whereas Jordan is more accommodating. Subsequently, Jordan presses Hamas by preparing Palestinian-Jordanian forces to enter the West Bank and impose law and order.

Within the Palestinian society the uncertainty, fear and anger skyrocket. Old local, family and clan networks take up arms and form small militias in order to protect their members from the coming chaos. Hamas and radical Fatah factions (al-Aqsa Brigades) condemn mainstream Fatah for flirting with





the idea of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation in order to save its lucrative government posts. As the date for withdrawal completion is approaching, hundreds of Qassam rockets are fired against Israel, prompting the Israeli army to respond with harsh and bloody incursions in Palestinian towns such as Nablus and refugee camps, with dozens dead among civilians as a result. A couple of suicide bombings in Haifa and around Tel Aviv claim a heavy death toll among Israeli civilians. Amidst this situation armed settler gangs attempt to derail withdrawal plans by attacking Palestinians as well as Israeli soldiers who try to dismantle small hilltop settlements.

The Quartet calls for an emergency summit with the leaders of Israel, Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian President and the Saudi Arabia. The USA and a grudging EU accept the Israeli move and try to manage the subsequent crisis. The Palestinian President refuses to attend, while the Egyptian President and the Saudi King send their Foreign Minister and the Crown Prince respectively in order to avoid taking the blame and to retain some room for maneuvering in the Arab world. Jordan is the weakest link, under the double-edged Damocles sword of a war with Israel and a spillover of the Palestinian chaos in the half-Palestinian Jordan. Is there a possibility for a UNIFIP following the example of UNIFIL? Can the West Bank and Gaza Strip be a new Kosovo without the consent of the Palestinians? Can it be a new recruiting base for so-called jihadist organisations? Is NATO ready to accept an anchoring Israel and guarantee its security? Who will undertake the political and economic burden for the next day?



What if Pakistan collapsed: *An "Islamic" Bomb*

Marina Eleftheriadou

A terrorist attack against the United States - this time in Guantanamo Bay - with the involvement of Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), invokes Washington's wrath against the Musharraf regime. In an effort to deal with the country's Islamists, the subtle internal balances are disturbed, causing a Sunni-Shi'ite civil war. The course of events compels the world to coexist with a nuclear and truly Islamic Pakistan.



After half a century in power with a hostile superpower on his rear and numerous failed attempts on his life... Fidel Castro dies of natural causes. The succession process throws the country into instability. The US seizes the opportunity in order to "help" the opposition establish a pro-Western government. The communist regime faced with underground foreign meddling in Cuba's domestic affairs, opens the country's gates to several Islamist groups that are planning an attack in Guantanamo Bay so as to liberate the detainees, including Mullah Omar who was captured recently. In return, they promise to back the regime in case of a US military intervention. As the operation unfolds, although the goal is not achieved, the Americans sustain heavy losses. Surprised by the unexpected attack and the ensuing prison riots, the American forces launch a counter-offensive which ends up in a wholesale slaughter.

While the American authorities investigate the incident, massive violent demonstrations erupt throughout the Middle East, accompanied by numerous attacks against American interests in the region. Preliminary evidence indicates that the attacks were carried out by -Muslim- nationals of Suriname and Guyana guided by Afghans and Pakistanis, with the involvement of high-ranking ISI officers. The revelation of the ISI involvement infuriates the Bush Administration which demands that Musharraf purge the army and the ISI completely from Islamists and take action against al-Qaeda-affiliated militants and the Taliban who are believed to be given a sanctuary in the north of Pakistan along the border with Afghanistan. Pressured by Washington, Musharraf reshuffles the top ranks of ISI and deploys the military in South and North Waziristan where, in 2004 and 2006 respectively, the government had reached a settlement with tribal leaders. According to these agreements, the tribesmen promised to stop attacking the army and refrain from crossing the border to fight in Afghanistan in exchange for the government's abstention from major ground and air operations in the area.

In order to garner the support of tribal leaders and local Islamists as well as to consolidate his power against the secular opposition which becomes increasingly vocal, Musharraf is forced to make concessions to the MMA (an heterogeneous coalition of Islamic parties that includes the Shi'ite "Islami Tehrik Pakistan") which has already managed to gain increasing representation in the National Assembly, form a provincial government in the NWFP (North West Frontier Province) and share power with Musharraf's party (PMLQ) in Balochistan. As a reward for the MMA's cooperation, the Assembly votes



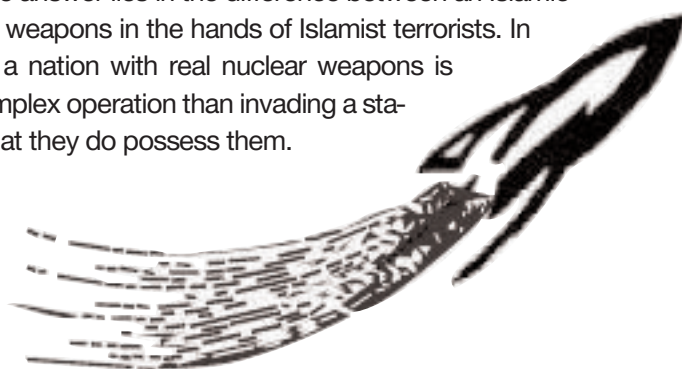
for a nation-wide enforcement of the Shari'a Bill which was approved by the provincial assembly of NWFP in June 2003. The most radical Wahhabi-influenced members of the MMA, such as JUI and Ahle Hadith, gain strength by challenging Musharraf and his decision to support the US, taking advantage of the widespread anti-Americanism in the country which is further increased by the Guantanamo incident. In addition to the Shari'a Bill, some parameters (anti-Shia) of the controversial Islamic penal code of the former ruler General Zia-ul-Haq's are brought back in force. As was the case in the early 80's, the initiative once again results in a widespread wave of sectarian violence when some moderate Sunnis and the majority of the Shi'ites, who constitute 20% of the population, angrily express their disapproval.

In this general atmosphere of chaos, Musharraf is assassinated. The Sunnis, part of the military establishment and the ISI blame the Shi'ites for the murder. The exchange of charges in combination with the instability and the prevailing feeling of uncertainty lead into a further escalation of sectarian violence, which spreads outside Karachi (the centre of violence par excellence) and increasingly assumes the attributes of an intra-religious civil war. The Northern Areas, where the Shi'ites form the majority of the population, become the theatre of intense fighting between the extremist Sipah-e-Sahaba (a Sunni group banned under Musharraf) and the Shia group Tehrik-e-Jafria.

The increase in anti-Shi'ite violence in Pakistan provokes Iranian intervention in order to protect its fellow Shi'ite coreligionists. Since a direct involvement would be really dangerous due to Iran's international and regional isolation, Tehran prefers to funnel covert economic aid and arms supplies to Shi'ite rebels. Accordingly, Saudi Arabia starts reinforcing the Sunni groups, thus transforming the conflict into a proxy war between the two regional powers. Iran also focuses on the border region of Balochistan where, apart from the Shi'ite Hazara refugees from Afghanistan, it also backs the Balochis in their long-standing insurgency against the central authorities (mostly belonging to the Punjabi community) and the Pashtuns.

Meanwhile, the Taliban enjoy unprecedented freedom of movement back and forth from Afghanistan to Pakistan, completely disregarding the Durand Line that separates the two countries. The NATO forces launch an attack entering Pakistani territory in order to eradicate militant pockets of resistance there. The Shi'ites, taking advantage of the disarray that the NATO offensive provoked among the Sunni ranks, seize control of the Kahuta enrichment plant in north Pakistan and a storehouse in the northern mountainous area of Gilgit where several nuclear warheads were airlifted in order to avert the possibility of Islamist access to such material after the government's decision to support the US war in Afghanistan. Faced with the possibility of those weapons falling into the hands of Iran (the most dreadful scenario for the West, partly because an Iranian bomb would provoke a development of nuclear arms by Saudi Arabia and probably Egypt), the US changes its attitude. It tactfully allows the empowerment of the Sunni groups who recapture the nuclear facilities and gradually suppress the Shi'ite insurgency.

At this stage, the scenario of Islamists seizing power and gaining control of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is considered a better alternative to a nuclear Iran. In all likelihood, the Pakistanis will vow friendship in the short run and the US - and generally the West - will pretend to believe them. The question "will they sooner or later use those weapons?" is difficult to answer as no such historic precedent exists. The same question was being asked during the 1950's and throughout the Cold War regarding the revolutionary Soviet Union. Perhaps the answer lies in the difference between an Islamic state with nuclear weapons and the same weapons in the hands of Islamist terrorists. In any case, one thing is certain: attacking a nation with real nuclear weapons is undoubtedly a much more difficult and complex operation than invading a state with no such weapons on the pretext that they do possess them.



Getting back home: The US as an offshore balancer

The US administration currently shows no sign of wishing to immediately withdraw its troops from Iraq, let alone reduce its involvement in the Middle East. However, this might change in the future.

Ilias Tassopoulos

In the aftermath of America's Vietnam adventure, all administrations have faced fierce domestic opposition regarding major military operations in distant areas- at least, until the demise of the Soviet Union. As a matter of fact, before rising to power, George W. Bush had been in favour of a highly restrained approach to US military missions around the globe. Nevertheless, the heinous World Trade Centre attacks of 2001 have legitimized a massive American military presence in the Middle East.



