

***ARAB PERCEPTIONS TOWARD US FOREIGN  
POLICY: WHY PERCEPTIONS MATTER AND  
WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE AMERICA'S  
IMAGE IN THE ARAB WORLD***

**MICHAEL B. MEYER**

**INTRODUCTION**

“We Arabs know American foreign policy is biased in favor of the Israelis,”<sup>1</sup> remarked an Arab League official to the author in December 2001. Backing up his assertion, the official referenced Secretary of State Colin Powell’s November 2001 remarks on the “Larry King Live” television program. On that program, Powell stated, “We are pro-Israel.” The Arab League official’s remembrance of the Secretary’s comments is as significant, though, because he failed to recall Powell’s other comments during the very same television program. Immediately after Powell voiced America’s support for Israel in front of Larry King, the Secretary remarked, “But I’m also pro-humankind. And I am also pro-Palestinian, to the extent that they are human beings, to the extent that they have a desire to see their children grow up in peace.”<sup>2</sup> The Arab official’s recollection and his perception of Secretary Powell’s comments, even if not complete, is both telling and representative of what many—if not most—Arabs think about United States foreign policy. While Arabs might not objectively consider the whole spectrum of US relations with Arab states and organizations, when Arabs evaluate United States foreign policy toward their region, Powell’s supposed “pro-Israel” remarks only further confirm what a majority of the Arab world have thought for at least the past few years. Arabs believe that American foreign policy is unjust in its treatment of Arab states and peoples,

*Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

and that the United States is biased against Arabs and in favor of Israel.<sup>3</sup>

Addressing Arab perspectives on the cause of the current turmoil in the region, Shibley Telhami writes, “This is not about the objective reality of where the blame lies; it is about entrenched perceptions. The public in the Middle East blames the powers that be, and sees Israel as the most powerful state in the region, an occupier of Arab lands, and the United States as the anchor of that order.”<sup>4</sup> Poor perceptions encourage outrage.

Anti-American resentment on the part of Arabs is not a new phenomenon. Christian Science Monitor writer Cameron Barr remarks, “The roots of this anger lie in US political manipulations in the region during the 1950s and 1960s. . . . As the world’s only superpower, the US is bound to make some people unhappy at least some of the time.”<sup>5</sup> William Quandt, a Middle East expert and a former member of the National Security Council staff, notes that a portion of Arab resentment towards the US derives from America’s dominant role in the world. “On the one hand, everyone is awed by US power, but on the other, they distrust it. . . . There is a certain inevitability that Middle Easterners will view the United States with suspicion simply because it is the most powerful country in the world—quite apart from its policies.”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Dr. Shireen Hunter of the Center for Strategic and International Studies who specializes in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Islam, emphasizes the Arab world’s feeling of vulnerability vis-à-vis the West and more specifically the United States.<sup>7</sup>

Beyond traditional pockets of resentment toward the US on the part of some Arabs due to cultural rifts and due to jealousy

about America's status as a superpower, the past few years have witnessed a new kind and depth of virulent anti-Americanism spreading across the Middle East. Fouad Ajami, in a *Foreign Affairs* piece, draws attention to the "rancid anti-Americanism now evident in the Arab world," and he remarks, "From one end of the Arab world to the other, the drumbeats of anti-Americanism have been steady."<sup>8</sup> Intense anti-US sentiment held by extremist groups was manifested in the attack on the World Trade Center in 1993, the attacks on US military forces in Saudi Arabia in 1995 and 1996, the attacks against the US embassies in Africa in 1998, the attack on the USS Cole in 2000, and most recently the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. While these reprehensible attacks were committed by extremists who are certainly not representative of Arabs as a whole, some of the very same issues that motivated the extremists to act also outrage Arab populations and anger Arab governments in the Middle East.

Examples of recurring themes that irritate the Arab masses are the US military presence in the Arabian Gulf and America's perceived ambiguous stand on promoting democracy in the Middle East. In a part of the world where history is seldom forgotten, secular and religious Arabs alike draw parallels between the US presence and influence in the region today and that of European crusaders centuries ago.<sup>9</sup> In the spring of 2001, a Saudi Arabian Ambassador assigned to a European country pointedly asked the author, "When will the United States ends its arrogance and withdraw it military forces from the Gulf?"<sup>10</sup> While public details are sketchy, and officials on both the Saudi and US sides have intentionally played down the apparent rift and even sought to repair it in the summer of 2002. Since the fall of 2001, it

*Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

appears that elements of the Saudi royal family and government (generally one and the same) are growing increasingly wary of the US military presence in the Kingdom.<sup>11</sup> The US presence inside a fiercely proud and independent country that bills itself as the keeper of the two holy Islamic cities of Mecca and Medina<sup>12</sup> draws unwanted notice and criticism to the Islamic Saudi government from both non-religiously and religiously motivated Saudi societal elements. This opposition has on more than one occasion already waged violent demonstrations against the US and the Saudi governments, as was the case in the 1995 and 1996 bombings. In short, the US military presence in Saudi Arabia threatens the Saudi ruling family's legitimacy with many religiously-minded Saudis.

Another charge levied by Arabs against the US involves America espousing democracy and pluralism while supporting Arab regimes that regularly practice repression. Critics of US foreign policy claim America plays lip service to and selectively promotes democracy as it conveniently suits US strategic interests. "How can the US criticize the Iraqi government for being repressive but not America's friend, Saudi Arabia? Saudi Arabia is one of the world's most repressive societies," remarked a Syrian doctor. Arabs charge that America supports regimes like Egypt and Saudi Arabia that promote the status quo and stability, allow the US use of military operating locations and airspace, ensure the US access to oil, and themselves crack down on popular Islamic and secular civic-minded movements.<sup>13</sup>

Beyond pockets of jealousy over the US being the world's sole superpower, the resentment caused by the US military footprint in the region, and America's questionable record for

supporting democracy in the Middle East, in the past decade two paramount issues associated with US foreign policy have particularly agitated Arabs from both private and public walks of life: America's handling of Iraq and America's position toward the Arab-Israeli conflict. These two issues have caused a large percentage of Arabs from every country in the Middle East, from every religious group, and from every social class to conclude that United States foreign policy toward the Arab world is unjust and grossly in favor of Israel, at the expense of the Arabs.<sup>14</sup> This paper, covering in depth the two salient issues of America's involvement with Iraq and the Arab-Israeli conflict, explains from the Arab perspective why such a large percentage of Arabs believe United States foreign policy toward the Arab world as unjust and biased.

Due to America's reliance on Gulf oil, its military presence in the Arabian (also known as Persian) Gulf, its desire for stability in the Middle East, and because of America's historic role as the principal mediator in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the United States is closely linked to the Arab world.<sup>15</sup> While relationships between America and Arab governments and peoples are most often oriented around common interests, the foundations of relationships are built on perceptions. It is important that America and its policies are well-received in the Middle East—not because it is pleasant to be liked, but because negative perceptions equate to security risks for the US. It is in America's national interest to promote a positive image. Hatred breeds horrible acts of extremism and encourages terrorists who will target America and America's friends in the region. Disdain toward America in Arab lands will likely eventually force moderate Arab governments,

*Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

now friendly to the US, to distance themselves from the US in order to save their own privileged positions in society. Therefore, America must proactively pursue enhanced initiatives in the political, economic, diplomatic, and informational (public diplomacy) realms to improve its image in the eyes of Arabs.

**IRAQ—“THE INNOCENT SUFFER”**

In the eyes of many Arabs, Iraq is a country that has been damaged by aggressive American policies that have hurt the common people and hardly touch the regime of Saddam Hussein. In the late 1980s, Iraq and its capital, Baghdad, were considered particularly advanced amongst Arab countries. This is not surprising, considering Baghdad had been a major center of Arab culture and learning for centuries, and since its citizens were some of the most educated and well-trained people in the Arab world. Rick Francona, an American military officer who worked as a US intelligence liaison with the Iraqi military, visited Baghdad in 1988 and remarked that the city was “a fascinating, vibrant, almost electric place.” Francona, a well-traveled Air Force officer and specialist in Arab politics and language, also noted in 1988 that despite the Iraqi capital city having endured over seven years of war with Iran, “Baghdad remained a beautiful city” with “history, charm, and character,” and “Baghdadis were proud of their capital.”<sup>16</sup>

The feeling that Baghdad was a pearl and that Iraq was a model country for other Arab states to emulate was shared by Arab citizens from other Middle East states. A professional Syrian educated in economics and with familial ties to the Syrian government, who worked abroad in the Gulf remarked, “Iraq’s economic and social well-being was the envy of most Arabs.”<sup>17</sup>

Baghdad and Iraqi society have changed, however, since the Gulf War. The former pearl of the Arab world has become quite tarnished.

In the wake of the Gulf War and after over a decade of sanctions against Iraq, it is obvious from media images and from numerous sources that Saddam and his regime continue to live quite comfortably, while ordinary Iraqi citizens suffer. Syrians with family members in Iraq note that their relatives' lives are materially much worse than before sanctions, while Saddam continues to live in luxury, unchecked.<sup>18</sup> Outside Iraq and in other Arab capital cities, the presence of Iraqi taxi drivers, selling cheaply made goods from their dilapidated cars, garners sympathy in the region for the Iraqi people.

