Note from the Project Convenors

We are pleased to present "Time for the Hard Choices" by P. W. Singer. It is the first in a new series of Analysis Papers to be issued by *The Brookings Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World*. These original research papers will explore the critical issues in American relations with Muslim states and movements. A special focus will be placed on the long-term trends and challenges that U.S. policy-makers will face and the possible options they could adopt for dealing with these phenomena. Future topics in this series will include: the impact of the "youth bulge" in Islamic societies; terrorist financing and recruiting networks; the dynamics of Saudi domestic politics; the responses of Gulf states to the 9-11 attacks; strategies towards Muslim civil society groups; and democratization in the Islamic world.

We are grateful for the generosity of the Ford Foundation, the Education and Economic Outreach Foundation, the Government of Qatar, the United States Institute of Peace, Haim Saban and the Brookings Institution for their support of the Project's activities. We would also like to acknowledge the hard work of Ellen McHugh, Haim Malka, and Susan Morrison in their support of the Project's publication series.

Sincerely,

Professor Stephen Cohen
Project Co-Convenor

Ambassador Martin Indyk
Project Co-Convenor

Professor Shibley Telhami
Project Co-Convenor

About the Brookings Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World

The *Brookings Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World* is a major, two year research program, housed in the Saban Center for Middle East Policy, that is designed to respond to some of the profound questions that the terrorist attacks of September 11th have raised for U.S. policy. The project seeks to develop an understanding of the forces that led to the attacks, the varied responses in the Islamic world, and the long-term responses that the U.S. can make. In particular, it will examine how the United States can reconcile its need to eliminate terrorism and reduce the appeal of extremist movements with its need to build more positive relations with the wider Islamic world.

The Project has several interlocking components:

- A Task Force made up of specialists in Islamic, regional, and foreign policy issues (emphasizing diversity in viewpoint and geographic expertise), as well as government policymakers, which meets on a monthly basis to discuss, analyze, and information share on relevant trends and issues,

- A Visiting Fellows program that brings distinguished experts from the Islamic world to spend time in Washington DC, both assisting them in their own research, as well as informing the wider work ongoing in the project,

- A series of Brookings Analysis Papers and Monographs that provide needed analysis of the vital issues of joint concern between the U.S. and the Islamic world,

- A series of Regional Conferences, which will bring together local experts in the Middle East and South Asia, with their American counterparts. This component will not only provide an opportunity for scholars to discuss their own diagnoses of current trends and possible responses, but also promote a much-needed exchange of ideas and information,

- An Education and Economic Outreach Initiative, which will explore the issues of education reform and economic development towards the Islamic world, in particular the potential role of the private sector,

- A culminating Brookings Institution Press Book, which will explore U.S. policy options towards the Islamic World. The aim of the book is to synthesize the project's findings for public dissemination.

The Project will also facilitate high-level dialogue between policy and issue experts and senior figures in the U.S. Executive Branch, Congress, and other governmental bodies. The underlying aim is to continue the Brookings Institution's original mandate to serve as a bridge between scholarship and public policy. It seeks to bring new knowledge to the attention of decisionmakers, as well as afford scholars a better insight into public policy issues. It is funded with the generous support of the Education and Economic Outreach Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Government of Qatar, United States Institute of Peace, and the Brookings Institution.

About the Saban Center for Middle East Policy

The Saban Center for Middle East Policy was established on May 13th, 2002 with an Inaugural Address by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan. The establishment of the Saban Center reflects the Brookings Institution's commitment to expand dramatically its research and analysis of Middle East policy issues at a time when the region has come to dominate the U.S. foreign policy agenda.

The Center's establishment has been made possible by a generous founding grant from Mr. Haim Saban of Los Angeles. Ambassador Martin S. Indyk, Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies, is the Director of the Center. The Center is located in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at Brookings, led by Vice President and Director, James B. Steinberg.

Joining Ambassador Indyk in the work of the Center is a core group of Middle East experts, who conduct original research and develop innovative programs to promote a better understanding of the policy choices facing American decision makers in the Middle East. This group will includes Professor Shibley Telhami, the Anwar Sadat Professor of Peace and Development at the University of Maryland, Dr. Kenneth Pollack, Brookings Senior Fellow and Director of Research, and Dr. Philip Gordon, Brookings Senior Fellow and Director of the Brookings Center on the United States and France. The Center also supports the work of Visiting Fellows from the Arab World and Israel. Dr. Khalil Shikaki, the Director of the Palestine Center for Policy and Survey Research, was the Center's first Visiting Fellow.