However, unexpected domestic developments could force the administration to withdraw all troops from the Middle East, although, given the significance of American interests in the region, the US might choose to retain the right of intervention to deter a single power from growing to dominate the entire region or crucial parts of it. In other words, the US might assume an offshore balancing role.



A similar role was played by the United States in the past, during the First and Second World Wars. Similarly, throughout the Cold War, the US did not intervene in the Middle East with ground troops, relying instead on the superiority of its air and naval forces. Apart from the infamous involvement of American agents in coups d' etat in the Middle East, the US pursued its policy through diplomacy and co-operation with regional allies.

In the same way that the US presence has an impact on the entire region so will its absence. Consequently, in the event of a US withdrawal, Iraq will probably slide into a full-blown civil war, which will result in the involvement of all neighbouring countries wishing to take advantage of the turmoil.

However, Iraq will not be partitioned, as the regional powers seem to believe that the present borders should be preserved. A redrawing of the borders could produce unprecedented upheaval. Iran, Syria and Turkey share a common interest in preventing such a development, as the Kurdish factor is always in the back of their minds. If Iraqi Kurds manage to secede, the Kurdish minorities that exist in Syria, Iran, and Turkey might be inclined to follow suit or at least stand up and demand a greater share of power. There is already widespread concern about the potential attitude of an independent Kurdistan, despite the fact that Iraq's Kurdish political leaders have managed to build a working relationship with Turkey over the last years. An independent Kurdistan may adopt irredentist goals, although it seems unlikely that it will possess the ability to implement them.

The Kurdish issue is dependent on the outcome of Iraq's internal struggle. Following the American withdrawal, Iran might support the ascendance of a strong government in Iraq, capable of extending sovereignty throughout the country's territory. By implementing the above strategy, Iran will be able to influence the whole of Iraq. Iran will mediate between the various Shi'ite groups so as to prevent disintegration. The new government will be built on cooperation among the SCIRI, Al Dawa and the Iranian regime. The precondition for Tehran's financial and military support to Shi'ite groups would be the renunciation of any plan that could lead to partition. The agreement would be espoused by the leader of the Shi'ite parliamentary bloc, Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim. Although he presently seems to be solely interested in retaining control of southern Iraq, the Iranian pledge to provide sufficient funds to the central government in order to impose Shi'ite control over the entire country would tempt him to comply.

Moqtada al Sadr and his followers would initially be excluded from the power structure, since Iran is extremely fearful of Sadr's volatile attitude. However this decision might end up provoking an "unholy" alliance between Sadr's army and non-Baathist Sunnis, an alliance based on both sides' nationalist credentials. This manoeuvre would force the new regime to include Moqtada al Sadr in the power-sharing process, so as to prevent a further radicalisation of the Sunni minority which would inhibit Iran's long-term plans.

The Sunni minority is a very important part of Iran's strategy, since Tehran wishes to support the rise of Shi'ite Muslims throughout the Arab World by subordinating the Sunni Muslims to a minority status. If this strategy proves successful, it will be easier for Iran to influence the entire Middle East, as the Arab regimes will be forced to face Iran as a Shi'ite ally which no longer constitutes a Persian threat. The plans to establish control over Iraq's Sunni minority could be a projection of the Iranian plans for the region.

The rise of a strong regime in Iraq will result in the weakening of the district governors. The Kurds will be allowed to keep their regional autonomy, but they will not be incorporated in the central power structure. Kirkuk will not come under their control, as the new regime will force the Kurds to abandon any claim to the oil-rich region. This will prevent Kurdish leaders from concentrating too much power in their hands. It may also forestall the rise of Kurdish nationalism in the region, since the Kurds will continue to lack the substantial funds necessary for the promotion of the ideal of Kurdish unity. These developments will mitigate Syrian and Turkish concerns over their Kurdish minorities, as the Kurds will continue to be held in a position of weakness.

Saudi Arabia might be tempted to intervene and incite a Sunni Muslim uprising against the new regime. Riyadh will certainly feel extremely threatened by an Iran-Iraq axis. Nevertheless, the fear of a



Shi'ite minority uprising in Saudi Arabia will prevent the Saudi regime from initiating a direct dispute with Iran. As the majority of Saudi Shi'ites reside in the crucial Eastern Province (where the major Saudi oil fields are concentrated), Saudi Arabia will be very careful not to ignite a generalized Sunni- Shia fight in the region.

If the US adopt an offshore balancing role, it will abstain from directly pressuring Iran. The change of US attitude towards Iran might also prompt other countries to take initiatives regarding the latter's nuclear ambitions. Russia might seize the opportunity to cooperate with Iran, acquire financial gains and expand its influence in the region. By acting as a moderate force with the intent of reconciling Iran's revolutionary rhetoric with the conservative regimes of the Gulf countries, the pro-Western Arab countries and Israel, Russia will significantly boost its regional prestige. In addition, China will be inclined to expand its presence in the region so as to secure undisrupted energy supply. Should the US troops withdraw, Iran will be able to manoeuvre more freely as far as its nuclear program is concerned. If the Iranian regime decides to intensify its pursuit of nuclear capabilities, the regional powers might attempt to acquire nuclear weapons themselves, especially those directly threatened, namely Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

The key issue will be the regional powers' perception of Iran's motives behind its nuclear ambitions. They might qualify the Iranian nuclear program as a blackmailing tool that Tehran will use to accomplish its regional goals to the detriment of the surrounding Arab countries. In this case, Egypt and Saudi Arabia might be tempted to create an alliance which might even lead to a deployment of Egyptian troops in the Gulf. However, Indian troops might be deemed as a better alternative. India might use its diplomatic ties with the small Arab Gulf States to persuade them -as well as Saudi Arabia- to accept an Indian military presence in the Gulf, thus forming the basis for a future strategic alliance between India and the Gulf States.

In the end, the Gulf States might be convinced that the Iranian regime wishes to use its nuclear program so as to extract economic benefits and security guarantees from the West. In this case, they might look for a new foreign guarantor of security. They might eventually turn to the countries most dependent on energy, the EU and Japan. The need to secure unhampered energy supply might compel Britain, Germany and France to take bold steps in forging a common European foreign policy. At first, the EU might come to an agreement with Iran by offering a package of financial incentives and security

arrangements in order to convince Tehran to abandon its nuclear plans. Japan might also be tempted to follow a more assertive foreign policy in the region.

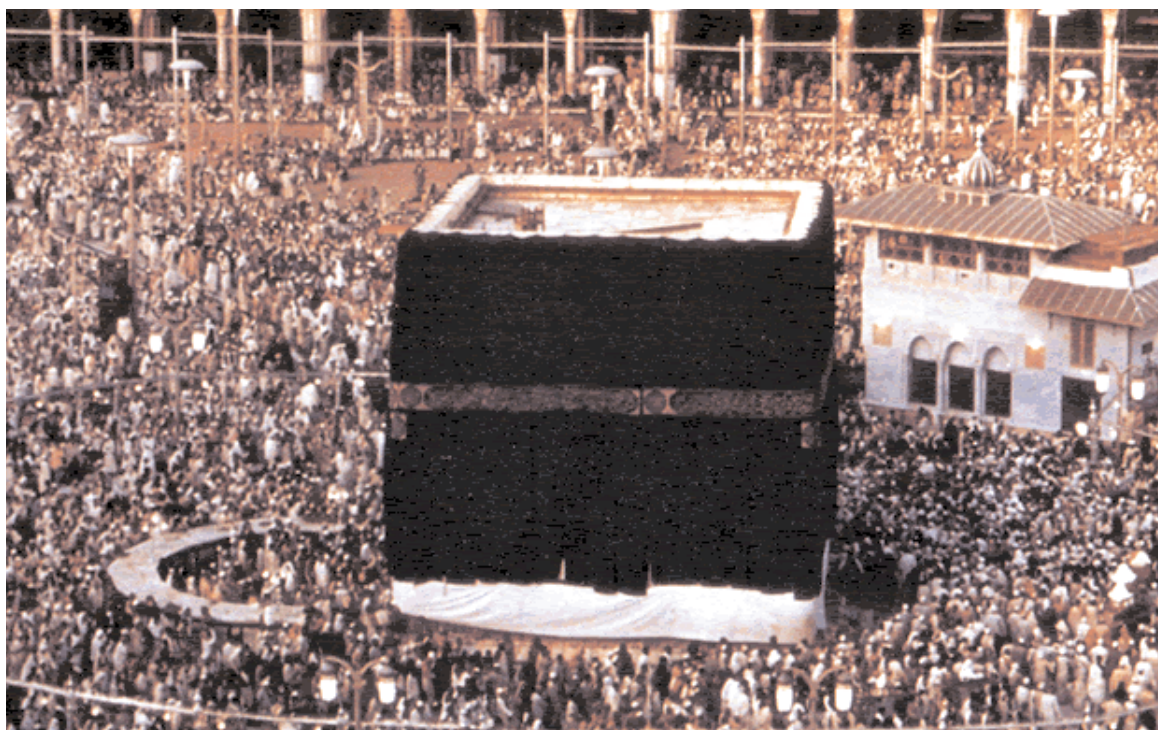
By and large, a withdrawal of American troops would probably result in short-term instability in the region. Iran will be able to expand its influence by cooperating with a Shi'ite regime in Iraq. However, it will be careful not to cross the line and provoke the return of American troops in the region. In the meantime, Russia, China and India will be more than willing to replace the United States as the dominant powers in the Gulf. The European countries and Japan will also be compelled to pursue a more activist Persian Gulf policy.