The United States has placed responsibility for Iraq's economic demise in the 1990s squarely on the shoulders of Saddam Hussein, citing the Iraqi dictator's intransigence when dealing with the United Nations. Whether or not the Iraqi regime has thumbed its nose at the UN, people from across the Arab world lay blame for the drastic decline of the Iraqi people's living conditions at the feet of America. Arabs feel that common Iraqis are paying an intolerably disproportionate penalty for the acts of the Iraqi regime, especially considering the relative ineffectiveness of UN sanctions that fail to punish Saddam.<sup>19</sup> In a December 2001 commentary, Arab journalist Ahmed Bouzid opined that sanctions have cost "the lives of half a million of our own children, devastating thus a whole generation of Iraqis, and reducing what was once far and ahead the most modern Arab country to a backward nation barely able to subsist."<sup>20</sup> Arab writer and Professor Kamil Mahdi likewise writes, "The

*Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

consequences of such a catastrophe will be with Iraq and the rest of the region for generations to come.”<sup>21</sup> Arabs argue that the resentment caused over America’s hard-line stance that damages Iraqi society will taint Arab, and particularly Iraqi, impressions of US policies for years to come.<sup>22</sup>

Some Arabs are puzzled why US foreign policies continue to target Iraq in such a harsh fashion, especially when Iraq and the US once cooperated rather closely in the Middle East. Arabs are quick to point out that the United States actively supported Saddam Hussein during the 1980s, when Iraq opposed Iran during the Iran-Iraq War.<sup>23</sup>

During the 1980s and just preceding the Gulf War, argue Arabs, “America’s Saddam” was every bit as much a dictator as he was in the late 1990s and into the next decade.<sup>24</sup> The fact that Saddam has been ironfisted during his rule in Baghdad is not a matter of contention between Americans and Arabs. Francona noticed the oppressive security environment in Baghdad in 1988, when Saddam was America’s man in the Gulf, and wrote “Government control was evident everywhere.”<sup>25</sup>

Arabs point out that Saddam’s tough rule and treatment of Iraq’s people is not an aberration for the way Iraqi leaders have dealt with their people over the course of that country’s history.<sup>26</sup> So it is not surprising that Arabs note that an Iraq and Middle East with or without Saddam is tolerable. One Arab wrote, “Iraqis will be content to live under Saddam as they have for two decades before the sanctions.”<sup>27</sup> Some Arabs have argued that it would be better for US foreign policy—and perhaps safer for the region in light of ongoing Iranian ambitions—for America to work with Saddam instead of against him. Along the same lines, Arabs point

out that some of America's key Arab government allies, particularly Saudi Arabia, are no more benevolent or democratic than Saddam when dealing with internal dissent.<sup>28</sup>

In the wake of the Gulf War and after a decade of sanctions, Arabs argue that Saddam no longer possesses a credible military threat to countries aligned with the US and to American interests in the region. They draw attention to the fact that America still seeks to degrade the Iraqi military threat, which was expanded mostly to fight the same enemy that America opposed during the 1980s—Iran. Meanwhile, Arabs are quick to point out America's own close ally and recipient of billions of dollars of US military assistance per year, Israel, employs American-made Apache helicopters and F-16 fighter aircraft against Palestinians without impunity in the Israeli-occupied territories. Additionally, while the US does not put pressure on Israel about its nuclear weapons program, Saddam is regularly lambasted for possessing weapons of mass destruction.<sup>29</sup> Palestinian intellectual Edward Said remarked in a spring 1998 editorial, "The media have been feeding the public a diet of stories about hidden weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, which may have them for all I know, but which are neither a threat to anyone nor, in fact, have been proved by anyone to exist. The United States, reserving for itself the right to stand above all the norms of international behavior, is determined to strike if diplomacy does not work."<sup>30</sup>

Arabs in both the Mediterranean and the Arabian Gulf also express their concern that the "Iraq issue" has become a convenient excuse for the United States to maintain a constant and robust military presence in the Gulf. As the predominant powerbroker in the region, Arabs argue that America could have

*Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

easily disposed of Saddam during or immediately after the Gulf War if the US had truly desired. A Gulf official remarked that a very high percentage of Arabs believe the US is merely playing a “game” with Saddam and that America will not force the Iraqi leader out of power, because that could spell the end of America’s desired hegemony in the Gulf.<sup>31</sup>

As a tangible indicator of Arab discontent with US military action in the Middle East against Iraq, frustration over OPERATION DESERT FOX in mid-December 1998<sup>32</sup> resulted in anti-American protests in Arab and Muslim countries.<sup>33</sup> Some of them became very violent, as was the case on 19 December in Damascus. On that day, a crowd of thousands pelted the US Embassy in downtown Damascus with stones and ransacked the residence of the American Ambassador. While it can be argued that rapidly quelling the riots was beyond the capability of the Syrian security services, American diplomats in Damascus felt that the Syrian government was delivering an indirect message to the American government by permitting the outpouring of emotion to get out of hand.<sup>34</sup> Very few public events, particularly protests, are truly spontaneous in a country known for its pervasive security environment. Adding more credibility to the theory that the Syrian government turned a blind eye in the early stages of the attack is the fact that the American embassy is located in the same neighborhood that is heavily patrolled by plainclothes Syrian presidential security guards.<sup>35</sup> It is probably no coincidence the violence took place at the same time that the Syrian government was beginning to restore formal economic relations with Baghdad.

In summary, Arab journalist Ahmed Bouzid's plea regarding Iraq rings true with both Arab populations and elites throughout the Middle East when he writes, "Why do Americans hate us [Arabs] so much that they would insist on imposing a decade-long embargo that has done nothing but ensure the misery of ordinary civilians?"<sup>36</sup> Arabs uniformly hope what they see as America's cruel and hypocritical vendetta against Iraq will come to an end.

**THE ARAB-ISRAELI CRISIS—THE SEMINAL ISSUE**

"Regarding America's foreign policy toward the Arabs, we don't actually expect the US to be one hundred percent unbiased, but we do wish the US was just ten percent unbiased."<sup>37</sup> This comment by a prominent Syrian businessman with very strong links to the Syrian government accurately highlights an opinion that has strongly resonated for years throughout the Middle East. In fact, what is seen as America's unjust approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict is the most frequently voiced issue unfavorably tainting Arab opinion of the United States. Even before the violent intifada erupted in late 2000, Arabs were already very aggravated by what they labeled as a definite American bias toward Israel and against the Arabs. Arabs see Israeli influence in the US government as pervasive at all levels, including within the legislative and executive branches. A journalist writing in a Saudi newspaper commented in a fall 2000 article, "Israel still has the Congress on its side, which always echoes the Israeli position," and "Washington must start to look at the area with a just perspective."<sup>38</sup>

Because of their proximity to Israel and because Israel occupies land once belonging to them, citizens of Syria and Lebanon, perhaps more than any other people from sovereign

*Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

Arab states, feel they have suffered at the expense of unbalanced, and even almost unbridled, US support for Israel.<sup>39</sup> From 1999 to 2001, hundreds of government and private Syrians in both official and unofficial forums fervently expressed their opinion to the author that the US has intentionally stacked the cards in the region in favor of Israel and against the Arab states. An educated, professional Jordanian citizen married to a Syrian and living in Damascus commented to the author, “I think that US foreign policy toward the Middle East has always been biased toward Israel. I don’t understand what the US gets from supporting Israel at the expense of abandoning the Arabs.”<sup>40</sup>

Very senior-level Syrian military officers regularly lectured American military attaches, both in public speeches and in private conversations, at Syrian military-sponsored dinners in 2000 and 2001 about the “inherent unevenness and inconsistencies” in US foreign policy toward the Arab countries. Several Syrian generals bluntly stated that it is not in America’s strategic interest, especially since the Arabs possess such great oil reserves, to back Israel—a nation of only seventeen million people—at the expense of the Arab states with a composite population of about three hundred million. Astute Syrians pointed out to the author that several prominent US officials, including Secretary of State George Marshall, opposed the US recognizing Israel in 1948 for fear of damaging relations with Arab states.<sup>41</sup>

In the late 1990s and into the next decade, many Syrians attributed what they viewed as anti-Arab policies to the fact that prominent Jewish persons held important positions in the Clinton Administration.<sup>42</sup> This opinion was echoed during a March 2001 US Air War College trip to Damascus, when Syrian Defense

Minister Mustafa Talas lectured US military officer delegates that the Syrians had heard that President Clinton “loved our people” but several key cabinet posts were held by Jews. Talas expressed his belief that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright had been openly working for the Jews.<sup>43</sup> Most American official visitors to Syria and diplomats accredited to Damascus are regularly subjected to rhetoric about perceived American bias against the Arabs and in favor of the Israelis from the Syrians.