Initially, the Saban Center will undertake original research in four areas: constructing the future Palestinian state; lessons from Camp David for U.S. peace diplomacy; the implications of regime change in Iraq; and the dynamics of the Iranian reformation. It also houses the ongoing Brookings Project on U.S. Policy towards the Islamic World.

The Saban Center's purpose is to provide Washington policymakers with balanced, objective and timely research and policy analysis from experienced and knowledgeable people who can bring fresh perspectives to bear on the critical problems of the Middle East. The Center upholds the Brookings tradition of being open to a range of views. Its central objective is to advance understanding of developments in the Middle East through policy-relevant scholarship and debate.

About the Author

Dr. Peter Warren Singer is an Olin Fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies program at the Brookings Institution and Coordinator of the Brookings Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World. His area of expertise is national security and foreign policy. His research interests center on changes in warfare, in particular the emergence of new actors and threats in 21st century conflict.

Dr. Singer has two upcoming books, Corporate Warriors (Cornell University Press, 2003), which explores the privatized military industry, and Children at War (Brookings Press, 2003), which looks at the new doctrine of child soldiers. His other publications include: "A New Model Afghan Army" (*Foreign Affairs*, July 2002), "AIDS and International Security," (*Survival*, Spring 2002), "Corporate Warriors: The Privatization of Warfare." (*International Security*, Winter 2001), "Pakistan's Madrassahs: Ensuring a System of Education not Jihad," (*Brookings Analysis Paper*, November 2001) "Winning the War of Words: Information Operations in Afghanistan" (*Brookings Analysis Paper*, October 2001), "Caution: Children at War." (*Parameters*, Fall 2001), "Bosnia 2000: Phoenix or Flames?" (*World Policy Journal*, Spring 2000), "The Thucydides Tapes." (*PS: Political Science & Politics*, September 1999), and "America and the Greek Revolution." (*Paralos,* Summer 1996).

Prior to his current position, Dr. Singer was a fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University. He has also worked for the Balkans Task Force in the U.S. Department of Defense, Duke University, and the International Peace Academy. He was a co-founder of the Harvard Colloquium on International Affairs and has also provided commentary for a variety of major media outlets including *ABC-Nightline*, *Al Jazeera, BBC, CBS,* and *CNN*.

Singer received his Ph.D. in Government from Harvard University and A.B. from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University.

Time for the Hard Choices: The Dilemmas Facing U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World

By P. W. Singer [1]

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the varied responses to them, both in the U.S. and in the Islamic world, raised a series of profound questions for American foreign policy. The challenges that have resulted --ranging from the war on terrorism, our role in the Mideast peace process, to crafting better public diplomacy-- will be at the center of international affairs for years to come. Unfortunately, the hard decisions needed to come to terms with these questions are yet to be made, a full year later.

While the last year saw American military success in Afghanistan, it has also seen a deepening of tension between the U.S. and the wider Islamic world (this includes not only the founding hub in the Middle East, but also other Islamic countries and movements in Africa, Europe, the former Soviet states in Central Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and beyond). Polling has found anti-American sentiment to be fairly consistent in most Islamic countries, while the continuing violence in the Middle East has hardened attitudes. Suspicion and antipathy plagues relations, even while the two sides proffer to share common foes and common interests.

At the heart of this worsening dynamic are a series of dilemmas that arise again and again in American foreign policy towards Islamic states and movements. These challenges fall along certain layers:

- The first set is primarily at the state level. How should the U.S. now deal with authoritarian regimes considered its traditional allies in the Islamic world, while still protecting for American strategic concerns and values in a changed threat environment?
- The second dilemma, at the intra-state level, is a by-product of this above question. How then should the U.S. deal with civil society, opposition parties, and other Islamist groups, often within these friends and allies?
- The third dilemma is one of balancing friendships and thus draws from both layers. How can the U.S. navigate maintaining a close alliance with Israel, while maintaining positive relations with Muslim states and movements?
- The fourth dilemma occurs at the extra-regional level. How can the U.S. respond to the issues and concerns of Muslim minorities, often living within our allies?
- Finally, the fifth dilemma occurs at the geo-political level. What is an appropriate paradigm for the war on terrorism, which can provides guidance without compromising other goals and values?

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[1] Dr. Peter Warren Singer is an Olin Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution and Coordinator of the Brookings Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World. This paper is the first in a series of Analysis Papers to be issued by the Project, exploring critical issues in U.S. policies towards Muslim countries and movements. The views expressed here are his own.

In and of themselves, each of these are difficult policy questions, though carrying different weights of complexity in the varied Islamic regions. The overwhelming concern, though, is that their sum-total complicates our present dealings with *all* Muslim states and movements. Thus, these challenges not only cut across both issue areas (from anti-terrorism to a potential invasion of Iraq) and regions, but may also threaten our long-term relations with the entire Islamic world. Until strategies are developed to resolve each of these impasses, their entirety will continue to undermine the standing and influence of the U.S. in the Islamic world for generations to come.