A Nuclear Saudi Arabia

Marianna Athanasopoulou

How possible is it that Saudi Arabia, alongside Israel and, most probably, Iran, will become one of the Middle East's nuclear powers and how would such a development affect the future of the one of the world's most turbulent and volatile regions? In this article we set out to explore this scenario, hoping that it does not come true...



Western policymakers entangled in the web of the Middle East's geopolitical uncertainties and ominous dynamics have of late been overwhelmingly preoccupied with the issue of nuclear proliferation, brought to the fore due to Iran's ongoing uranium enrichment program which is deemed as by far the most serious long-term security challenge to US primacy in this strategically pivotal corner of the world. Various threat assessments warn about the possible domino effect of the Iranian policy producing an unprecedented escalation and even triggering a general nuclear war.

However divergent the scope or extreme the outcome presented in these scenarios, they do merit consideration. With Iran getting closer to becoming the world's next nuclear power and given the long tradition of regional rivalries, it seems that the die is cast and it is almost inevitable that other regional powers will seek to enhance their power of deterrence and geopolitical status by acquiring nuclear capabilities. Turkey and Egypt have already announced plans to develop a nuclear program for peaceful purposes. The Gulf Cooperation Council followed suit when in December 10, 2006 its heads of State issued a joint communique announcing similar plans. Nuclear proliferation could become the single most important factor that will determine the nature of Middle Eastern power politics in the years to come.



One of the Arab countries most affected by Tehran's increasingly assertive policy in this field is undoubtedly Saudi Arabia. The regional circumstances certainly provided Riyadh with a number of incentives to go nuclear. Despite the fact that the Kingdom is a signatory of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) since 1988 and it officially supports a Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone (MWFZ) in the Middle East, political realism naturally prevails over good intentions and even formal commitments. In a region which possesses almost 70% of the world's known oil reserves, Tehran and Riyadh, the centre of Shiism and a regional power which is becoming increasingly hard to ignore and the Arab heavyweight in terms of economic power and religious authority respectively, have a long tradition of animosity and antagonism over the leadership of the Persian Gulf. Despite public protestations to the contrary, Tehran is already a nuclear power, the first state in the region to challenge Israel's nuclear monopoly and tip the balance of power in its favor. With the establishment of a Shi'ite dominated government in Baghdad which is bound to develop close ties with Tehran, the political and security environment in the Gulf could have easily turned into a Saudi nightmare. Riyadh had reason to fear that the United States, despite its much publicized opposition, lacked the resolve to effectively deter Iran from advancing its capabilities further or from using them to "blackmail" its neighbors, due to the Iraqi fiasco and the growing domestic unpopularity of President Bush's Middle Eastern adventures. The mounting levels of instability and the increasing militarization of the region further highlighted the inferiority of Riyadh's military status and its vulnerability to foreign invasion, which was first brought forward by Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. What is more, deteriorating relations with Washington in the aftermath of September 11th called the Saudi policy of heavy reliance on US protection into question. It is therefore clear that, aside from being solely an issue of prestige, Saudi procurement of a nuclear deterrent was a pragmatic need in order to counterbalance the shortcomings of its conventional military capabilities.

Although the US and Saudi Arabia have long shared a common strategic interest in ensuring that no regional power comes to dominate the Persian Gulf and they are both extremely alarmed by the progress of Iran's nuclear program and its de facto upgraded geopolitical status following the overthrow of the Iraqi Baathist regime, they could not cooperate in the development of a Saudi nuclear program in order to neutralize the Iranian threat. Despite its security ties with Washington, which has so far provided the bulk of its military equipment, Riyadh went underground and worked a nuclear deal with Pakistan. There was a historic precedent to such an action: in 1988, to the great discontent of the United States, Saudi Arabia purchased CSS-2 long-range ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons from China. Following widespread US criticism for that move, King Fahd had boldly stated that "the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is not tied to anyone...if things become complicated with a certain country, we will find other countries regardless of whether they are Eastern or Western. We are buying guns not principles". The most suitable partner for Saudi Arabia was Pakistan. In fact, during the past few years there had been numerous reports that the Saudis had already played a major role in financing Pakistan's nuclear research and development program possibly with an eye to obtaining nuclear warheads in the future. Procurement of cheap oil was Pakistan's primary incentive for entering into such cooperation, as well as a desire to match the close Indo-Israeli military relationship. The deal between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia was made during a series of high-level Saudi visits to Pakistan's nuclear and ballistic missiles facilities. Given the fact that Saudi Arabia already possessed adequate delivery systems (the Chinese CSS-2 missiles), it purchased nuclear material rather than follow in Iran's footsteps and develop an indigenous uranium enrichment program which would have to be monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and would therefore be hard to sustain, lest Riyadh should have been ready to face international isolation and sanctions. By acquiring a ready-made nuclear warhead, the Saudis were able to instantly join the nuclear club without having to face the international opprobrium that accompanies indigenous production.



The United States cannot afford to turn a blind eye to Saudi Arabia's acquisition of a nuclear status. A nuclear capability combined with the country's vast oil resources have single-handedly transformed it into a regional "superpower", capable of implementing a more independent and assertive policy vis a vis oil prices and production, Iraq and even the Israeli- Palestinian conflict. History has taught the US that it cannot take for granted the acquiescence of pro-Western Middle Eastern regimes to its grand scheme for a "New Middle East" (in the words of US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice). Such was the case of Saddam Hussein, an erstwhile friend and ally, who became dangerously ambitious and opted for a confrontational foreign policy, openly challenging the post-cold War US-led "New World Order". Even before Riyadh's procurement of Pakistani-made nuclear weapons was brought to light, a mere suspicion of Pakistani-Saudi cooperation in the nuclear field had raised eyebrows of concern in Washington, even more so since such a Saudi move was perceived as a threat to US diplomatic efforts to halt Iran's program and to prevent a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. For the record, the 1999 visit of Crown Prince Sultan to Pakistan's uranium enrichment and missile production centre in Kahuta had prompted a formal US diplomatic complaint to Riyadh. The US administration has so far adopted the carrot and stick approach - in contrast to its relentless Iran policy - warning Riyadh of the implications of its nuclear pursuit and at the same time offering incentives for disarmament (a nuclear umbrella against Tehran and attractive contracts for the modernization of its conventional forces) to ensure the regime's compliance. But under the current circumstances, it will become increasingly hard for Washington to negotiate some sort of settlement without accepting to bring into the debate the issue of Israel's nuclear arsenal, so far a non-starter for the administration. In any case, the Kingdom being the world's leading oil exporter, the West will be forced to adopt somewhat depleted measures against Riyadh, in order to ensure uninterrupted flow of Saudi oil to Western markets. On the other hand, the Saudis cannot rely on the oil card indefinitely as the sole means to achieve favorable treatment from the international community. Maintaining a friendly relationship with Washington is still in Riyadh's interest and the royal family would certainly not want to see a repetition of the 1973 situation, when it was made clear that there are limits to Arab use of the oil weapon for diplomatic or military gains.

The country which has reacted most vociferously to Saudi Arabia's purchase of nuclear material is Israel. Although the former was never considered an outright hostile country, such as Syria or Iran, Israel is not ready to give up its hitherto exclusive privilege of being a full-blown nuclear power and lose its decisive advantage over the combined conventional armies of the Arab world. So far, Tel Aviv's reaction is limited to making use of the influence of the powerful pro-Israel US lobby to prompt Washington to take harsh measures. Even under US pressure, Israel is not likely to negotiate its nuclear status as part of a general Middle East denuclearization scheme.

The decision of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to announce plans for a joint nuclear research program highlights the Gulf States' increasing concern over Iran's weapons and their assessment that US security assurances are not enough to offset the Iranian threat. Given the fact that the oil-rich emirates have traditionally been viewed as Saudi satellites, they have stood behind Saudi Arabia as a means of counterbalancing Tehran's increasingly assertive Gulf policy (let's not forget that Iran and the UAE are already at odds regarding three islands near the Strait of Hormuz which Tehran seized in 1971).

Saudi Arabia's decision to obtain a nuclear arsenal will undoubtedly open Pandora's box for a nuclear arms race, increasing the danger of cross-border smuggling of nuclear material which could end up in the hands of terrorist groups ready to kill and die for a "divine purpose". The recent disclosure of a nuclear technology black market network led by the pioneer of Pakistan's nuclear program, Dr. A. Q. Khan, makes such scenarios more realistic than ever. Given the underlying rivalries within the Saudi establishment as well as the de facto existence of al Qaeda-affiliated organizations which continue to fund worldwide terror activities the danger is clear and present and, for better or for worse, the West's hands are tied...