Talas’ verbal backlash to the 2001 Air War College delegation can be partially attributed to the collapse of Syrian trust and what Syrians deemed as false hope they placed in the George H. W. Bush and Clinton administrations. Because of President George H. W. Bush’s and Secretary of State James Baker’s efforts to closely cooperate with the Arabs, especially during the Gulf War, Syrians and Arabs held those former officials in high esteem. Arabs believed the first Bush was more inclined to be objective with Arabs than were previous American administrations. Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad took a risk and signed on to the coalition against Iraq by contributing troops during the Gulf War. While Iraq had been a rival to Syria, on many levels, Hafiz al-Asad’s standing with America in 1990-1991 in the Gulf was extremely controversial with his public. One Syrian doctor remarked, “Just remember us siding with the coalition forces during the Second Gulf War, while the public opinion was against it.”<sup>44</sup>

Several Syrians told the author that Bush’s, and America’s, credibility was boosted in the Arab world when, in 1992, Bush attached strict conditions to Israel for loan guarantees meant for new Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories. Most Arabs and a large portion of the international community interpret the

*Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

establishment of new settlements in the West Bank and Gaza strip as violations of international law under UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. Bush's delay in loan guarantees angered Israel.<sup>45</sup> In the eyes of the Arabs, Bush had the courage to stand up to Israel and, generally, had even-handedly dealt with the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>46</sup>

Just a few years later, Syrians were optimistic that Clinton could convince Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, a seemingly more reasonable man than Barak's predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu, to negotiate land for peace, as was called for under the Madrid Peace Process formula.<sup>47</sup> In the end, and in the eyes of the Syrians, Clinton failed.<sup>48</sup> The ultimate culmination point of Syrian disappointment with the past administration came at the March 2000 Geneva Summit between Presidents Asad and Clinton. In the lead-up to the summit, Clinton reportedly promised the Syrian president "good news," and the ailing Asad traveled to Switzerland to accept what he hoped would be a promising offer from the Americans and Israelis. Asad believed that Barak was finally ready to propose Israel's complete withdrawal from lands Israel occupied on the Golan Heights, up to the 4 June 1967 line. This was reasonable, since former Prime Minister Rabin, by many accounts, had already quietly made this promise to Asad in 1994, before Rabin's untimely assassination in 1995.

However, as the 1967 "border" was never formally demarcated, the precise location of that line is difficult to ascertain. The border was merely a line which Syrian tanks guarded before Israel launched pre-emptive attacks against the Arabs in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. In the Syrian mind that

border touched Lake Tiberias (also known as the Sea of Galilee) on the northern part of the lake and then ran through the middle of the lake, or at a minimum touched the lake on the east of the body of water. At Geneva, Barak, through Clinton, proposed that the Israelis control not only all of Lake Tiberias' waters, but also maintain a small strip of land for security on the eastern portion of the lake. Therefore, the Syrians would lose complete control over the shoreline and any right to water.<sup>49</sup>

When they heard nothing new from Clinton regarding the Israeli position, Asad and the Syrians balked, and they left Geneva embittered. The Syrian/Lebanese-Israeli track of the peace process effectively died. In what was seen as a public insult to the Syrians, Clinton officials charged that Asad had been inflexible, and the ball was in the Syrian President's court. Syrian citizens angrily shot back that the US diplomatic effort was amateurish and that Clinton never should have summoned Asad to Geneva without offering something new.<sup>50</sup> Hafiz al-Asad, who involved Syrian in the peace process since 1991 and who most Syrians argue really did want an "honorable" peace, died in June 2000 and was succeeded by his son, Bashar.

Beyond the Syrian frustration with what they perceive as America failing to deliver a just solution regarding the return of historic, now Israeli-occupied Arab lands, Syrians are also incensed over the US condemning Syria for that country's support to what it considers "liberation" groups. Syrians are angry that backing for Palestinian groups like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and for Hizballah has landed Syria on the US State Department's list of states that sponsor terrorism. Syrian officials and citizens argue that Syria supports popular

*Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

movements that merely seek to end the Israeli occupation of historic Arab lands. After all, runs the Syrian argument, how can such organizations which maintain offices in Damascus and funnel weapons to “freedom fighters,” be considered terrorists if they strive to attain what is called for in United Nations Resolutions 242, 338, and 425—return of traditionally Arab-controlled lands occupied by Israel? America and its coalition partners fought in 1991, after all, to restore land to Kuwait from Iraq, citing UN resolutions as justification for action. One frustrated Syrian appealed to the author, “They [Israel and the United States] call us terrorists, and expect us to sit and watch them [Israel] occupying our land and humiliating our people.”<sup>51</sup>

In reference to Arab forces seeking an end to Israel’s occupation of Arab lands, Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Shara’ had this to say to the UN General Assembly in the Fall of 2001: “Syria was the first country to call in 1985 for convening an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations to define terrorism and to differentiate it from the struggle of peoples for national liberation. Israel invented new types of terrorist practices in order to continue its occupation of Arab territories. . . . How could anyone fail to differentiate between terror and resistance? Anyone who would like to target terrorism in our region must target the Israeli terrorism first and foremost, because what Israel does is the utmost form of terrorism that is absolutely shorn of human feeling.”<sup>52</sup> Syrians and, for that matter, Arabs in general view American moves to condemn Arab attempts to gain back lands that once belonged to them as hypocritical.

Just a month after the Foreign Minister’s appeal in the UN, the Syrian Ambassador to the United States reaffirmed the Syrian

and Arab positions on peace and terrorism, stating, “Syria seeks a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in accordance with UN resolutions.” Furthermore, “Syria has no connection with terrorism; Syria seeks to uproot terrorism in all its forms”—a direct reference to Israel.<sup>53</sup> Arabs across the Middle East emphatically charge the US with holding double standards for claiming Arab “liberation” groups are terrorists, while Israel continues to brutally treat Arabs in lands where they once ruled.

Perhaps the “liberation” organization that evokes the most pride from Arabs across the Middle East is Hizballah in Lebanon. This group is supported by not only Iran, but also by Syria; and it serves as one of the few remaining pressure points Syria can apply against Israel. Arabs credit Hizballah’s military efforts in the 1980s and 1990s as having been the impetus for Israel’s withdrawal from south Lebanon in the spring of 2000. Most Syrians openly engage in hero worship when they speak about Hizballah’s accomplishments against the Israelis in southern Lebanon, and they note that Hizballah has succeeded where most other Arab organizations have failed at forcing Israelis to concede territories back to Arabs.<sup>54</sup> During a Spring 2001 trip the author took with Syrians through Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley, several well-to-do Syrians—most of whom had occasional political contacts with Syrian government officials in Damascus—eagerly donated cash along the road to youths waving Hizballah flags and collecting money for the group. During his two years in Damascus, the author observed no other group that attracted the same level of admiration on the part of private Syrian citizens.<sup>55</sup>

Hizballah’s continued actions against Israeli occupation forces in the Sheba Farms area is controversial but continues to

*Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

receive strong support from Syrians.<sup>56</sup> The UN certified Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon complete in 2000, in accordance with UN Resolution 425. In a move backed by the US, Sheba was deemed by the UN not part of Israeli-occupied Lebanon, but instead, part of Israeli-occupied Syria, which is covered under UN Resolution 242. While Israel is no longer technically violating the UN resolutions applying to Lebanon, Arabs still claim Sheba as part of Lebanon, and thus in their eyes, Hizballah is warranted to continue attacks in the area. Syrians do not so easily distinguish between Israeli occupation of Lebanon and Israeli occupation of Syria, and they are prepared to continue the fight. Syrian Ambassador Zoubi predicted, "As long as Israel is not in compliance with UN resolutions, Hizballah will remain active."<sup>57</sup>

During Prime Minister Ehud Barak's time in office as Israel's Prime Minister, Syrian perception of US foreign policy turned from bad to abysmal. In the spring of 1999, after Barak's victory and assumption of office, Syrians believed that a door for peace between Arabs and Israel might finally be opening after the difficult Netanyahu years. Geneva, however, slammed that door shut, only further confirming to Syrians that the US could not be trusted as an honest broker.<sup>58</sup> Public perception of America in Syria, and across the Arab world, took a nose dive when the Palestinians' situation in the Occupied Territories became grave in late 2000, a subject to be covered in-depth in the next chapter.

Syria's Palestinian neighbors to the south are perhaps even less impressed than Syrians with America's record for acting as an honest broker in America's desire to assist in delivering an equitable peace to the Middle East. Palestinians optimistically

went into the Oslo Peace Talks in the early 1990s. Sara Roy notes that the Palestinians sought “their own state, which must consist of a contiguous West Bank and Gaza, a connection between them, and only minor adjustments to 1967 borders.”<sup>59</sup> Prior to the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Arab control extended over East Jerusalem, including Muslim holy sites.<sup>60</sup> By the late 1990s, though, Palestinian and Arab hopes were dashed. Arabs believe that the much-touted, American-supported Oslo agreements were more about “process” and Israeli stalling—while Israel expanded Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories—than about attaining actual peace and prosperity for both parties. In short, the Arab argument goes, the Palestinians had been cruelly manipulated by the Israelis and their American ally, and Oslo created a diversion on Israel’s path to gobbling up more and more Palestinian land and rights.<sup>61</sup>

Palestinian intellectual Edward Said’s words in a 1998 essay, regarding America’s role as a negotiator in the peace process, accurately represented Arab opinion: “It [the United States] can pretend that it can be all things to all parties; that pose has been shown for the miserable ruse that it has always been. The United States has also lost the support of even those Arab and Islamic states who are its supposed allies, so appallingly insensitive and hypocritical has its behavior been in coddling Israel and at the same time demanding compliance from the Arabs.”<sup>62</sup>

In order to more clearly understand Arab perceptions relating to America’s involvement in the peace process, a brief overview of Palestinian attitudes towards the peace process and Oslo is warranted. Jerusalem Media and Communication Center public opinion poll results highlight growing Palestinian dissatisfaction

*Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

with what they believe have become increasingly fruitless efforts to deal with Israel. In December 1996, Palestinian support for the peace process was recorded at 78%, while support for Oslo stood at 75%. By December 2000, those numbers were 47% for the peace process and 39% in favor of Oslo. The poll's analyst remarked that Palestinians were relatively optimistic in 1996 because they had faith that the peace process and Oslo would "help them achieve their national aspiration of ending occupation and building an independent state." After only a few years, though, Palestinian support greatly declined because of "the deteriorating political and economic conditions of Palestinians as a result of Israeli violations of Interim agreements, continued Israeli settlement activity and Palestinian land confiscation, closures and restriction of movement of Palestinians, and the fact that most aspects of Palestinian life remained under Israeli control."<sup>63</sup>

Under Oslo, life became more difficult rather than easier for Palestinians. Augustus Richard Norton notes "[Since Oslo], the quality of life has declined, especially as measured by per capita income, which has shrunk 20 percent in the West Bank . . . and 25 percent in Gaza. The comparable figure for Israel has increased . . . 11 to 15 times the Palestinian level. Put simply, peace did not produce an economic bonanza for the Palestinians."<sup>64</sup> By the late 1990s, unemployment soared to approximately 20% in the West Bank and 30% in the Gaza Strip. Palestinians became increasing impoverished and desperate as Oslo "progressed."<sup>65</sup>

Under Oslo, Palestinian wages and the aggregate Palestinian economy declined as Israelis tried to prevent violent Arab acts of extremism by closing Palestinians out of Israeli-occupied areas

and out of Israel proper. What this meant is that Palestinians could not transit to and from their jobs, move freely from one Palestinian area to another, or even visit their holy sites in Jerusalem. Israel imposed 342 days of total closure on Palestinians in the Gaza strip and 291 days of total closure on the Palestinians in the West Bank from 1993 to 1996. Less stringent closure rules were applied on other days during those years.<sup>66</sup>

Another serious bone of contention for Palestinians regarding the Oslo Peace Process has involved their lack of physical control over traditional Palestinian land. Under the Palestinian Authority, and as a desired outcome of Oslo in the 1990s, the Palestinians looked forward to the creation of a Palestinian state by 1998 in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Even if that had come to fruition, however, the West Bank and Gaza Strip only represented 22% of pre-1948, historic Palestine.<sup>67</sup> By mid-2000, though, the Palestinians had complete control over only 17.2% of the West Bank, and that land was not all located together. Instead, Israeli roads and settlements resulted in the Palestinian-controlled territory being carved up into small enclaves. Sara Roy notes Palestinian areas “were noncontiguous and remained isolated cantons separated by areas under complete jurisdiction of Israel.” So, when the Camp David II summit in July 2000, under the tutelage of President Clinton, failed to offer the Palestinians more than 90% of the West Bank, again broken up by Israeli roads and settlements, Palestinians and the entire Arab world were naturally frustrated.<sup>68</sup>

A Palestinian negotiator, in a letter to US Congressional members, wrote that the Camp David proposal “fell far short of minimum requirements for a viable, independent Palestinian

### *Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

state.” Under the proposal by Israeli Prime Minister Barak, the Israeli offer “would have made Palestine nothing more than Arab ‘Bantustans’ perpetually at the mercy of Israeli economic and military closures.”<sup>69</sup> By the summer of 2000, it was clear that Israel would not withdraw completely from the territories it occupied beginning in 1967. Additionally, Palestinians’ economic prospects were dim, and the Palestinians felt socially humiliated. It has been evident from the mass outpouring of Arab emotion, as regularly highlighted in the international press since the fall of 2000, that people from across the Arab world are sympathetic to the Palestinian cause and have shared common frustration over Israeli and US policies.

### **ADDING FUEL TO THE FIRE—THE SECOND INTIFADA**

Arab outpouring of emotion over the plight of the Palestinians has been expressed across the Arab world in the form of pro-Palestinian demonstrations and riots against Israel and the US since fall of 2000. The al-Aqsa, or second, intifada was born following Ariel Sharon’s controversial visit to the common site of the Temple Mount and the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem at the end of September 2000.<sup>70</sup> Sharon’s act of boldly forcing his way to the site with Israeli police escort into the area of Islam’s third holiest site added fuel to a fire that was bound to break out in the wake of what the Palestinians and Arabs already perceived was the end of the peace process.<sup>71</sup> Large and sometimes violent demonstrations protesting Israeli and American policies toward the Palestinians occurred in several Arab capitals and cities in subsequent weeks, including Rabat, Cairo, Manama, Muscat, and Damascus.

Damascus was the site of particularly fierce outbursts aimed at America, as the Syrian regime and new President Bashar al-Asad were willing to allow Arab displeasure to be visibly displayed. Because there are no formal diplomatic relations between Syria and Israel, there is no Israeli Embassy in Damascus. Instead, the American Embassy, as a symbol of both Israeli and American policies in the mind of incensed Arabs, served as a symbolic target against which to vent frustration. On 4 October 2001, a crowd of approximately three thousand Palestinian and Syrian students, mostly in their twenties, rioted outside the walls and attacked the American embassy with large rocks and bricks. Embassy windows were broken, and one Syrian managed to scale the embassy wall and tear down the US flag from the top of the main building before being subdued by the Marine security guards.<sup>72</sup>

Two days later on the first declared “Palestinian Day of Rage,” a hostile crowd of several thousand Palestinian young men from Palestinian refugee camps/neighborhoods in Damascus, along with Syrian young men, staged a particularly violent display against American interests. Demonstrators burned Israeli and American flags in the streets of Damascus. In an attempt to reach the embassy, rioters threw Molotov cocktails and bricks at Syrian riot police blocking their route. Policemen in and around the vicinity of the embassy responded to the crowd with tear gas and warning shots fired in the air. Syrian police bloodied scores of protesters as some were dragged away to custody, unconscious. Several Syrian policemen were also injured. For the next few weeks, additional violent demonstrations followed, although Syrian police protected the US Embassy, and rioters were repelled

*Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

at a greater distance from the building. As a signal to the US Ambassador and to United States diplomats, and as a means for allowing Syrians and Palestinians to vent their aggression, the Syrian government organized more peaceful protests in October 2000 in Damascus. These orchestrated demonstrations in the vicinity of the US embassy sometimes consisted of more than twenty thousand public sector workers, university students, and high school students ordered to march in the streets near the embassy. Demonstrators carried individuals in the air, covered in shrouds and symbolically representing dead Palestinians killed by Israelis in the Occupied Territories. Demonstrators also carried banners and large pictures of Palestinian children killed during fighting in Israel, and they shouted anti-US and anti-Israeli slogans while they burned American and Israeli flags. On a busy main street in Damascus, a giant poster of a Palestinian boy, Mohammed al-Dura, who was shot to death by Israeli forces while cowering at his father's side in the early stages of the intifada in Palestine, hung for weeks in the vicinity of several embassies and along the route to the American embassy. Without doubt, this poster was placed there with the approval of the Syrian government, since nothing appears on Syrian streets without regime approval.

The demonstrations against the US diplomatic mission in Damascus in the fall of 2000, which were either undoubtedly approved or ordered by the government—at least the less violent ones—expressed the sentiment of Arab peoples throughout the Middle East. While most in the Arab world did not go to the extremes exhibited by the rioters in Damascus, the hatred demonstrated and the excitement for striking out at something

American was a perfect manifestation of how many Arab citizens feel about the US after years of Palestinian suffering.

During the second intifada, Arabs have been particularly distraught with what they view as an Israeli hard-line approach to the Palestinians. They see this Israeli approach as directly backed and funded by the United States. They are also angered by America's willingness to prevent the international community from stepping in and stopping what they view as Israel's slaughter of Palestinian citizens, who have died at a rate about three times the rate of Israelis since the beginning of the violence. In addition, America's provision of large amounts of military aid and financial aid to Israel, versus much more conservative amounts for the Palestinians, has been a bone of contention with Arabs. Since the fall of 2000, Israel's employment of sophisticated US-origin military equipment against the lightly armed Palestinians has outraged Arabs. An official with the Kuwait Information Office, Dr. Shafeeq Ghabra, remarks that Arabs "notice that the Israelis are using American-made Apache helicopters and F-16s."<sup>73</sup> An academic at Cairo University vents, "What has it [the United States] done to stop Israeli acts of terror, which the US makes possible through supplies of state-of-the-art military hardware?"<sup>74</sup>

Also frustrating to Arabs is what they view as American obstruction of UN efforts to create an impartial international monitoring force in the occupied territories. Twice in 2001—the latest of which was in mid-December—the US vetoed a UN Security Council resolution calling for international monitors to be sent to the West Bank and Gaza. The resolution in December 2001 was sponsored by the Arab countries Egypt and Tunisia, and it also called for a cessation of violence between Israel and the

*Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

Palestinians, as well as the resumption of peace talks between the two sides. A Palestinian UN official called the US action “unreasonable,” saying, “We are the little guys. We are the people under occupation, and it is our right and a duty to come to the body responsible for peace and security, to the United Nations.”<sup>75</sup> Between May 1990 and mid-December 2001, the US vetoed six Security Council resolutions related to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, further tainting US foreign policy in Arab eyes.