The dilemmas also underscore how there is no easy way out of the predicament the U.S. presently confronts in its relations with the Islamic world. In many ways, these problems feed off of each other, each problem complicating any solution to the others. As such, this report does not represent any final conclusions. Instead, its aim is to identify the primary challenges that the U.S. faces in its long-term policy towards Muslim countries and movements. In short, if America wants to develop an effective policy towards the Islamic world, these are the hard decisions it still has to make, a full year after the attacks of 9-11.

The Dreaded "D" Word: Democracy

In a sense, the first dilemma is shaped by the limited objectives that the U.S. has long had towards the Islamic world. For the last several decades, U.S. policy towards the Islamic world, particularly in the Middle East, has been shaped around an essential "bargain." As long as stability and other strategic U.S. interests (i.e. support in the Cold War against communism and/or the assurance of stable energy flows) were met, the U.S. was willing to support the status quo and not push for political and economic reform within Islamic states. This approach was predicated on several key assumptions: that governments were the only important actors in the relationship and that these primarily autocratic regimes had both the means and willingness to maintain their part of the bargain.

After 9-11, an overriding question in U.S. policy towards the Islamic world is whether the attacks have essentially ended that bargain. Not only have American strategic interests changed with the revelation of new threats from terrorists, but also it has been demonstrated that autocratic governments are only one of many important actors. More importantly, they appear to have been unable to live up to their side of the accord. Instead, our support for repressive regimes may have backfired and increased the dangers to ourselves. This is true not only in the Middle East, but also other Islamic states, such as Pakistan.

The general failure of the state in the Islamic world is at the center of this quandary. The idea of a healthy state, able to provide good governance (providing the public services to make its people secure, healthy, educated, and prosperous) and economic advancement, is almost unknown in the Islamic world at present. Instead, the prevailing model is more often than not a brittle regime, beset by cronyism, which provides little in the way of public goods.

This problem is heightened by the fact that the majority of Islamic countries are ruled by autocratic regimes, unrepresentative of their own populaces. While the last few decades saw a momentous global movement towards freedom and democracy, the Islamic world was generally left behind. Indeed, only 1/5 of those countries with Muslim majorities are democracies. Not one of the Arab states in the Middle East and North Africa --the original centrus of Islam, which have an added influence because of oil monies-- have governments that are elected by their own people (Lebanon

would be the one possible exception, but between the various confessionally based quotas and the influence of Syria, it is admittedly highly imperfect). As a result, there are also higher levels of repression and lower levels of individual human rights in the Islamic world, relative to other parts of the world.

The same failings carry over into other critical areas of how government's legitimacy is judged. Over the last quarter century, standards of living (encapsulated by the per capita GDP) in most Islamic countries have either fallen or remained the same. Few have positive civil-military relations and local observers in the majority of Islamic states rarely describe their own foreign policies as the ideal of achievement. Indeed, using any standard measure of global competence, it is quite hard to identify a single Islamic state that is cited as a political and economic model for success.

This past performance creates an underlying tension within society in the present and future. Given that the regimes in charge of most Muslim countries often failed to take power by public choice (indeed, many are the result of coups more than a generation past), a poor record can call into question their very justification for being. When the populace did not choose the ruling regime and it has had little success in its governance to account for itself, the regime then faces great difficulty in continuing to legitimize its right to maintain power. With most Muslim countries facing growing populations and deteriorating economies, the situation looks likely only to worsen.

As a result, a number of Islamic regimes are under great internal pressure, with little in their policy toolbox, other than a repressive internal security apparatus. In turn, radical groups are flourishing by taking advantage of this state weakness. Several Muslim states have faced severe challenges from terrorist groups, such as al Qaida and Egyptian Islamic Jihad (that later combined in exile), bent upon the regime's overthrow. Unable to fully crush them, the response of these states has often been to export the problem. Forced into exile, many of these groups then turned their gunsights towards the U.S., as America has become identified as key to the local regime's hold on power.

The general failings of the state also reinforce a growing sense of general anger, often directed at America. Many in the Islamic world see the U.S. as the guardian of the status quo, a status quo that has failed the common Muslim. Their resentment is with an existing political order, supported by the U.S., that they cannot affect. There is often present a sense of indignity in their day-to-day lives, pushed by local abuses of power in the economic, political, and military realms. These local abuses, however, are held up by central governments, which are supported by the U.S. As the Palestinian issue is often the one area of allowed political expression, particularly in the Middle East, so too it adds to the sense of indignity and often becomes a proxy arena for opponents to criticize their own regimes.