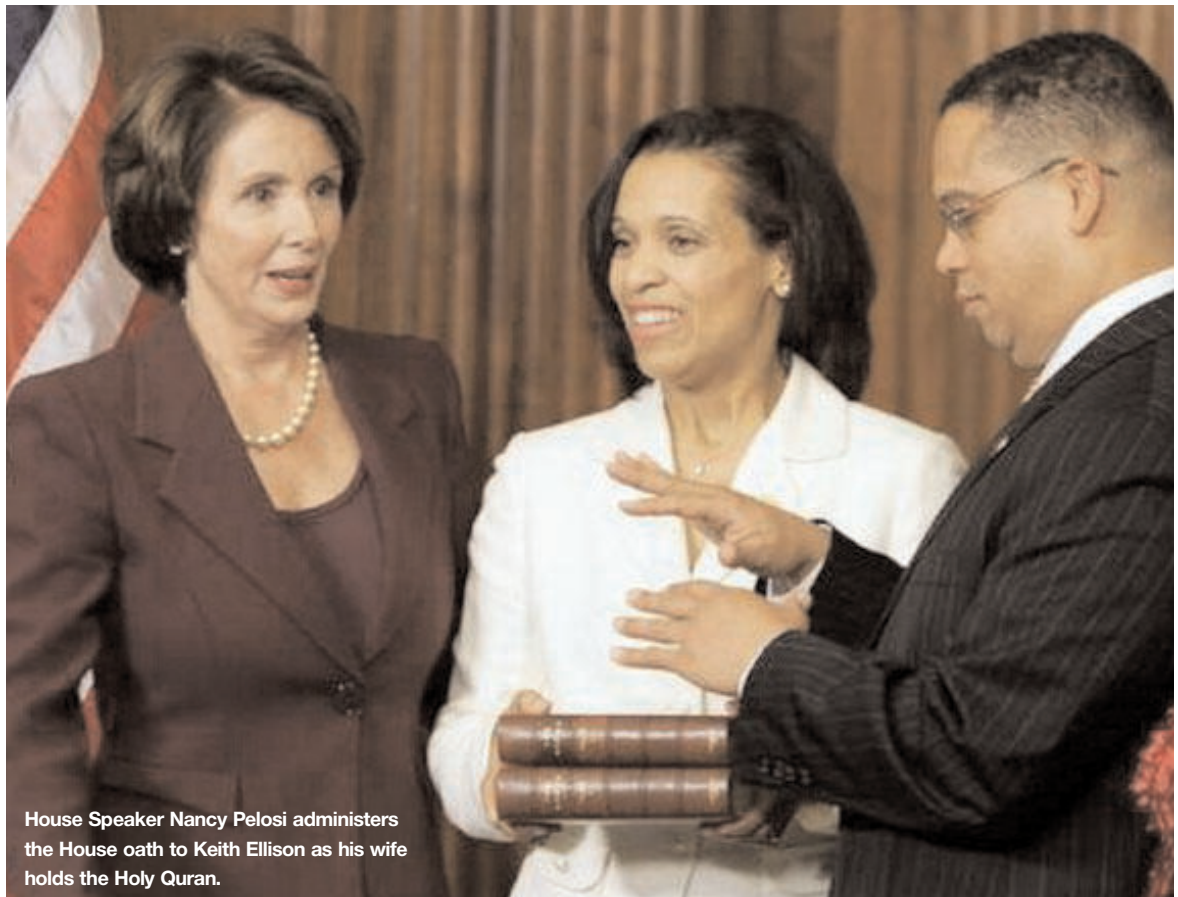


A Muslim in the House

Anna Apostolidou

The new President of the United States is a Muslim and everyone anticipates great changes in the superpower's Middle East policy. Nevertheless, in reality not much is going to change. The perception of national interest, the geopolitical importance of the Middle East, the American decision-making process and the weakness of the pro-Arab US lobby vis a vis its Israeli counterpart present the new President with little margin for a truly novel foreign policy orientation.

After a suspenseful night, the outcome of the presidential elections shakes the very foundations of the American political heritage: The new President of the United States is Muslim. This unprecedented fact gladdens Arab Americans and Muslims throughout the world, who now hope that the sole superpower will reconsider its Middle East stance. They expect that Washington will strengthen its ties with Islamic countries and that it will be willing to build a more lucrative relationship with them. They even hope that the US will halt its assistance to Israel, act in favour of the Muslim world's interests, or, at least, scale down its involvement in Middle Eastern affairs. However, their hopes soon prove unrealistic.



House Speaker Nancy Pelosi administers the House oath to Keith Ellison as his wife holds the Holy Quran.

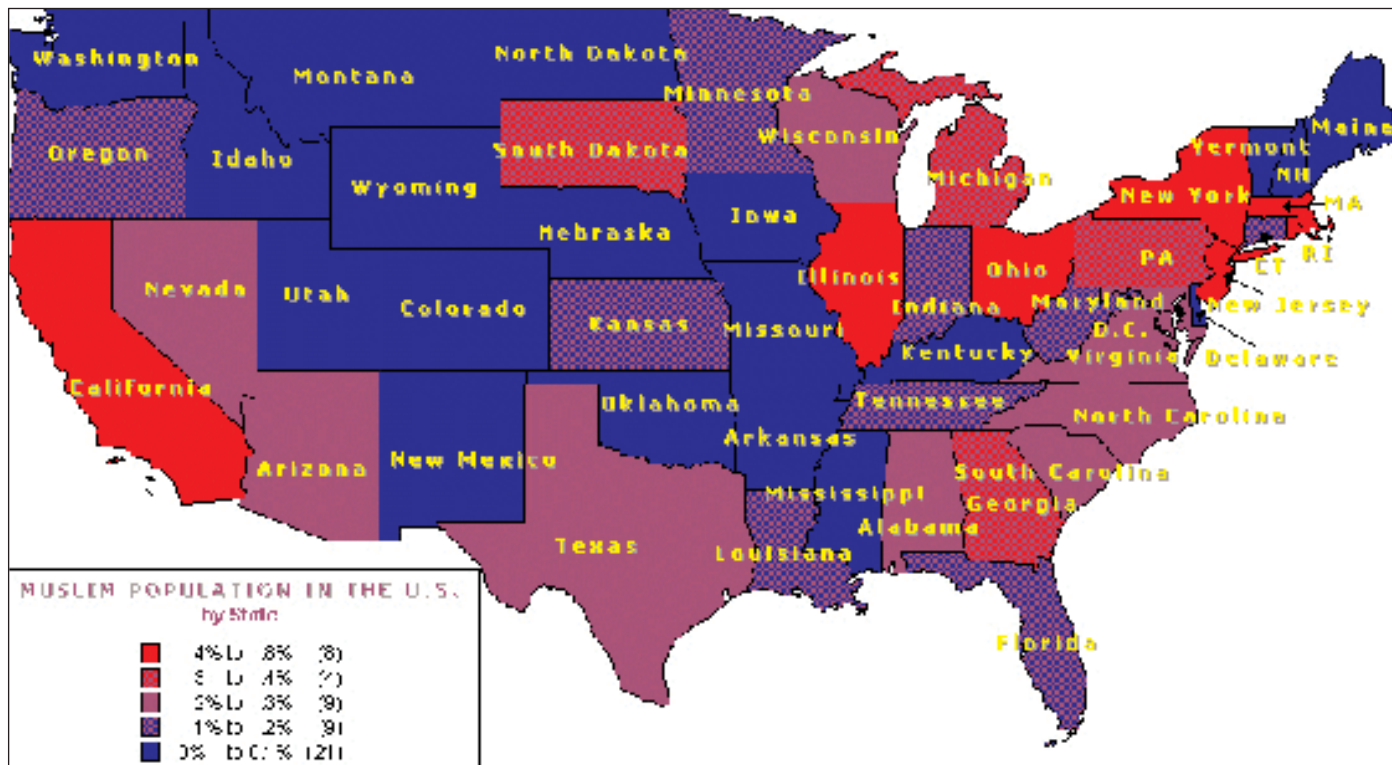


The rigidity of American foreign policy can be interpreted through the realistic model of the theory of International Relations. Given the fact that each nation's primary goal is to defend its national security and interests, foreign policy planning is based on a rational cost-benefit evaluation rather than on emotional considerations. Religion and personal beliefs, although they may influence governmental politics in a variety of ways, cannot overshadow the principal objective of survival and expansion of the nation's might. Undoubtedly, one counterargument could be that the American foreign policy is characterized by idealism rather than realism. In that context, it is possible that the new American government would change its ideological orientation in favour of the Arab world. Nonetheless, Washington would be less inclined to pursue pro-Muslim policies if these were deemed as damaging to the principal goals of national security and national interests. If American involvement in the Middle East shrivels, those principal goals will be threatened. First of all, a hands-down Middle East policy would damage its national economic interests. Secondly, it would degrade its international status, since US absence would create a vacuum of power in this geopolitically pivotal region that another country might benefit from. In other words, it is in Washington's best interest to continue pursuing an active policy in the region in order to safeguard its position as a superpower in the current international system.