The Al-Aqsa intifada has also adversely affected America’s relations with the Gulf States. In the past few decades, these countries have not placed a large emphasis on the Arab-Israeli conflict as a theme in their strategic relations with the US. This is changing, though. An American expert with great insight into the Gulf is Dr. John Duke Anthony, President and CEO of the National Council on US-Arab Relations. In testimony delivered on 31 July 2001 before Congress, Anthony noted that the Palestinian issue has tainted US relations with the Gulf States. Before the House of Representatives he stated, “The simmering disappointment of GCC leaders at the way they see Washington as having treated Palestinian issues has accelerated considerably since the onset of the Al-Aqsa intifada. . . . They [GCC peoples] admit to a sense of growing pain in their hearts. Neither the elites nor rank-and-file in any of these countries is oblivious to the implications for domestic and regional stability that flow from the prevailing perception that the United States is anything but ‘even-handed’ or ‘honest,’ or an ‘honest broker,’ when it comes to the question of Palestine.”<sup>76</sup>

Dr. Anthony's assertion that the Arab-Israeli conflict evokes deep-seated negative sentiment and is having unfavorable consequences in the way Gulf rulers and elites view the US is backed by observations of American officials. Colonel Bernard Dunn, US Defense Attaché to Saudi Arabia from 2000-2002, noted in December 2001 that, since the beginning of the second intifada, the Saudis have been upset with America's handling of the Palestinian-Israeli crisis, and this has hampered US-Saudi security cooperation.<sup>77</sup> Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Ryan Crocker, a former US ambassador to several Arab states, acknowledged also in December 2001 that the intifada has had a "corroding effect on American interests" throughout the Middle East.<sup>78</sup> During office calls with very senior Arab military officials attended by the author in the summer of 2002 in several Arab countries, several prominent officers opined that the Palestinian-Israeli situation must be solved prior to the US or a US-led coalition targeting Saddam Hussein.<sup>79</sup>

Perhaps most damning is a January 2002 statement to the US from the Saudi Crown Prince himself: "I don't see the sense of justice and the sense of righteousness ordained by God Almighty in what is happening in the [Israeli-occupied, Arab] territories. When you look at your own nation [the United States] and how it was founded, the principles were justice, righteousness, equity, and concern for eliminating evil and decadence and corruption. . . . I have great concern about America's credibility and I care about how America is perceived. As friends and as your allies, we are very proud of our relationship with you. In the current environment, we find it very difficult to defend America, and so we keep our silence. Because to be frank with you, how

*Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

can we defend America?”<sup>80</sup> While most contempt for US foreign policy on the part of Arabs is held primarily by the common people in Middle Eastern societies, and not as much by the elites who send their children to America to study and who vacation in the US, there could easily come a day when Gulf officials can not ignore the voice from the expanding masses. “People power” may well significantly impinge on America’s ability to maneuver in the Middle East and to project its interests in a region so vital to US national security interests.

**CONCLUSIONS—IMPLICATIONS FOR US NATIONAL SECURITY AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE AMERICA’S IMAGE IN ARAB EYES**

Because of America’s stance toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and because of its handling of Iraq during the past decade plus, both public and private Arab citizens’ perception of US foreign policy is worse in late 2002 than perhaps at any previous time in history. Do Arab perceptions about American foreign policy really matter, though, as America navigates its course through the treacherous waters of Middle East politics and security? If so, what initiatives should the US pursue to improve its image in the eyes of the Arab world? This section concludes that Arab perceptions do matter and are important, since negative perceptions endanger American security interests in the region and on US soil. Additionally, the paper recommends that, in order to better its image in the Middle East, the US must modify its policies toward the Arab-Israeli conflict, increase financial aid, expand its diplomatic efforts, and more aggressively pursue a public diplomacy campaign.

It would seem that Arab governments and organizations might distance themselves from the US as Arab officials themselves and

particularly their populations become more suspect and even hateful of America and what it stands for in Arab eyes. By spring and summer of 2002, certain indicators hinted that the Arab states were at least somewhat distancing themselves from the US. For months, heavy criticism was heaped on the US in the Arabic press. In a concrete example of the results of strained ties between the US and Arab world, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Africa and the Middle East Molly Williamson remarked that America's composite trade with the Arab world was down by approximately twenty-five percent during the first six months of 2002, as compared with the first half of 2001.<sup>81</sup>

Widely reported rifts in US-Arab ties emerged when President George W. Bush suggested in the summer of 2002 that Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat must be removed before a viable Palestinian state could emerge. Regarding extensive talk of possible US or US-led military action against Iraq, the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Gulf governments cautioned restraint; they publicly announced that their territory could not be used to base US forces prepared to attack Iraq. On 7 August 2002, Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Feisal publicly stated that Saudi Arabia could not be used as a US launching pad to attack Iraq. He emphasized this was Saudi Arabia's public and private positions.<sup>82</sup>

Official Arab rhetoric, though, is often inconsistent with Arab actions. When it comes to Arab cooperation with the United States even the staunchest Arab critics have regularly found reason to work with America, despite dissatisfaction with American policies. Surprisingly, the same Syrian government that has been so critical of the US in recent years has cooperated with America since 11 September 2001 by sharing intelligence on

*Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

terrorist cells and groups. Syrian information given to the US apparently helped prevent an attack by extremists against American servicemen in the Gulf sometime in 2002.<sup>83</sup>

In mid-September 2002, following months of a worsening trend in Saudi-US relations, in the wake of and Riyadh's claim that US military forces could not base out of the Kingdom in the event of an attack on Iraq, Saudi officials seemed to conduct an about face. Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Feisal noted that if the United Nations authorized force against Iraq, the United States could apparently stage military operations out of Saudi Arabia because "everyone is obliged to follow through."<sup>84</sup> Even lacking UN backing, Saudi will still likely follow the US lead to smite Saddam. Other Arab countries also changed course and refuted earlier statements which hinted that US forces attacking Saddam would not be welcome in their countries. Qatar's Foreign Minister Hamad bin al-Thani, in reference to potential US requests to base American military forces in Qatar remarked, "We always consider requests from our friends. We consider the United States our ally." Jordan, a country with close ties to both Iraq and to Palestinians, seemed to acquiesce to America, as well, when its Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher relayed, "Jordan has a strategic, political, and economic relationship with the United States, and certainly, Jordan will not jeopardize this relationship."<sup>85</sup>

By late September, it seemed that negative Arabs opinion toward US foreign policy had ostensibly done little to actually create a fissure in government-to-government security relations between the US and Arab countries. At least with regard to the Gulf nations, US-Arab cooperation even expanded. Progress

included the continued construction of the joint Qatari-US airbase and a US air operations center at al-Udeid, photos of which appeared on Internet sites in the summer of 2002.<sup>86</sup> As part of a trip around the Gulf, and at a conference in Kuwait on 21 September 2002, the Commander of US Central Command, General Tommy Franks, remarked that US military forces in the Arabian Gulf have stepped up training with host militaries there. The day before, the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister remarked that Kuwait would support action against Iraq, provided it had United Nations backing.<sup>87</sup>

Facts like the ones above hardly indicate a freeze in official relations in the short term or even the more ominous “clash of civilizations” predicted by Samuel Huntington. In his book, Huntington notes, “The twentieth-century conflict between liberal democracy and Marxist-Leninism is only a fleeting and superficial historical phenomenon compared to the continuing and deeply conflictual relation between Islam and Christianity.”<sup>88</sup> Perhaps his comments are a bit premature when examining official US-Arab relations; however larger societal rifts could develop over time.

Ideological and emotional differences may exist between America and its Arab partners, especially over the Palestinian issue, but a very pragmatic symbiosis still dominates the current, official relationship. America and its allies require access to Gulf oil, and Arab states like Egypt, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates are unlikely to soon abandon the security umbrella provided by US military forces. America represents a shield for Gulf countries against Iran and Iraq. Because the US and the Arab world are so inextricably linked in the economic and security spheres, Arabs’ negative perceptions of

*Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

US foreign policy is unlikely to create a real chasm in official US-Arab relations during the immediate-to-intermediate term.

While official relations will continue generally unabated in the near future, and likely for at least the coming few decades, American officials would not be wise to disregard the dangers to US national security because of negative Arab perceptions of US foreign policy. The “Arab street,” or Arab populations in the Middle East from all socio-economic backgrounds, which many analysts regularly dismiss as irrelevant in Middle Eastern politics, often see relations with America quite different from their leaders. These disgruntled and marginalized individuals represent a growing pool of religious extremists or secular extremists driven by perceived injustice. Extremists pose a challenge to moderate Arab states’ long-term domestic stability. Additionally, extremists will threaten America by committing further terrorist acts against Americans and US facilities both overseas and within America’s borders.

Ominously, the number of disgruntled Arab citizens—the same group that is largely hostile toward US policies—is rapidly growing. Most Arab governments have either no plans or poorly developed plans for dealing with a glut of un- or underemployed young people. A third of Saudis of working age are unemployed, and more than half the population is under the age of twenty.<sup>89</sup> Egypt, a country of great strategic importance to the US because it controls the entry and exit of US naval ships through the Suez Canal and because most US military air traffic en route to the Arabian Gulf over flies its territory, is now struggling to dole out unimaginative jobs to its burgeoning population. Fewer public sector jobs—a traditional social welfare safety net—handed out

each year equates to less loyalty by lower class Egyptians for the Egyptian government.