This dynamic takes place within an American foreign policy that claims to support freedom, human rights, and democracy. Yet, this is generally at odds with the local experience in many Islamic countries. Instead, the U.S. is seen as the patron of a regime that oppresses. The result is a fierce criticism of American double standards that were implicit in the "bargain." Many in the Islamic world feel that while the U.S. may promote certain principles abroad, it often does not support them, instead cynically pursuing perceived national interests.

Therefore, the general alienation, lack of accountability, and lack of political or economic success helped create the context for the attacks of 9-11 and the often-shocking responses to them in the Islamic world. More importantly, even if the U.S. is able to run-down the leaders of al Qaida, the

underlying conditions that facilitated the group's emergence and popularity –political oppressions and economic marginalization- will still be present. For these reasons, reform may now have to be an American strategic priority. In turn, it may also be in the best interests of Islamic governments themselves, even the most autocratic. If these regimes want to survive in some form or another, political change may be necessary to respond to their present and growing pressures.

In sum, a vicious cycle has been created, whereby authoritarian governments, anti-modernist religious groups, and pervasive poverty and hopelessness feed upon and reinforce each other. *The overwhelming policy challenge is how to break this cycle, while still maintaining U.S. interests.*

This raises an issue that is often evaded by American policymakers and their counterparts in the Islamic world: democratization. If the lack of transparency and freedom has been at the root of the problem, then democratization may be the only way to help end the fundamental alienation in Islamic societies.

By realigning the political context along more representative lines, democratization possibly will resolve the panoply of problems troubling the Islamic world: the support for radicals that emanates from populaces now excluded from participation in politics, the general poor governance that results from corrupt, dictatorial regimes, and potentially even the violence stemming from conflicts with Israel, India, and elsewhere, which have often been stoked as a means to divert internal tensions onto external issues. American support for democratization would also potentially build up more solid and equimonious alliances with Muslim states, in a parallel to how the U.S. has built enduring partnerships with fellow democracies in Western and then Eastern Europe, as well as East Asia.

A push for democracy, however, means that the U.S. would have to effect a U-turn and reverse decades of policy. The exceptionalism previously granted to allied governments in the Islamic world would no longer be a part of American foreign policy. Instead, a push for human rights and other principles of transparency and reform would become an integral part of the U.S. agenda. It would become a constant issue raised in diplomatic exchanges, a subject for congressional scrutiny, and a core component of U.S. assistance programs. Such a change of direction onto a new agenda is no easy task and would require a great deal of political energy and capital.

It is also important to acknowledge that the U.S. would be pressuring –and potentially alienating- allied regimes at a time when we may need them most. That is, the same invasive internal security apparatus that often maintain autocrats' hold on power, may be the very tools the U.S. requires to root out terrorist groups. For example, a key ally in certain aspects of the anti-terrorism campaign has been Syria, far from a representative regime. Similarly, the support of many of these autocratic states in the Gulf would be critical in toppling the government of another autocratic state, Iraq. It is unlikely that any amount of diplomatic dexterity would be able to fully cover all these agendas.

At the same time, democratization is an unstable, uncertain process. History has shown that the transition to effective elected regimes can be painfully slow and often involves detours that risk violent conflict. The ensuring dilemma is then how to push for change, but in doing so, avoid the risk of releasing extremism and providing radical Islamists a means to power. In some cases, such as Pakistan, elections have acted as a check on radicalized Islamic groups. In others, however, there are risks that radicals may use the new openness to gain power and even hijack the system, as was the concern in Algeria. Moreover, even if opened up, the political contexts in many Islamic countries would likely still be shaped by a legacy of fervent anti-Americanism. As such, in any democratization

process, those regimes too closely identified with the U.S. would be at risk. Opposition groups might seek to use this issue as a way to topple pro-American governments, leading regimes to steer away from working with the U.S.

Stemming from this, another important challenge is how to create a productive dialogue with the new regimes that might stem from old opposition groups. In many states, Islamist political parties have no clear rivals and would likely gain power in a democratization process. Therefore, it makes sense that the U.S. should begin cultivating new contacts and interactions with these forces, as a potential means to establish a positive relationship and even moderate their views towards the U.S. To do so, though, requires that the U.S. eschew the objections of allied autocratic regimes, who would rather not see such a dialogue with their opponents occur. Equally, this would require American diplomats to learn how to work with Islamic parties, as well as more secular forces, as potential partners, rather than adversaries.