Notwithstanding, let us assume that the President, inspired by his Muslim faith, would be willing to adopt pro-Muslim policies. However, we should bear in mind that presidential authority in the American political system is not absolute. The President may appoint his subordinates, but he cannot act without their support or ignore the Congress, which has a respectable constitutional role in policy-making. The executive branch and the Congress cannot be comprised only by Muslims or pro-Muslims, so the President would have to encounter fierce opposition if he were determined to enforce his personal will. Apart from this, it is quite doubtful whether the President himself would have a purely Islamic political identity. His personality would have been formed under the influence of American political tradition and thus his political identity would bear the hallmarks of Western ideals and principles rather than those of political Islam. Otherwise, he would not have been able to rise to the leadership of either of the two major parties, Democrats or Republicans, and to gain the trust of American voters.

Another justification for the consistency of the American Middle Eastern policy is the role of lobbies in the American decision-making process which gives specific interest-groups and organizations the right to influence governmental decisions. Jewish Americans are better organized than Arab Americans and have par excellence played a far more influential role on governmental and Congressional attitudes vis a vis Israel. According to a study carried out by the National Journal (March 2005), the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) was ranked as the second most powerful lobby in Washington, despite the fact that Jewish Americans account for less than 3% of the population. The pro-Israel lobby has also managed to influence the administration's policies by funding the electoral campaigns of pro-Israel candidates from both parties and hampering candidates who are seen as hostile to Israel. Accordingly, no President with an anti-Israeli agenda could ever be elected. The Muslim President would definitely have to make some compromises so as to gain the acceptance of the lobby. In addition, Jewish Americans have managed to obtain significant leverage in the media (e.g. Committee for Accurate Middle East Reporting in America) and have a leading presence in many academic institutions (e.g. Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Center for Security Policy, Foreign Policy Research Institute, Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs etc.) which allows them to put pressure on the government and to turn American public opinion more favourable toward Israel.





On the other hand, the Arab American community, although estimated at about 4 million, does not have analogous access to the decision-making process. For many years, America's Muslims had to face the dilemma of integration into the American way of life and institutions or abstention from them. This dilemma stemmed from the medieval Islamic division of the world between Dar el Islam (Abode of Islam) and Dar el Harb (Abode of War). Muslim immigrants were considered to be an enclave of Dar el Islam lodged in the body politic of Dar el Harb, whose laws diverge from the Shari'a. Moreover, the Muslim community exhibits considerably varying degrees of diaspora consciousness, i.e. of concern for the political interests of their homeland in the host nation, with the American-born being much less activist vis a vis the Arab-Israeli conflict. This fact, combined with the customary assimilation of the immigrants, might explain the Arab Americans' lingering in organizing themselves politically. Their two most influential organizations, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the American Muslim Alliance (AMA) were founded as late as 1994.

These organizations have not yet achieved to counterbalance the Israeli sway in the American policy-making process. Until this happens, the American Middle Eastern policy is unlikely to change in essence. Still, the election of a Muslim President will modify Washington's rhetoric. The idea of the nation's destiny and of America's missionary role will continue to play a key role in the US domestic and international image, but it will be embellished with arguments underlining the uniqueness of the liberal US political system, where all citizens - Christians, Muslims, Jews, whites and blacks - share equal opportunities. Moreover, the election of a Muslim President will overwhelm those who allege that there is a clash of civilizations between Islam and Christendom.

On the rhetorical level, Washington will also strengthen its ties with the Arab countries, especially those who are already its allies, like Egypt, Jordan and the Gulf states. The President will probably also try to build some communication channels with more radical countries by pointing out the common religion and by offering economic incentives. In the case of Syria, he



might be successful (Damascus has declared that it would accept a partnership with the US if Washington offered meaningful incentives). Nevertheless, it's dubious that Washington will try to ameliorate its relations with countries like Iran, who threaten to overturn the regional power balance. Iran's nuclear program is a sensitive matter, in which neither part is willing to make compromises. The new administration under a Muslim President might soften its rhetoric, talking about political and economic reforms instead of regime change, but, in point of fact, it will probably maintain the goal of regime change on its agenda. In any case, it will not seek normalization of its ties with Tehran per se, unless unforeseen developments dictate such a flip-flop.

Regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict, the new President will face an interesting dilemma. Naturally, he will display some concern for the Palestinian plight, like the majority of the Muslim diaspora does. However, his country's strategic alliance with Israel, based on the affinity of their political systems, their long-standing and multi-level cooperation, common strategic interests and their commitment to lead a war against terrorism, combined with the power of the pro-Israel US lobby, would not allow him to undertake peremptory initiatives that would harm the alliance. The Arab world will expect him to work more actively on a fair settlement of the Palestine issue and, for the first time in American history, the US government will be able to claim that it is an impartial mediator. So, the President will have to pursue either a multilateral or a bilateral approach. The multilateral approach implies that the negotiations would be carried out under the aegis of the UN, aiming to a resolution and a multilateral agreement that will bring the crisis to an end. However, given Israel's preference for bilateral agreements and its long tradition of indifference towards UN resolutions, this course of action is bound to fail. Probably, the new administration will prefer to convene a new bilateral peace conference and to play a role similar to that played by American Presidents during the Oslo Agreements of 1993 or the Camp David summits of 1979 and 2000, that is mediate between the two sides and not come forward with independent proposals.

Multilateral diplomacy will prove to be a more useful foreign policy tool in the case of Iraq, where the US would continue to plan for a military disengagement without abandoning its interests in the region. It is probable that the new administration will accept the Baker-Hamilton Commission's recommendations regarding the "constructive engagement" with Iran and Syria and the upgrade of UN's role. American troops will be withdrawn or reduced in size and the President will invoke his religion so as to present the withdrawal not as a failure of America's Iraq policy but as a generous step to promote trust and friendship in the Middle East.

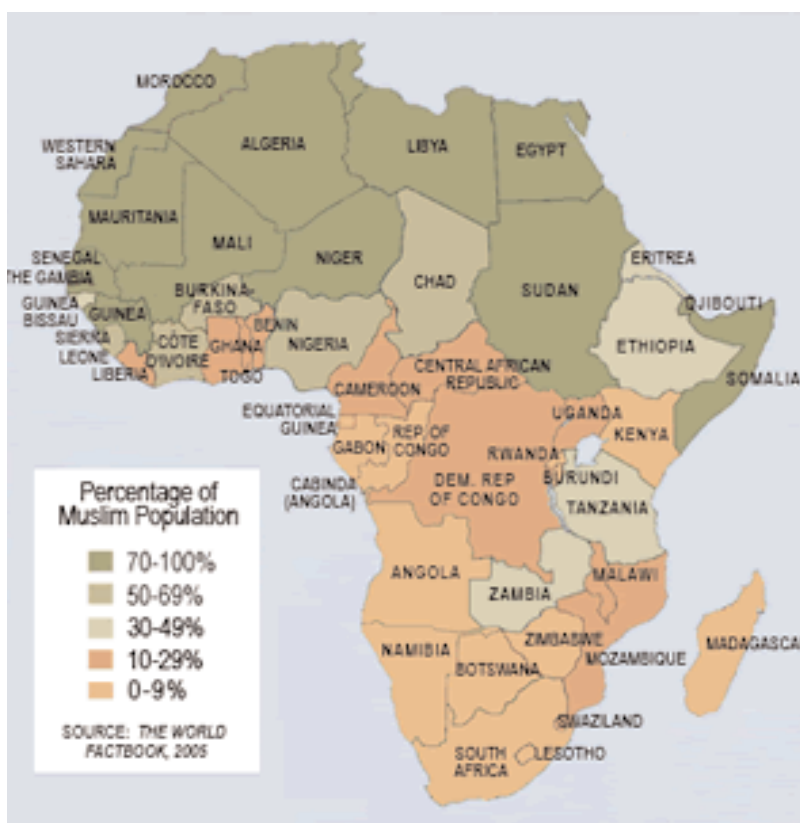
Even if the US Middle Eastern policy does not change dramatically, the election of a Muslim President will mark a breakthrough in American political culture. Certainly, in order for this to happen, there are some preconditions. First, the appropriate candidate shall be found; a charismatic candidate, corresponding to the Bonaparte model, that will be able to rally the Muslim voters around him and at the same time gain the trust of the majority non-Muslim voters in an era where American distrust towards the Muslims is record high. Second, the Muslim community, Arabs or African-Americans, will have to overcome their dilemmas and accept that there might be some ground for cooperation between the US and their countries of origin. Third, the American society has to be ready to accept such a domestic change when the circumstances allow it. Already, the Muslims have begun to participate more actively in the American political scene. On January 4, 2007, Minnesota Representative Keith Ellison became the first Muslim member of the US Congress. And the Senator Barack Hussein Obama Jr., who has expressed his desire to run for President, comes from a Muslim family (although he is not Muslim himself). AMA has set itself the goal to elect a Muslim President "by the year 2020". Unbelievable? Maybe, but not impossible.



The Horn of Africa: The die is cast?

Ioannis V. Mantzikos

The geopolitical situation in the Darfur region of Sudan is fragile; Somalia is an Islamic and a warlord protectorate of inter- and intra-clan fighting, which Ethiopia tries to maintain weak. For its part, Ethiopia has unsolved differences with Eritrea, affecting the whole Horn stability. We could say that the Horn is being "middle-easternized" (sic). If we could bring into existence a time-machine, the forthcoming scenario would not be mutatis mutandis in the man's extraordinary or utopia sphere.