One late morning in 1995 while in an Egyptian military building, the author woke up one of four young soldiers “guarding” the key to a bathroom door. One sleepy soldier opened the door to a bathroom for the author, which appeared safe enough without a lock. Egypt and other Arab government’s calculate that it is better to pay a soldier or public servant a salary of \$100 or less than have that same individual unemployed and on the street—a lucrative target for recruitment by Islamic opposition figures. In short, angry Arab populaces across the Middle East, which have been demonstrating against Israel and the US in larger numbers than those seen in several decades, represent a real threat to the stability of Arab governments friendly to the US. Over the long term, Arab internal intelligence and security organizations will have to be more oppressive to subvert citizens opposed to their governments continually siding with the US, or Arab officials will have to take their people’s opinions more into consideration when drafting their responses to US policies.

Arab popular scorn will undoubtedly motivate Arab extremists to continue to lash out at American interests. Each Israeli reprisal against Palestinians, especially ones employing American F-16 fighters or Apache helicopters, which attract only mild criticism by American administration officials unwilling to highlight the possible illegality of such Israeli action in terms of UN resolutions, further motivates Arab extremists to attack the US. American diplomats and American businesspersons will face increased risk of attack or kidnapping. Poor perceptions of the US in Arab countries hosting US forces will likely force the US

### *Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

military presence—rather apparent to locals in some Middle East countries—to become and more isolated from Arab population centers, such as has been the case during the past decade in countries like Saudi Arabia. Force protection measures will become increasingly more crucial at US military forces, US embassies, and US business centers and compounds in the Middle East.

The fact that a large percentage of Arab citizens hold US policies in contempt is unlikely to change in the near future due to the current difficult conditions in the Middle East. Because of disdain generated by America's commitment to Israel as a special partner and because of differences between American and Arab positions over Iraq, Arab resentment is not likely to soon dissipate. However, there are several measures that the US can take to mitigate Arab perceptions of US foreign policy and even stem future contempt. Reducing the magnitude of Arabs' negative perceptions will take a more determined and sustained effort by the US government, which must employ the complete gamut of political, economic, diplomatic, and informational (public diplomacy) instruments of power.

Considering, again, the seminal issue in eyes of Arabs is the Arab-Israeli conflict, politically, the US would quiet millions of enraged Arab voices if the US would tenaciously and consistently push for an internationally-recognized Palestinian homeland, encompassing the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. As an admirable and courageous first step in the policy arena, President Bush and the United States called for the creation of a Palestinian state twice publicly in 2002. President Bush's administration is the first US administration to formally take such a stance. On 12

March 2002, the US put forth a Security Council resolution, which was passed 14-0, “affirming a vision” of a Palestinian state and calling for an end to the violence in Israel/Palestine.<sup>90</sup> Then, in another encouraging step, President Bush on 24 June unequivocally called for the creation of a Palestinian state. The President even criticized Israeli tactics toward the Palestinians, stating, “It is untenable for Palestinians to live in squalor and occupation.” He made references to the pre-1967 boundaries—those before Israeli occupation of traditional Arab lands—as a starting point for Israeli-Palestinian discussions “based on UN Resolutions 242 and 338, with Israeli withdrawal to secure and recognized borders.”<sup>91</sup>

Unfortunately, however, President Bush has marginalized Chairman Arafat in the US Administration’s vision for a future Palestinian government. While Arafat is despotic and corrupt, and probably should go, he was recognized by the US, under the previous administration, as the elected leader of the Palestinians. The US must find a way to civilly marginalize Arafat, so that another, more enlightened Palestinian leader can emerge, without allowing Israel to repeatedly attack his headquarters. The administration has wisely criticized such aggressive Israeli action against Arafat but hesitates to actually alienate or punish Israel. Additionally, while the US vehemently emphasizes Iraqi refusal to abide by UN resolutions, it fails to take concrete steps to punish or rebuke Israel for failing to adhere to UN prescriptions. Certainly a tall order, to genuinely improve its image in the Arab world, the United States must be willing to pressure the Israelis to return historic Arab territories back to the Arabs (that they held before 1967) for a Palestinian state, help broker a solution over how

*Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

Jerusalem can be equitably ruled or administered by both Israelis and Palestinians, and address the Palestinian refugee issue. Finally, America must place as much priority on solving the Israeli-Palestinian morass as it does on pursuing Saddam Hussein. The US should not abandon its special relationship with Israel, but America should not allow Israel to steamroll the Palestinians, either.

Turning to the economic instrument of power, increased amounts of aid, properly accounted for once it is placed in foreign hands, must be granted to give the despondent members of struggling Arab societies hope of a better life. Instead of potentially seeing America as a rich, far-away land that is not concerned with the welfare of the world community, increasing amounts of American aid must be earmarked for less fortunate members of the international community. Financially assisting countries like Yemen, which is a hotbed for extremism, in a serious and substantial way, might even help strengthen Arab governments friendly to the United States. Encouraging in this regard is President George W. Bush's 15 March 2002 speech at the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington, where he promised a \$5 billion increase in official US aid over three budget years, to begin in fiscal year 2004.<sup>92</sup> While it is debatable if this amount will make a significant difference, the message sent to the Middle East and other developing countries is important. Realistically, aid dispersed must be monitored carefully to prevent money from ending up in the bank accounts of foreign government officials and their cronies.

Another instrument of power that American officials should increasingly pay attention to is the diplomatic one. US

professional diplomats, including State Department Foreign Service Officers and military attaches, receive only minor public diplomacy training. According to the findings of an Independent Task Force on Public Diplomacy sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations, only one hour of the seven-week course for new Foreign Service officers is dedicated to public diplomacy training.<sup>93</sup> During training, military attaches also receive little training in presenting the US perspective on events.

Additionally, America's professional diplomats are grossly under-funded when it comes to entertainment funds and budgets. Because reimbursable representational funds are extremely tight for mid-level diplomats sent abroad—a US State Department diplomat can afford to host only a few dinners or functions in his home each year—American diplomats do not have the chance to properly mix in highly social Middle Eastern societies. While opportunities are limitless to spend time with Arabs while on assignments abroad, the unwritten rule in Arab society is that you must invite to be invited. In other words, if an American diplomat does not have proper funds to host dinners and functions, and also the inclination to spend extensive time with Arabs in a social setting, then that diplomat will not be consistently invited to Arab social functions.

Real rapport between American diplomats and Arab foreign nationals, which will help dismantle distrust over time and introduce accurate American viewpoints to Arab citizens sometimes tainted by grossly inaccurate press reports, is not built by official handshakes. Confidence and trust is built by spending countless late nights together talking, eating Arabic food, and drinking coffee or tea. What might seem to some Americans as

### *Meyer—Arab Perceptions*

idle talk and wasted time engaging in informalities builds genuine bridges between Arabs, who are typically social and hospitable by nature, and Americans seeking to help Arabs better understand the constraints and nuances of US foreign policy. Strong relationships built today between junior- and mid-level US diplomats and Arab citizens at all societal levels will be the cornerstones of future American-Middle East relations and will help overcome misunderstandings.

Closely tied to diplomacy, and directly related to proactively shaping Arab perceptions of US foreign policy, is the informational instrument of power. The State Department has the primary responsibility for public diplomacy outreach programs, but educational and cultural exchange programs have suffered drastic cuts in recent years. Since 1993, funding for such valuable resources has been cut thirty-three percent from \$349 million to \$232 million.<sup>94</sup> This trend must reverse itself as programs like the American Language Centers in several Arab cities provide not only English language training for young Arab students and professionals, but also put a human face on American values by placing dedicated American teachers in front of Arab audiences.

Regarding mass media and the broadcast of US views to the Arab world, American music, movies, and popular culture are popular with Arabs, but the United States has done a rather poor job in recent times of actively explaining and promoting US public positions to the Arab world. Over the past decade, US government sponsored media programs, like the Voice of America radio network, have received less priority and funding. In 2002, Christopher Ross, a retired State Department official and former Ambassador to Syria remarked, “In the ten years between the Cold

War and September 11, we had forgotten about the outside world.”<sup>95</sup> Public diplomacy programs are a proactive way of preventing disagreements over misinterpreted positions, and they create a more accurate public awareness in the Arab world of US intentions and positions. In short, there must be a concerted effort to deliver the “American message” to the Middle East in a format which appeals to Arabs.<sup>96</sup>

America’s image is suffering in the Arab world. As long as Arabs perceive that America is biased in favor of Israel, and as long as Arabs contend that America’s policies hurt common Iraqi citizens, US credibility will continue to suffer amongst Arabs. To ensure unhindered diplomatic and military access to the region well into the future and to ebb the tide of extremism projecting across the Middle East and into America itself, US policy makers must act with haste to improve America’s tarnished image by employing more expansive political, economic, diplomatic, and informational instruments of power.

#### **NOTES**

---

<sup>1</sup> League of Arab States Mission official, interviewed by author, Washington, DC, 19 December 2001. Throughout this paper, because the topics are often considered rather politically sensitive, the author does not list the names of the Arab individuals interviewed. Without anonymity, Arab sources might be hesitant to discuss such subjects with a diplomat or with an American military officer, despite the fact that the topics are unclassified. This stems in part from the sources’ concern over portraying their own Arab people in a negative light (this relates, in part, to Arab culture) and for fear of their own governments possibly enacting retribution against them.

<sup>2</sup> “Secretary of State Colin Powell on CNN’s ‘Larry King Live,’” 26 November 2001, *US State Department web site*, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from <http://uninfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/01112701.html>.