Such questions of democratization and reform are not only important in relations with our allies, but are also relevant to the legacy that the U.S. seeks to leave from its military operations within Islamic regions. After its military success in Afghanistan, the U.S. has assiduously avoided "nationbuilding," for fear of becoming too ensnared in local politics and misusing our military assets. This policy, however, raises great worries about the prospects for long-term stability in Afghanistan, as well as what might happen in any potential post war Iraq.

Our overwhelming military superiority may be our greatest asset, but it will only go so far in resolving the long-term security challenges that we face (Or, as one Austrian prince is reputed to have put it, "You can do a lot with bayonets, but you cannot sit on them."). A real worry in the Islamic world is that, while the U.S. has experienced great military victory in its past operations --and likely would for a second time in Iraq, it is unclear if it has yet developed a blueprint on how to follow these operations up in the political sphere. This then brings the problem back full circle.

In sum, this tension between the pursuit of vital American interests and the need to promote change will complicate U.S. policy for the coming years. The U.S. has to find a way to encourage and assist moderate voices of reform and tolerance, by taking away the sources of anger that fuel support for radicals. At the same time, the difficulty is that the U.S. must operate against terrorist forces, within an ongoing war that is also internal to Islam. How we ultimately resolve these dilemmas may well determine our underlying relations with the Muslim world for generations to come.

The U.S. and Islamic Movements: The Reform Challenge

Linked with the above, another core challenge in American foreign policy, as well as for Western NGO groups, is how to assist moderate Islamic and civil society forces within these states at risk. Presently, radical Islamic forces often dominate the limited numbers of groups that operate outside the state. Much of this results from the fact that extremism thrives in instability, while mosques often offer one of the few safe environments for civil society to organize, free from government interference.

The importance of building civil society in the Islamic world is that it offers alternatives to both autocratic rule and radicalism. By opening new space for local actors, positive developments might be generated from the ground level upwards. As a result, aiding such organizations would seem a prime area to assist change. Indeed, given the rentier economic structure in many Islamic states,

outside forces often have a magnified influence to support reform, which heightens their prospects for success. At the same time, American efforts to aid local civil society groups would build up reservoirs of good will.

The dilemma is how to aid the growth of positive civil society force in the Islamic world, without causing undue or counterproductive interference? Layers of questions must be resolved before the U.S. is able to act. The first dynamic is how to identify legitimate local civil society groups, i.e. those groups who will use outside aid and assistance to the cause intended. Not only is there the generic concern of corruption and mismanagement of aid projects, but a further complication is that many of the most popular civil society forces in the Islamic world have agendas that are not always in line with Western preferences. For example, the same groups that provide such valuable and popular services as free local health care or food to the poor often have certain restrictions with regards to women's rights. The result is that the most able groups on the ground will often be those that espouse values anathema to some American donors.

An added problem is that American assistance frequently carries negative externalities. Proponents of aid too often focus only on our own goodwill, and not the actual effect on the recipients. That U.S. aid can sometimes carry a stigma is then frequently missed. Therefore, in many Muslim countries, civil society may need support, but not at the costs of becoming too closely associated with the donor's perceived motivations. The dilemma therefore is how to assist local forces working for positive change, without being seen as unduly interfering and also avoiding compromising them to charges of being agents of or beholden to the Americans. In particular, the U.S. must be sure to avoid being seen as trying to redefine Islam under its own terms.

Education reform is a prime example of these difficult dilemmas. Across the spectrum in the Islamic world, there is general agreement that many education systems have failed their constituencies. The full range of success measures --literacy rates, science achievements, etc.-- is well below global standards, with special problems of gender inequalities. The consequence is a heavy weight against the future economic prospects in the Islamic world, which has become linked with the broader problems of an underperforming state and weak civil society.

In Pakistan, for instance, the public school system has gradually deteriorated over the last few decades, ceding much of the education sphere to the system of Islamic religious schools, better known as madrassahs. Madrassahs have a long and noble history that spans centuries. The problem, though, is that these schools were originally intended to train Muslim clerics, not the wider population. Where once these schools numbered in the hundreds within Pakistan, now they count in the tens of thousands and encompass a significant portion of lower education. A key selling point is that many of these madrassahs also provide social welfare services, such as free food to poor students. They thus gain students and popularity by filling the state's void. The curriculum of these schools, however, is generally limited to rote religious training. The result is that they graduate a yearly cohort that is ill-prepared for the modern world. A small minority of these schools is also affiliated with dangerous militant groups, and act as feeder institutions, providing a pipeline of recruits and support for operations. The prevailing system of education consequently acts as both a general drag on the already struggling Pakistani economy and also a sustaining factor to the violence and instability in the region.