The Darfur region of Sudan will be the outburst of great changes in the eastern African geopolitical map. Abdel Wahid Nour, leader of the Fur (Darfur's largest tribe), with the argument that Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) and Minni Arkoi Minnawi lack the Darfurian confidence and trust, will nullify the deal by destroying Zaghawa (Minnawi's tribe) villages. As a consequence, Minnawi will be forced into withdrawal from the DPA. Furthermore, Nour alongside with the Justice and Equality Movement, the National Redemption Front and national parties such as the Umma Party

and the National Reform Congress, will lead a successful military coup against al-Bashir in order to end Khartoum's political hegemony and economic marginalization.

However, state-building will be a difficult task for Darfurians. Rebels will seek to establish an authoritarian Islamic regime by promoting Arab-Darfurians within the administration, non-Arabs will be expelled from the country and non-Arab political parties will be disbanded; allied forces will receive governmental positions and extended autonomy for their governorates. Economic practices and state ideology will be influenced by the book of the Iraqi Ayatollah Baqir as-Sadr known as Iqtissaduna an economic system based on the principles of Islam. Another critical issue will be the Sudanese People Liberation Movement's (SPLM) Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the former government which will not exist; Darfurians will not allow any secession plans, since the



oilfields are located in the South; unlikely, the South Sudan Defence Force (SSDF) will be reorganized in order to gain control of the oilfields and Sudan will be on the brink of a new civil war.

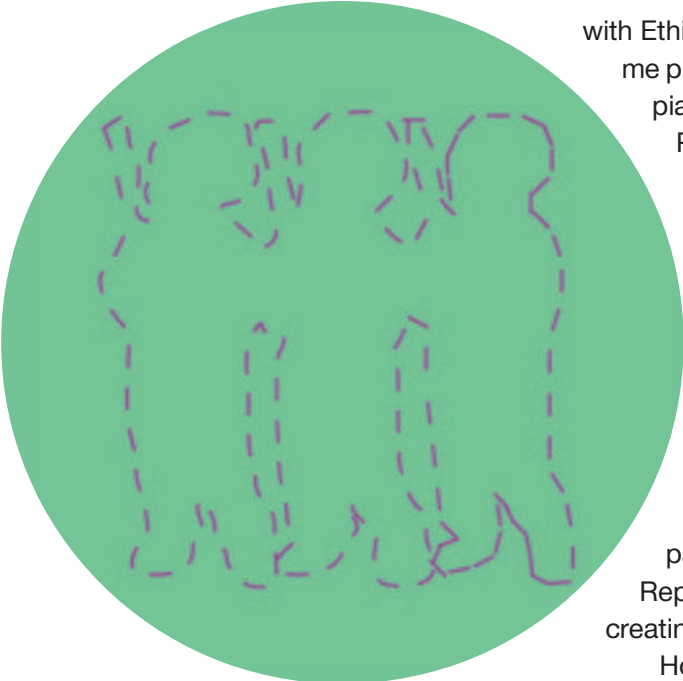
In the inter-relations, Chinese President Hu Jintao will be frustrated after the government's ad hoc decision to nationalize the oilfields and to cancel the trade deal with China. In Egypt, Muslim Brothers' declaration of support for the Darfurian regime and the disputes in Nile region between the Nuer, the Liliir and the Bahr el Ghazal tribes, which will threaten the country's most essential natural asset, the Nile will loom President Hosni Mubarak. Egyptian foreign policy will support al-Bashir's counterattack, an initiative also backed by China and Chad whose economy will be destabilized by the mass refugee influx. Surprisingly enough, Darfurian regime will be supported by the Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and the Bolivian Evo Morales, who despite the regime's strict Islamic nature, will find an ally against "the Western Devils" as they both stated.

Furthermore, inspired and assisted by Darfurian insurgency and having a vision of a continental Islam; Somali Islamists under the leadership of Ahmed Abdi Godane and Hassan Dahir Aweys will devote their efforts towards integrating the "Western Somalia" as former dictator Siad Barre used to call the territory of Ogaden in order to fulfill the dream of the "Greater Somalia" (Ogaden province was given to Ethiopia during the reign of King Menelik). Radicals' strategy will be the creation of a parallel front in the borderlands which will push Ethiopian troops out of Mogadishu. Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) supported by Somalia, under the claim of self-determination will declare secession from the Ethiopian rule. In addition, Zenawi's denial of humanitarian aid by the World Food Programme (WFP) to Ogaden people will legitimate (in public eyes view) their struggles and will force Somali into invading Ethiopia. Immediately, Ethiopian government will order bombings against Ogaden villages and will suspend migration. Oromo and Ogaden Fronts with Darfurian assistance will join *urbi et orbi* the Somali emirates. The Kampala Accord held in Uganda, under African Union (AU) auspices will result into Ethiopian acceptance of the current status quo. After a 5 year period both sides will organize a self-determination referendum for Ogaden and Oromo territories. This will remain known later as: "the first phase of Ethiopian partition".

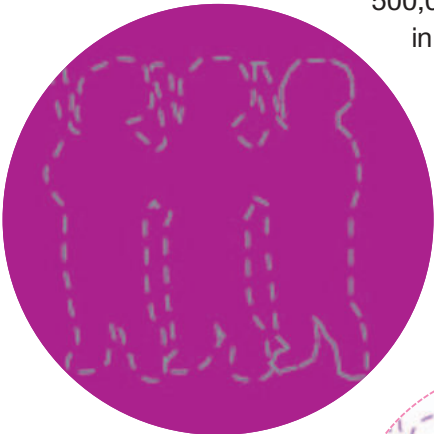
Meanwhile, another Radical Front of Islamists will exploit Ethiopia's war with the tribal secessionists and will attempt a coup against Baidoa (transitional government's headquarters). Al-Qaeda's guerilla tactics, who wants to open a new jihadist Front in the Horn, Eritrean armed supplies and Sahel countries assistance will be proved critical in Somali dispute. The coalition between the secularist transitional government, the Ethiopian troops and the warlords (whom United States backing as counterbalance to radicals) will not be able to defend Somaliland and Puntland where terrorist's organizations like the Ammari Saifi's Group for Preaching and Combat will attack. Sahel caravans will be used from the radicals as routes for arms and hideouts in both war situations. Despite the fact that Ethiopian planes will bomb Mogadishu and Garissa, Islamists will gain control of the key regions in Somalia. However, radicals will face problems in their effort to establish an Islamic emirate; Ethiopian meddling, warlords and clan disputes over power distribution and moderate Islamists doubtful stance will be the key issues.

Moreover, Eritrea will try to take advantage of the Ethiopian crisis. Eritrea since its independence (1993) and the continuing war from 1998 to 2000, has unsolved territorial differences

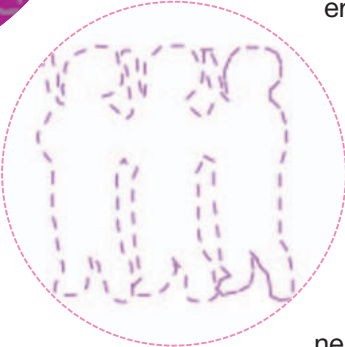




with Ethiopia. Ethiopians, on the other hand, consider Eritrea and Badme province (the so called "Kashmir of Africa") in particular, "an Ethiopian" land and their traditional route to the Red Sea. Nevertheless, President of Eritrea Isaias Afewerki, reshaping a former statement made in National Independence Day, will say that: "Our war with Ethiopia may never end, unless they (Ethiopians) vanish". In response, Ethiopian aircraft will attack Asmara (Eritrean capital) and in retaliation Eritrean planes will bomb Makelle and Adigat. Ethiopian government will order massacres against Ethiopians of Eritrean origin and Eritrean forces will have all Tigray people (Zenawi's tribal origin), living in Badme violently expelled. With Somali and Darfurian assistance, Afewerki's forces will capture most of Northern Ethiopia, achieving the later known as: "second phase of Ethiopia partition". A peace process held in Bangui in Central African Republic, under AU will not reach a compromise or an agreement, creating a "dead end" situation.



However, these wars will have huge humanitarian costs. In Darfur 500,000 people will cross the border to Chad and 1.1 million will be displaced in southern Egypt. Subsequently, refugee presence in Chad and Egypt will add negatively in both countries political and economic stability; for i.e., in Chad, the expenditures per refugee will be among the highest in the world. The increasing desertification in Darfur and the absence of sustained livelihoods will raise malnutrition rates to a 25% while safe water and sanitation access will decrease to 60% and 55% respectively. Somali and Ethiopian borderlands will be on the prowl of a polio and typhoid epidemic. About 2.3 million people from Eastern Ethiopia will be displaced in the inner country whereas another 2.2 from Northern Ethiopia will migrate also. The drought in Ogaden region will be catastrophic and will result in a massive loss of livestock, which probably lead into a food and water crisis; Somali and Ethiopia malnutrition rates will raise to rates of 55% both.