<sup>3</sup> This paper is based mostly upon comments and writings from educated, elite Arabs. By “elite” the author means Arabs generally at the top of Arab society, which is a minority. (There is not a large middle class in Arab countries.) Most Arab elites interviewed for this paper have connections or at least inroads into Arab governments. Arab sources are typically government officials, wealthy private citizens—businessmen or other professionals—and journalists. Many are Western educated, and most have either traveled extensively or lived in the West or in the United States. From his discussion with Arabs, professional readings, and personal experiences in the Middle East, the author contends that the sources’ views are representative of dominant opinions in the Arab world. When it comes to the emotional issues discussed in this essay—Iraq and the Arab-Israeli conflict—the author believes the so-called “Arab street,” or bulk of Arab citizens, feel very much the same as those in their society who are wealthier or more educated. In fact, because the “Arab street” is less exposed to outside (and various) views, and more subject to government propaganda in places like Syria, the author believes that the general populace feels even more strongly than Arab elites that American policies are biased and unjust. For instance, in the spring of 2000, a poor Syrian policeman (most Syrian policemen are poor) spoke with the author in a street in Damascus. The policeman told the author that he did not like Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and US foreign policy; this was in the wake of the failure of the Geneva summit between President Hafiz al-Asad and President Bill Clinton. The policeman, who was likely exposed mostly to Syria’s government-controlled media, could not explain why he did not like US policies, only that he despised them.

<sup>4</sup> Shibley, Telhami, “It’s Not About Faith: A Battle for the Soul of the Middle East,” *Current History* 100, no. 650 (December 2001): 417.

<sup>5</sup> Cameron W. Barr, “US Policy in Mideast under Scrutiny,” *Christian Science Monitor Internet Edition*, 13 September 2001, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from <http://www.csmonitor.com/2001/0913/p2s1-uspo.html>.

<sup>6</sup> William Quandt, “New US Policies for a New Middle East?,” in *The Middle East and the United States: A Historic and Political Reassessment*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, ed. David W. Lesch (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 432. Quandt was a member of the National Security Council staff during the Nixon and Carter administrations; he was intimately involved in the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt.

---

<sup>7</sup> Shireen T. Hunter, Director of Islam Program at Center for Strategic and International Studies, interviewed by author, Washington, DC, 18 December 2001. Hunter is also an occasional television commentator on Islamic, Middle East, and Central Asian events.

<sup>8</sup> Fouad Ajami, “The Sentry’s Solitude,” *Foreign Affairs* 80, no. 6 (November/December 2001): 2-3.

<sup>9</sup> Interviews, Damascus, Syria, June 1999-June 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Interview, Damascus, Syria, 16 June 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Numerous press items were released on this subject in January 2002. For example, see, David B. Ottaway and Robert G. Kaiser, “Saudis May Seek US Exit,” *Washington Post*, 18 January 2002, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A64536-2002Jan17>.

<sup>12</sup> Mecca is considered the first most holy city in the Islamic religion, while Medina is the second most holy city. Mecca was the birthplace of Islam’s prophet Mohammed Ibn Abdullah al Quraish, and the city is the site of the annual Islamic *haj*, or pilgrimage. In the year 622, Mohammed migrated from Mecca to Medina, and eight years later he triumphantly returned and conquered Mecca. Mecca is the site of the Grand Mosque, while the Great Mosque is located in Medina.

<sup>13</sup> Interviews, Damascus, Syria, June 1999-June 2001.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> For purposes of this paper, the “Arab world” stretches from across North Africa, from Morocco to Egypt, through the Levantine states of Jordan, Syria, Israel/Palestine, into the Arabian Peninsula—including the Arabian Gulf countries, and into Iraq. This paper does not include opinion from peoples in Turkey, Iran, South Asia, or Central Asia, although individuals and states there, in many cases, would likely have similar thoughts. The paper is not concerned with Islamic opinion, per say, although the majority of people in the Arab world are Muslims. Considering Islamic versus Arab opinion toward American foreign policy opens up a separate (although sometimes common) set of concerns based on religion, or interpretation of religion. Instead, this paper seeks to explain complaints common to Arabs of various religions and ethnic sub-groups across the Arab world.

<sup>16</sup> Rick Francona, *Ally to Adversary: An Eyewitness Account of Iraq’s Fall from Grace* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1999), 13, 16.

<sup>17</sup> E-mail from Syrian who grew up in Syria and spent extensive time living in the Arabian Gulf, received by author, 13 March 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Interviews, Damascus, Syria, spring 2000.

<sup>19</sup> Interviews with Syrian businessmen, Syrians with family links to the Syrian government, and with Arab diplomats assigned to Syria, June 1999-June 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Ahmed Bouzid, "Why Do They Hate Us So Much?," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 20, no. 9 (December 2001): 14.

<sup>21</sup> Kamil Mahdi, "The Iraq Sanctions Debate: Destruction of a People," *Middle East International*, no. 615 (24 December 1999): 22.

<sup>22</sup> Interviews, Damascus, Syria, June 1999-June 2001.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. Francona's *Ally to Adversary* briefly covers the US-Iraqi security relationship during the 1980s, including sharing technical intelligence, 9-30.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with former Iraqi citizen and Defense Language Institute Arabic language instructor, Spring 1994. This instructor's family left Iraq because of political repression. More specifically, Iraqi internal security personnel, who demanded her brother join the military, repeatedly sought him out.

<sup>25</sup> Francona, 17. See pages 14-19 for a good description of Iraq's pervasive security climate.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Gulf official, December 2001.

<sup>27</sup> E-mail from Syrian cited in footnote number two above.

<sup>28</sup> Interviews, Damascus, Syria, June 1999-June 2001.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Edward W. Said, "Gulliver in the Middle East" (an essay originally appearing in *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 26 February 1998), in *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After*, updated edition, (New York: Vintage, 2001), 241.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Gulf official, December 2001.

<sup>32</sup> Following Iraq's obstruction of UN weapons inspectors attempting to accomplish their duties, the US military initiated strikes, called OPERATION DESERT FOX, against Iraq on 16 December 1998. Targets included suspected WMD-associated facilities, surface-to-air missile sites, command and control facilities, airfields, and Republican Guard facilities. For additional information about the

---

operation, see Linda D. Kozaryn, “Saddam Abused His Last Chance, Clinton Says,” *American Forces Information Service News Articles*, 17 December 1998, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Dec1998/n12171998\\_9812171.htm](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Dec1998/n12171998_9812171.htm) and Paul Stone, “Desert Fox Target Toll Climbs Past 75 Iraqi Sites,” *American Forces Information Service News Articles*, 18 December 1998, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Dec1998/n12181998\\_9812182.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Dec1998/n12181998_9812182.html).

<sup>33</sup> Arab governments, in general, maintain rather tight control over their societies. “Spur-of-the-moment” protests in Arab states are sometimes allowed by Arab governments as a means to let common citizens vent their anger. Protests are, in effect, a pressure valve meant to dissipate anger toward outside influences and to prevent Arab citizens from turning their frustrations toward their own governments.

<sup>34</sup> Interviews with various US diplomats at US Embassy Syria, Damascus, Syria, June 1999.

<sup>35</sup> The American Embassy in Damascus is located in the upscale Malki/Abu Romani district of Damascus. The Syrian Presidential offices and apartment are located approximately a half-mile away from the embassy.

<sup>36</sup> Bouzid, 14.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Syrian businessman with strong professional and familial links to the Syrian government, Damascus, Syria, 25 May 2001.

<sup>38</sup> Jamal Khashoggi, “War Against Terror: A Saudi Perspective,” *Arab View*, Fall 2001 (no date posted), n.p., on-line, Internet, available from <http://www.arabview.com/article.asp?artID=105>.

<sup>39</sup> Palestinians are not included here, since Palestinians have not achieved governance over a sovereign Palestinian state. Instead, as of early 2002, Palestinians held autonomy over limited territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These are the areas that the Palestinian Authority hopes to incorporate into an actual, recognized state.

<sup>40</sup> E-mail from private Jordanian citizen living in Syria (in response to author’s e-mail questions), received by author, 4 November 2001.

<sup>41</sup> Interviews, Damascus, Syria, June 1999-June 2001. For an explanation of prominent US officials who opposed US official recognition of Israel upon creation of that country, see Robert D.

Kaplan, *The Arabists: Romance of an American Elite* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), 85-87.

<sup>42</sup> Interviews, Damascus, Syria, June 1999-June 2001.

<sup>43</sup> Group interview, Syrian Defense Minister LtGen Mustafa Talas, interviewed during visit of US Air Force War College, 14 March 2001.

<sup>44</sup> E-mail from private Syrian (in response to author's e-mail), received by author, 10 November 2001.

<sup>45</sup> William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1993), 405-407, 411.

<sup>46</sup> Interviews, Damascus, Syria, June 1999-June 2001.

<sup>47</sup> The land Asad and the Syrians/Lebanese believed they could reacquire from Israel were territories on the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and in Southern Lebanon, the return of which is called for in UN Resolutions 242, 338, and 425. Syria exercises tremendous control over Lebanese domestic and foreign policies. Historically, Lebanon was part of Greater Syria, before the colonial British and French powers carved up the Middle East.

<sup>48</sup> Interviews, Damascus, Syria, fall 2000.

<sup>49</sup> Patrick Seale, "Bye-Bye Dennis Ross," *Al Hayat* (English version), 11 November 2001, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from <http://www.mafhoum.com/press/sealeh2.html>. The popular story circulating around Damascus at the time of the Clinton-Asad meeting, and directly thereafter, was that Asad had swum in Lake Tiberias and barbecued on its shore as a child. Asad, however, grew up in a village in the mountains of Syria, far from Lake Tiberias. It is more likely that he never visited the lake as a child. The line of reasoning went that since Syrians had access to the lake at one time, they must again—as a result of the peace process—have access to the lake and its eastern shore.