The madrassahs, therefore, represent the exceptionally complex policy challenge of aiding local internal reforms, of the type that often bedevils U.S. efforts towards the Islamic world. On one

hand, education is obviously a domestic political issue that falls within the scope of the sovereign Pakistani state. Moreover, the madrassahs are non-governmental religious schools. How they should be run and the curriculum that they should teach is, understandably enough, considered a matter internal to Islam. Shutting them down will likely provoke a violent backlash, while any alternative schools that the U.S. directly supports will potentially be seen as suborned to American values. At the same time, the general dominance of madrassahs presents challenges to a close and increasingly important American ally, as well as failing the wider Muslim populace. The radicalized schools also present certain direct dangers of violence towards U.S. interests.

The U.S. government and number of non-profit aid groups seemingly want to promote intercultural dialogue, education support, and economic outreach, as a means to prevent terrorism. How to carry this out, though, is a far more difficult dilemma. Outsiders can only go so far in aiding this process, and will have to navigate the fine line between assistance and undue interference

Equally, American aid to civil society forces in the Islamic world may be well intentioned, but it also involves becoming enmeshed in ongoing intra-Islam debates and intervening into the core concerns of other societies. The underlying challenge, therefore, is to establish a process to ensure that the consequences of our aid are positive. Until that is built, American support to civil society forces in the Islamic world may have to be guided by a Hippocratic oath of sorts: First, do no harm.

Old Problems and New Threats: Israel, Palestine, and Beyond

In no way were the attacks of September 11th the result of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Indeed, while al Qaida has recently tried to exploit the violence to its own ends, it is important to underscore that the group long held its distance from the Palestinian cause. In his major doctrinal pronouncements, bin Laden's primary focus was on the U.S. and its presence in the Gulf, not on supporting or linking with Palestinian groups. That said, however, no other issue polarizes the U.S. and the Islamic world or presents greater dilemmas to American policy than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and what the U.S. role should be in it.

The U.S. has often treated its close relationship with Israel, and the resulting implication in its conflict with Palestinians, as a matter distinct from its relations with other Islamic countries. However, the continuing high levels of escalating violence present a danger of boiling over into our relations in the Middle East and beyond. For example, even in states thousands of miles away, which share little kinship with Palestinians, such as Malaysia or Indonesia, no discussion on U.S. relations with Islam can fail to include the situation in Palestine and Israel. These states certainly are not interested in intervening into the fight or anything that extreme, but it causes an underlying resentment and suspicions that haunt broader U.S. policies.

The U.S. enjoys a long, close relationship with Israel, and has a growing sympathy for its predicament with regards to terrorism. As a result of American political and military aid to an Israel that has continued to occupy and settle the West Bank, however, the U.S. is increasingly viewed as an inherently biased player against the Palestinians, and Muslims by extension. The resulting sense of alienation presents a great challenge to American policies towards Muslims states and movements. *The challenge of navigating between the pressures of alliance with Israel, while still maintaining a positive image in the Islamic world, presents one of the most important, and most difficult, dilemmas for American policymakers in the near future.*

At the crux of the policy challenge is the changed context of politics within many Islamic states. Generational change plays a role in this. Across the Islamic world, there has been an important demographic shift, with a "youth bulge" of young males making up an increasing portion of the population. Traditionally, such an age group composition has been a source of instability. Presently, the risks are heightened by the failure of many Muslim states to integrate this cohort into already strained political and economic structures. Additionally, this new generation has come of age in the period of increasing Islamization and violence, while not sharing in the long history of alliance with the U.S. or other mediating forces, such as Arab nationalism.

Many Islamic leaders are starting to realize that the Israeli-Palestinian crisis –and their inability to do anything substantive about an issue that their wider population has great concern about- is poisoning their own domestic politics. The danger in the crisis for these states is that it not only creates a heightened sense of anger among their young populations, but also reveals their regimes' inherent weaknesses and ineffectiveness, not only at home, but also abroad. At the same time, the tensions between a growing common sentiment (anti-Israel, but also anti-American by implication), their broader commitments (demands placed on them by the US for support in the war on terrorism, Iraq, etc.), and lack of capabilities risk putting them on a collision course with wider U.S. strategic goals in the Islamic world.

Most importantly, the renewal of Israeli-Palestinian violence and the shift in demographics is occurring in context of an outgrowth of new media in the Islamic world. In many states, a range of local and transnational news outlets are replacing the singular government monopoly of the news market –and its resultant control over the public forum. The *Al Jazeera* TV network, which offers unmediated news from an Arabic viewpoint available to anyone with a satellite dish, encapsulates this development.