Thus, these disputes will bring to surface regional and global (as well) issues: African Union lacks the financial capacity to carry its continental mandates and without United Nations assistance, Africa's peacekeeping supervision will be doubtful; the displacement of 6.5 million people in the Horn will create new circumstances which will contribute to Africa's emerging nutrition and sanitation problems; the future of religious affairs and particularly the Christian-Muslim relations in the continent; the Arab-African divide, especially in Muslim Africa; Chinese energy strategy after Darfurian coup; the depth in which American foreign policy going to be engaged in Africa by enforcing "positive poles" like Kenya, Uganda or Libya and a possible new strategy of containing political Islam.



"Islam is the solution"

Alexandra Karaiskou

By placing itself in the vanguard of a political reform movement, the Muslim Brotherhood managed to gain parliamentary control following Gamal Mubarak's failed attempts to cripple opposition by means of a massive campaign of state repression. Far from being as moderate as it previously contested, the Brotherhood remains loyal to its strict Islamist ideology and worldview. What is worse, the group is perceived as being ready to turn Egypt into a hub of Islamist militancy, spreading out terror and further destabilizing the region. However it seems that, at the end of the day, far from establishing a pan-Islamic state on earth, the moderate Islamist forces work through legitimate political channels in order to garner public support. The Muslim Brotherhood's brand of Sunni Islam could thus act against extremism, while the group could even prove to be a better and more sincere negotiator with the West compared to the authoritarian secular Middle Eastern regimes.

Under the slogan "Islam is the solution" the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) managed to overthrow Gamal Mubarak shortly after his succession to the leadership of Egypt. Taking advantage of Gamal's incompetence in holding the reins of government, the group organized a series of mass demonstrations against the regime. The rioters transformed into an uncontrollable force and managed to seize the presidential palace demanding Gamal's resignation, while MB parliamentarians dissolved the People's Assembly - in which the group held 88 of 454 seats following the 2005 parliament elections. MB leader Mahdi Akef subsequently called for a referendum concerning a constitutional amendment to allow fair multi-party elections. Under the circumstances, Gamal was forced to yield to popular demands, accepting the referendum and calling for elections in which the MB prevailed over the National Democratic Party (NPD) by a landslide. The population's disillusionment with the corruption of the state apparatus

and with Mubarak's pro-Western policies in addition to the movement's commitment to proceed with Egypt's political democratization and economic reform as well as its renunciation of violence, its proclaimed respect for human rights and its given influence on the middle-class were some of the factors that assured its victory. The MB, which until recently comprised the largest opposition group in Egypt, constitutes the world's oldest and most influential Islamic group with various offshoots or affiliated organizations operating across the Middle East, Europe and even America (it is thought to have some form of presence in a total of 70 countries). After having received a popular mandate, the MB's efforts now focus on restoring Egypt's former status as a powerful regional player and cementing its leadership of the Muslim world.



However, after rising to power, the movement deviated from its original commitments. Whereas it previously advertised its deference to non Muslim minorities, the Copts, the most significant Christian community in Egypt, are once again the target of fierce attacks. Their fear of becoming second-class citizens ('dhimmi') on the basis of their religious beliefs is confirmed. The community is already being submitted to continuous assaults, Christian churches are vandalized and Christian citizens expelled from the public sector. MB control of the People's Assembly, the legislative branch of government, has caused increasing concern among the Copts belonging to the upper class, namely the entrepreneurs.

With regards to foreign policy, the movement has been vocal in expressing its enmity toward Israel, the major U.S. ally in the region, refusing to recognize the legitimacy of the Jewish state. Moreover, the MB quickly moved to renounce the Egyptian-Israeli Camp David peace accord of 1979, which had resulted in Egypt's isolation in the Arab world and its expulsion from the Arab League. Mahdi Akef had already called for an annulment of the accord in the summer of 2006 on the basis that it was signed in a period when democracy did not exist in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood has therefore openly declared its hostility toward Israel which has so far responded only by means of diplomacy, denouncing the violation of international law at the U.N. General Assembly. Israeli military action against Egypt is not very likely at this stage. First of all the U.S. cannot afford another Arab-Israeli war and neither can Israel, following the failed 2006 intervention against Hezbollah in Lebanon. Secondly, the radical Islamist groups Gamaa Islamiya and Islamic Jihad that maintain active cells within the Egyptian society and have close ties with al Qaeda would turn such a war into a generalized jihad with massive terrorist attacks against Israel.

As part of its broader regional strategy, the MB strives to form a moderate Islamic front by approaching ideologically affiliated groups (i.e. Hamas) in order to confront Israel and counterbalance its military superiority. As a result and with regard to the Palestinian territories, Mahdi Akef is supportive of the Palestinian struggle against Israel, as he considers the latter an occupation force and wishes its expulsion from the occupied territories. To this end, the movement has long devoted a significant amount of time and effort to raise awareness in Egypt, through lectures and publications of books or pamphlets. In the general elections of January 2006, Hamas gained 74 of the 132 seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council. This evidences the strengthening of political Islam in the region. Emboldened by the MB's rise to power in neighboring Egypt, Hamas is expected to escalate the conflict with Israel. The MB wishes to pursue a rather stabilizing role in the Palestinian territories by supporting the formation of a national unity government. The group has recently provided Hamas with money in an effort to counterbalance Fatah. This could mean that the MB prefers that Hamas be the one to set the terms for dealing with Israel.

Despite the fact that Egypt is a signatory of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the new MB-dominated government has proclaimed its goal to acquire a nuclear arsenal. In the summer of 2006, the movement had put pressure on the Mubarak government to restart the country's dormant nuclear program. Since Israel is widely believed to possess about 200 nuclear warheads, Egypt's acquisition of a nuclear status would serve as a deterrent against a potential Israeli assault. In the same vein, the possession of nuclear weapons is the country's sole means to effectively put a halt to Iran's hegemonic regional aspirations.

As far as Iraq is concerned, the organization has made it clear that it holds the US forces exclusively responsible for the escalation of sectarian violence, thus avoiding to concentrate on the civil war itself and focusing instead on the American presence in the country. The group regards America as an illegal occupation force, usurping Iraq's resources. Despite the profound divisions between the various Iraqi ethnic and religious groups, the MB has proposed the formation of a national unity government consisting of moderate Shi'ites and Sunnis in order to deal with the paramilitary organizations that have managed to establish quasi-total control over Baghdad's quarters. For this purpose, it has already sent Egyptian army officers to train the Iraqi forces and assist them in imposing order and it has also launched a diplomatic dialogue with the various groups contesting for a share in power following Saddam Hussein's demise (Egypt was the first Arab country to establish formal diplomatic relations with



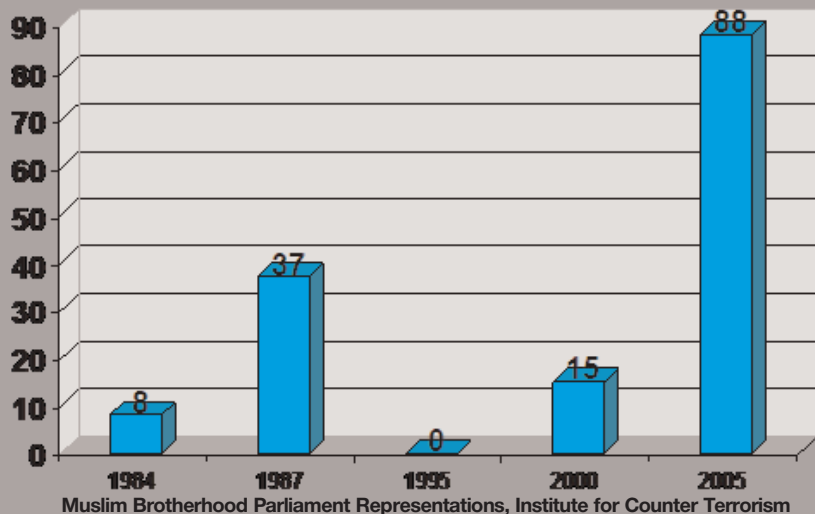
post-Saddam Iraq).

On November 7 2001, during a raid in Youssef Nada's villa in Switzerland, (Nada is a high-ranking MB member and the director of Al-Taqwa Bank of Lugano) the authorities discovered the so-called "Project", a document dated December 1982, which elaborates on a twelve-point plan aiming at "establishing a truly Islamic government on earth". The document suggests, among others, the creation of a network of Islamist organizations, maintaining a "moderate" profile and dissimulating the network's real goals, avoiding a direct conflict with the West, establishing an international financial network, promoting the ideal of jihad, providing social and medical services to the socially disenfranchised groups, creating an Islamist intellectual community, penetrating democratic institutions in the West, inciting hatred against the Jews and, ultimately, liberating Palestine. Ever since its establishment in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood's *raison d'etre* has been the foundation of a pan-Islamic state based on the rule of the Shari'a. Is it therefore possible that the action undertaken by the MB immediately after winning the elections is part of a long-term plan to accomplish what has been its initially explicit and subsequently covert aim to unite the world's umma in one entity?