<sup>50</sup> Interviews, Damascus, Syria, 2000.

<sup>51</sup> E-mail from Syrian cited in note number 44 above.

<sup>52</sup> Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al-Shara', "H.E. Mr. Farouk Al-Shara', Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, at the 56<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, 14 November 2001, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from <http://www.syrianmission.org/fmeb56.htm>.

- 
- <sup>53</sup> Syrian Ambassador to the United States, H.E. Rustom Al-Zoubi, interviewed by author, Washington, DC, 20 December 2001.
- <sup>54</sup> Interviews, Damascus, Syria, May-June 2000.
- <sup>55</sup> Interviews, Damascus, Syria, April 2000-June 2001.
- <sup>56</sup> Interviews, Damascus, Syria, 2001.
- <sup>57</sup> Zoubi interview. Note that Lebanon, until the colonial powers divided the Middle East up after World War One, was part of historic Syria. Hafiz al-Asad claimed that the division between Lebanon and Syria was artificial and that the populace in the two countries was merely “One people living in two lands.”
- <sup>58</sup> Interviews, Damascus, Syria, June 1999-June 2001.
- <sup>59</sup> Sara Roy, “Why Peace Failed: An Oslo Autopsy,” *Current History* 101, no. 651 (January 2002): 16.
- <sup>60</sup> Before the 1967 Arab-Israeli (Six-Day or June) War, Jerusalem was a partitioned city, with Israel controlling West Jerusalem, and Jordan controlling East Jerusalem. Islamic, Jewish, and Christian holy sites were all located in then-Arab territories.
- <sup>61</sup> Interviews with Palestinians and Syrians, Damascus, Syria, June 1999-June 2001.
- <sup>62</sup> Edward W. Said, “Gulliver in the Middle East” (an essay originally appearing in *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 26 February 1998), in *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After*, updated edition, (New York: Vintage, 2001), 241-242.
- <sup>63</sup> Dr. Lama Jamjoum, “Palestinian Opinion Pulse,” from Jerusalem Media and Communication Center, Volume 2, no.4, June 2001, n.p., on line, Internet, available from <http://www.jmcc.org/publicpoll/pop/01/jun/pop4.htm>.
- <sup>64</sup> Augustus Richard Norton, “America’s Middle East Peace Crisis,” *Current History* 100, no. 642 (January 2001): 5.
- <sup>65</sup> Roy, 13.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.
- <sup>69</sup> Palestinian Peace Process Negotiator quoted in Debrorah Sontag, “The Palestinian Conversation,” *New York Times Magazine*, 3

February 2002, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/03/magazine/03PALESTINE.html>.

<sup>70</sup> The first *intifada*, or Palestinian uprising, occurred from 1987-1991. It is often credited with forcing the Israelis to the peace table. Regarding the first *intifada*, Dilip Hiro wrote, "Actions by the Israeli security forces—involving firings, curfews, harassment, arrests and house searches and demolitions—severely disrupted Palestinian life. During the first four years of the *intifada* 1413 Palestinians were killed. . . . The refusal of the Palestinians to call off the *intifada*, convinced the Israeli government of the futility of continued suppression of them and denial of their national identity and the right to self-rule, and paved the way for the Israeli-Palestinian Liberation Organization Accord in September 1993." Dilip Hiro, *Dictionary of the Middle East* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 123-124.

<sup>71</sup> The *al-Aqsa* Mosque, from where Muslims believe the prophet Mohammed ascended into heaven, is also in the direct vicinity of the Jews' historic Temple Mount site.

<sup>72</sup> Author personally observed riots and demonstrations in Damascus in October 2000.

<sup>73</sup> Dr. Shafeeq N. Ghabra, "Violent Face of Extremism Unveiled," *Gulfwire: Voices from the Region*, 1 November 2001, n.p., on-line, e-mailed to author. *Gulfwire* located at [www.arabialink.com/GulfWire](http://www.arabialink.com/GulfWire).

<sup>74</sup> Mustafa Kamel El-Sayad, "To An American Friend," *Al-Ahram Weekly On-line*, no. 561, 22-28 November 2001, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from [www.ahram.org.eg/weekly/2001/561/op10.htm](http://www.ahram.org.eg/weekly/2001/561/op10.htm).

<sup>75</sup> "US Vetoes UN Terror Resolution," *USA Today.com, World*, 15 December 2001, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from <http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2001/12/15/us-veto.htm>.

<sup>76</sup> Dr. John Duke Anthony, "The Impact of the Palestinian Al-Aqsa *Intifada* on US Relations with Key Arab Countries: The GCC Region," testimony delivered to the US House of Representatives, United States Congress, Washington, DC, 31 July 2001.

<sup>77</sup> Former US Defense Attaché to Saudi Arabia (and former US Defense Attaché to Syria) Col Bernard J. Dunn, interviewed by author, Washington, DC, 22 December 2001.

<sup>78</sup> Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Ryan C. Crocker, United States State Department, interviewed by author, Washington, DC, 21 December 2001.

---

<sup>79</sup> Discussions with senior Arab military officers in multiple Arab countries, August 2002.

<sup>80</sup> Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz quoted in Elaine Sciolino, "Saudi Affirms US Ties but Says Bush Ignores Palestinians' Cause," *The New York Times on the Web*, 29 January 2001, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/29/international/middleeast/29SAUD.html>.

<sup>81</sup> Remarks delivered by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Africa and the Middle East Molly Williamson during National Council on US-Arab Relations conference, Washington, DC, 9 September 2002. While overall trade with the Arab world was down, however, in Jordan, where between fifty and sixty percent of the population is Palestinian and thus seemingly motivated to closely scrutinize ties with the US over grievances, that country's trade with the US was up by twenty-nine percent by early September 2002 in comparison with the January-September timeframe in 2001. This is despite ongoing fierce Palestinian and Israeli retribution and counter-retribution in 2002.

<sup>82</sup> Donna Abu-Naser, "Saudi: US Can't Use Kingdom to Attack Iraq," *Washington Post*, 8 August, 2002, available from Gemstar E-Book. Syria has undoubtedly been prompted to pragmatically cooperate with the US in the war against terrorism because Damascus has also historically opposed Islamic extremists. President Hafiz al-Asad waged an internal war against the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria in the late 1970s and early 1980s, culminating in the death of multiple thousands in Hama in 1982.

<sup>83</sup> Howard Schnider, "Syria Evolves as Anti-Terror Ally," *Washington Post*, 24 July 2002, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A60219-2002Jul24.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A60219-2002Jul24.html).

<sup>84</sup> Todd S. Purdum, "Saudis Indicating US Can Use Bases if UN Backs War," *New York Times*, 16 September 2002, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from [www.nytimes.com/2002/09/16/international/middleeast/16IRAQ.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/16/international/middleeast/16IRAQ.html).

<sup>85</sup> Daniel Williams and Nora Boustany, "Arab Countries Bending to US Influence on Iraq," *Washington Post*, 23 September 2001, page A-01, on-line, Internet, available from [www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A53133-2002Sep22](http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A53133-2002Sep22).

<sup>86</sup> Walter Pincus, "Hussein Tries to Mend Fences with Neighbors: Officials Say Iraq Acts to Forestall US Attack," *Washington Post*, 19 July 2002, available from Gemstar E-Book. This article states the US

is spending \$1 billion to upgrade and expand military facilities in Qatar.

<sup>87</sup> “General: US Set for Any Iraq Action,” *Associated Press*, 21 September 2002, available through America Online.

<sup>88</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations: Remaking of the World Order* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1996), 209.

<sup>89</sup> “Number of Jobless Saudis Hits 3.2 Million,” *Reuters Press Service*, 22 September 2002, available through America Online.

<sup>90</sup> “Text of UN Security Council Resolution on Mideast,” *Reuters Press Service*, 13 March 2002, available through America Online.

<sup>91</sup> Karen DeYoung, “President Outlines Vision for Mideast: Palestinian Statehood Depends on Arafat’s Removal, Bush Says,” *Washington Post*, 25 June 2002, available Gemstar E-book.

<sup>92</sup> Andrzej Zwaniecki, “President Bush Committed to Development, State’s Larson Says,” *Washington File, US Department of State International Information Programs*, 18 March 2002, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from [www.uninfo.state.gov/cgi-bin/washfile/display.pl?p=/products/washfile/la.../newsitem.shtm](http://www.uninfo.state.gov/cgi-bin/washfile/display.pl?p=/products/washfile/la.../newsitem.shtm) 3/18/02.

<sup>93</sup> Peter G. Peterson, “Public Diplomacy and the War on Terrorism,” *Foreign Affairs* 81 no. 6 (September/October 2002): 89.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>95</sup> Karen DeYoung, “Bush to Create Formal Office to Shape US Image Abroad,” *Washington Post*, 30 July 2002, A1, A13.

<sup>96</sup> A couple of encouraging recent developments have taken place in this area. In the spring of 2002, Radio Sawa began broadcasting to the Arab world in a format more attractive to young audiences. Additionally, the Bush Administration announced in the summer of 2002 its plan to create an Office of Global Communications out of the White House as lead agent for public diplomacy.