The expansion of new sources of information in the Islamic world is a positive, in that it has created greater space for public debate and critique. The problem is that in the course of the fierce competition and the presence of constant violence in Palestine, many of these outlets have found that hyperbole is far more effective and profitable than abiding by the norms of professional journalism. Indeed, a parallel to the evolution of the American media market may be occurring in Muslim markets as well. There is a growing dominance by talkshows and news programs, which blatantly choose sides and intentionally stoke outrage (in this case, often directed at the U.S.), rather than provide an open forum.

The result is a dangerous social milieu created by an increasingly disaffected youth bulge, weak governments, an explosion of multimedia outlets, and the continuing daily diet of violent images from the Intifada. These combine to generate a growing anti-Americanism. This trend also gives allied regimes far less room to maneuver, shaping their policies to cooperate with the U.S. on terrorism or Iraq or support any peace process with Israel. It has also caused a resurrection of Islamism on the street, a legitimization of certain forms of terrorism, and a partial delegitimization of many regimes.

Consequently, the U.S. faces a further series of linked dilemmas. How does it support Israel and oppose the use of terrorist violence against civilians, without compromising its relationships with Islamic states, whose support is equally needed in the war on al Qaida? In the same way, how does it support the growth of a free and open media in the Islamic world, when at the same time, it finds

this media often to be deleterious to its efforts? That is, where once the U.S. supported the outgrowth of new media outlets free from government interference, recently it has resorted to asking regimes to reign them in. Finally, how does it support moderate Muslim regimes and civil society forces that are working towards peace with Israel, without compromising them to accusations that they are kowtowing to U.S. demands?

In sum, there is general agreement that a renewal of the peace process and an end to Israeli-Palestinian violence would not only be a positive in itself, but would also solve an array of problems in the U.S. relationship with the wider Islamic world. It would both relieve pressure on local regimes and throw a wet blanket on simmering anti-Americanism across the region. The bedeviling question, though, is just how to get on this path, without compromising other goals and interests?

Rogue States, the Middle East, and the Islamic World

The next set of dilemmas stems from one of the ironies of American foreign policy. While much attention and energy is paid to the problem of certain states that are "rogue" or in an "axis of evil," such as Iraq or Iran, the underlying tensions (and resulting threats) with the Islamic world repeatedly seem to emerge from within our allies instead. Moreover, American policymakers have long operated under the assumption that having a Middle Eastern policy was the same thing as having one with the Islamic world. This may have been adequate in the past, but no longer suffices. *In short, the U.S. faces a dilemma of policy expansion: How can it deal with the issues of Muslims who do not live in what are traditionally viewed as Islamic states, which often will also be our allies?*

A few important statistics are all-too-often ignored in the assumptions behind our policymaking. Arabic people make up less than 1/5 of all Muslims. Indeed, the top four most populous Muslim states (Indonesia, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh) are not even in the Middle East. Additionally, over 1/3 of all Muslims live as minorities in non-Muslim countries (in China, France, India, the Philippines, the U.S., etc.). 130 million Muslims live in India alone. Subsequently, while the Middle East in general and certain rogue states in particular are certainly important to our policy concerns, they are not the whole story. If the U.S. wants to build positive relations with the Islamic world writ large, its policies must be writ larger as well.

For example, the issue of how to relate to Muslim minorities –and the regimes that often maltreat them- is a prevailing dilemma. In many ways, there is nothing new about this challenge; several conflicts of the recent past, such as in the Balkans and Central Asia, were driven by oppression directed at Muslim communities. The challenge today, however, is that such minority groups represent growing and increasingly mobilized populations. More importantly, they are far better integrated into the wider Islamic world. There are also heightened sensitivities from the advent of global media and broader concerns over Islam's place in the word system.

With the opening of borders encapsulated in globalization, Muslim minorities are not just interlinked with the wider Islamic world, but also have become a part of the global commons. The outcome is that pain in one part of the umma is increasingly felt across the wider Muslim community. The concerns of Muslim minorities, such as in the Philippines, the Balkans, or Xinjiang, thus are no longer isolated. Instead, they can be at the center of potentially destabilizing conflicts, which both draw in radicals from other regions and, in turn, export virulence and violence. The global movement of mujahideen veterans from the Afghan war to Algeria, Bosnia, Chechnya, Indonesia,

the Philippines, Tajikistan, etc. encapsulates how violence in one region can manifest itself across a number of other regions.