The answer is rather negative. Indeed, the evidence shows that the Muslim Brotherhood is in no way bound by the content of 'The Project'. Although the Brotherhood believes the prevalence of Islam and opposing secularism, they pursue their goals by different means. While al Qaeda divides the world into believers and infidels and uses violence and large-scale international terror attacks to destroy its enemy, the MB is part of Egypt's political system and acts from within the state's boundaries. Al Qaeda's Ayman al-Zawahiri has criticized the MB's and Hamas' participation in political institutions. The same applies for the Islamic Jihad and Gamaa Islamiya, the radical Islamic organisations that act inside Egypt. The Gamaa Islamiya renounced violence in 1997 and since then its leadership has remained within this ideological scope. In August 2006, the movement denied Al Zawahiri's claims that the Gamaa had joined the al-Qaeda network. In fact, the group has cooperated with the MB on various issues and managed to gain some parliamentary representation by abandoning its terrorist activities. On the other hand, Islamic Jihad is still considered an active militant group which continues to maintain ties with the al Qaeda hardcore. Nevertheless, its terrorist activity is concentrated on the "near enemy", the Egyptian regime, as opposed to al Qaeda's "far enemy", the United States. At present, its support base appears to be shrinking. This might lead to an organizational split between the extremists and those in favour of the MB-controlled government. After the rise of an Islamic group to power, the terrorist attacks on Egyptian territories (such as those in Taba, Sharm El Sheikh and Dahab) are rather meaningless, since the entrenched Mubarak regime that constituted the "near enemy" no longer poses a threat.

Even though the prevalence of the Muslim Brotherhood might be an unwelcome development for American and Israeli interests in the region, it seems that political Islam can pursue a moderate agenda and serve as an alternative against al Qaeda's internationalist jihadi campaign.

Far from establishing a pan-Islamic state on earth, the moderate Islamist forces work through legitimate political channels in order to garner public support. The MB's brand of Sunni Islam could thus act against extremism, while the group could even prove to be a better and more sincere negotiator with the West compared to the authoritarian secular Middle Eastern regimes.





Ian S. Lustick

Trapped in the War on Terror

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, September 2006

Chryssoula Toufexis

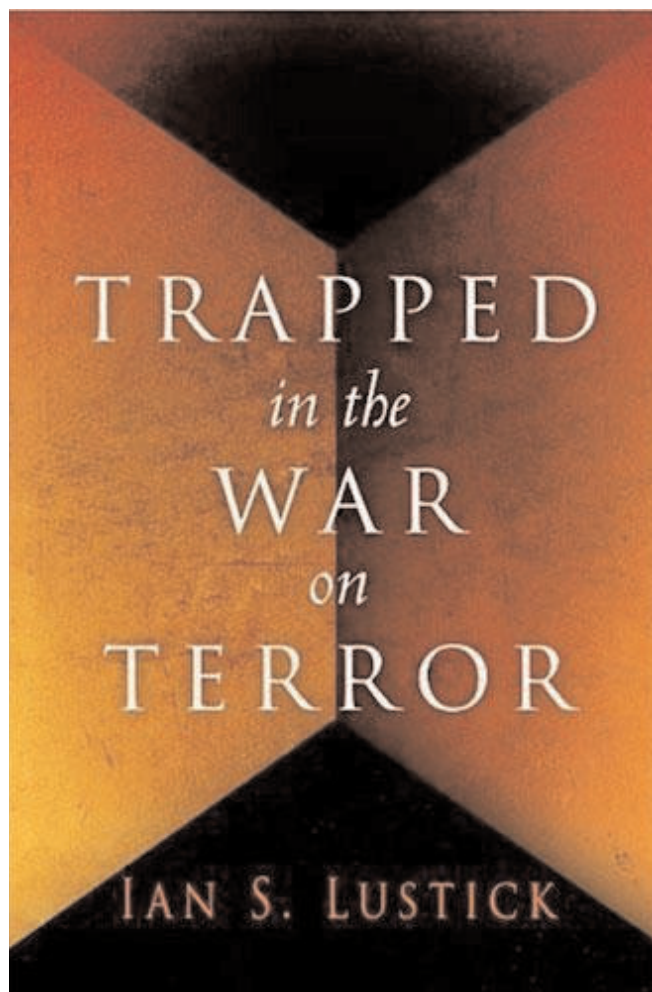
"The greatest fear is fear itself". Ian Lustick, Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania, quotes the words of Franklin Roosevelt in an effort to prove that the United States has an alternative way to fight terrorism. The War on Terror has resulted in more damage than the actual attacks of September 2001. It has disoriented public opinion as well as foreign and domestic policymakers from the real threats. The US is currently hunting ghosts, allowing the enemy plenty of time to reorganize and become stronger out of the fear of weakness, which is the actual message terrorism itself implies.

Lustick maintains that in the aftermath of 9/11 the issue of terrorism came to dominate the media, presidential and administration speeches, think tank assessments, and generally public discussions as the most significant threat to the nation's existence. Portrayed as the "greatest evil", fear of terrorism became the worst American nightmare, an invisible enemy overshadowing all other issues of political debate such as education, tax relief and counter-narcotics policies.

The author suggests that after 9/11 the nation became for the first time aware of the state's vulnerability to disastrous attacks which could occur anytime, in any place, by all possible means. The American people were thus exposed to a fearful enemy beyond any imagination, one impossible to predict, prevent and eliminate. This was the threat as perceived by ordinary citizens and as fueled by the government and mass media. But is the threat really that grave? Professor Lustick's answer is that public perceptions of the terrorist threat were both intentionally and unintentionally misguided by top administration officials and special interest groups and exploited by the media, leading to an expanded War on Terror with the war in Iraq as its "central front". As America's focus shifted to Iraq, the Administration tried hard to convince the population that security would henceforth be a top priority and that this security could only be achieved through engagement in a large-scale, long-term struggle against regimes and states constituting an "Axis of Evil". The higher the expectations, the higher the price that the people would have to pay. As a result, the Americans accepted the restriction of their civil rights and freedom and the great increases in military and security budgets devoted to the counterterrorism campaign.

Subsequently, Professor Lustick investigates the actual threat, in order to assess whether the action taken by the government was based on specific proof, whether the widespread fear that an immense terrorist attack was imminent anytime was justified and whether the implemented policies and the immense military expenditure were absolutely necessary. After examining the outcome of the merciful hunt of suspected terrorist networks active within the country, he found that harsh surveillance tactics led to a limitation of the citizens' rights and that the huge spending on equipment, troops and personnel was actually purposeless, having achieved zero results. There was actually no evidence pointing to terrorist plans to attack targets on US soil,





despite the various false alarms publicized by the government in order to indicate that its harsh domestic and foreign policies were absolutely justified and necessary.

The War on Terror was in the minds of the American people the only solution to a problem that no one could afford to underestimate. All that was ever examined was the best means to conduct the war, not the question of whether war was the right way to fight terrorism. Thereafter, Lustick suggests that the "War on Terror took a life of its own". In an attempt to explain this dynamic the author describes how special-interest groups took advantage of the government's counterterrorism campaign and how the population's expectations were raised due to the political rhetoric surrounding the War on Terror.

Given the fact that a huge amount of resources was diverted to urgent security measures and research, the various lobbies, companies and academic centers as well as activists and ad-

ministration officials competed with each other in order to receive funds, practically advertising their associations and projects as the best solution to the imminent danger of terror attacks. In this way not only did they consume enormous resources without having carried out meaningful cost-benefit analyses, but they also used the War on Terror to further their own interests, thus leading to a further disorientation of the public opinion. As politicians fight to prevail and survive in the political arena, they are inclined to maintain an agenda that addresses the ultimate fears and expectations of the public. After having cultivated the idea that terrorism is the most sensitive matter and the highest challenge that America has ever faced, the politicians appealed to the masses by presenting themselves as relentless prosecutors of terrorism.

A remarkable case in point is the supremacist faction of neoconservative Republicans, whom Professor Lustick holds responsible for the way the War on Terror was conducted. According to the author "this group transformed the national response to the 9/11 attacks from a rational and direct reaction to a serious, specific threat, meaning al-Qaeda, to a crusade for the implementation of its own long-cherished blueprint for a new kind of American role in the world", trying to implement their plan for the New American Century and their ideology of Global Hegemony. After the 9/11 attacks, exploitation of the widespread fear of terrorism ensured public support for an expanded war whose growing agenda gradually included more countries, transforming into a crusade against all evil regimes and rogue states who wouldn't hesitate to use nuclear weapons or WMD in cooperation with terrorist networks against the United States. Such was



the case of Iraq. The War on Terror was used to provide justification for resorting to unilateral military power in a war of good versus evil. The success of this plan would ensure predominance for the supremacist faction of Republicans in American politics and victory in a series of electoral combats.

The last chapter of professor Lustick's book is dedicated to how America could escape from the trap that diverted its economic and military resources to an endless fighting against this invisible enemy. One way to overcome fear is knowledge of the enemy through systematic and precise analysis of his weaknesses and strengths, motivations, abilities and goals based on George F. Kennan's 1947 "containment model". This is, according to the author, the best solution in order to avoid another humiliating version of McCarthyism. By launching a full-scale war against Islam, the United States helped al-Qaeda expand its support base among the Arabs. By implicitly defining Muslims as enemies America led the Islamic world to unite under al-Qaeda's banner. By responding militarily to the terrorist attacks, the United States were dragged into a tremendous waste of money, time and human lives. Nevertheless, the War on Terror, no matter how fierce, has not eliminated fear from the lives of Americans.



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