Indeed, the situation need not turn into open conflict for the issues and challenges presented by Muslim minority groups to be important. As the September 11th attacks illustrated, even within stable and prosperous countries, Muslims' disconnection or alienation from a predominating non-Muslim society can have global repercussions. A remarkable shared aspect of the September 11th hijackers is that while they were all Arabic in background, their radicalization and organization took place primarily within the Western world. Much of the planning is suspected to have taken place while hosted among Muslim minorities in Hamburg.

This policy challenge continues today. In contrast to the tenuous links between al Qaida and certain rogue regimes, it is confirmed that other cells of the organization are presently operating within a number of close, non-Muslim U.S. allies, such as Spain and Italy, and even within the U.S. itself. Accordingly, the U.S. and its allies must learn how to address the underlying problems that make Islamic extremism appealing not only in Pakistani madrassahs, but also in the mosques of Brussels, the ghettos of Birmingham, England, or the even the old steel towns of upstate New York.

The realization that there is no one single frontline in the war on terrorism is not just important to American foreign policy, but is also relevant to homeland security. Indeed, the al Qaida group appears to have developed a strategy of recruiting among disaffected Muslim minorities, as means to get around traditional profiling by law enforcement. Richard Reid, the "shoe bomber," emerged from Britain, while Jose Padilla, the would-be "dirty bomber," grew up in Chicago. As a result, despite the Hollywood stereotype, the likely radical Islamic terrorists of tomorrow will not simply be the "usual suspects" (i.e. Arabic men bearing passports from obvious home states).

The challenges of Muslim minorities have political implications that go far beyond any link with al Qaida, however. The broader state of affairs within Europe illustrates. Driven by higher birth rates and immigration, Islam's presence in Europe will rise dramatically within the next generation. Already, Muslims make up 10% of France's population and significant portions in Germany, Britain, and the Netherlands. However, these groups have been poorly integrated into their respective societies and suffer the brunt of socio-economic problems, as well as discrimination.

If current trends continue and young Muslims remain alienated, radical Islam will likely find even more fertile ground across the continent. As these states are among the U.S.'s closest allies, this opens a series of challenges for American foreign policy. With the shift in the domestic landscape across Europe, what are the implications for trans-Atlantic relations? Will Europe's Muslims lead European governments to act more closely with America on certain issues because of a perceived common threat, or will it make the allies more distant if they fear a different sort of domestic backlash? In turn, how must American policies and strategies towards its traditional allies alter, if dealing with Islamic groups within them has a heightened priority?

The essential point is that in a globalizing world, U.S. policy towards the Islamic world must be predicated on more than just rogue states, and encompass more than just the Middle East. The U.S. has a great deal both to learn and to teach on the challenges of combating terrorism and the integrating of immigrant communities.

The New Cold War

The final dilemma is at the level of geopolitics. The idea of the U.S. having a monolithic grand strategy seemed to have gone out of style with the fall of the Berlin Wall. However, in the wake of September 11th, many feel a new approach towards the world is gradually coalescing, similar in means and ends to what centered American foreign policy during the Cold War.

Increasingly, the war on terrorism has become an all-encompassing paradigm through which both policymakers and the American public view the world. As it offers sure domestic support, linking an agenda to the terrorist threat has become a means to justify a broad range of foreign policy actions, with the attached potential of discrediting any challenge or opposition. Indeed, the al Qaida threat may well become the Red Menace of our times --a real challenge, but one whose threat could be distorted in pursuit of other goals.

The positive of an overarching strategy based on threat is that it gives the U.S. an energy and focus that had been lacking in what was a post-Cold War ennui. However, there are also risks from looking through lenses that only see threats and not opportunities. *The dilemma we face is how a paradigm for the war on terrorism can provide a strategic framework for guidance, while avoiding becoming a straightjacket that locks us into inappropriate actions.*

The quandary over where next to send American forces in the war on terrorism illustrates. As a general rule, the problem in "Phase Two" states (areas such as Yemen, Georgia, and the Philippines, where U.S. troops have recently deployed) seems not to be a fear of radical Islamic takeover. Instead, American worries are more driven by the limited security controls that the local government has over certain of its provinces in conflict, such as Mindanao or the Prevlaka valley. Our concern is that these weak state areas, much like Afghanistan as a whole, might be used as bases for transnational terrorism. Therefore, such communal conflicts in Muslim areas can have global relevance.

However, a growing U.S. involvement in what had been local conflicts carries certain risks of backfire. When American forces deploy into these wars, they may be able to run down transnational adversaries, but they may also make themselves new enemies out of local actors. The fighting may potentially expand as well. The local regime might also become greatly dependent on U.S. assistance, to the extent that its forces lose capabilities and respect from their own citizens. Finally, the overarching policy may also promote an image of a creeping American imperialism across the Islamic world, which will create a general backlash and contrast with other aspects of our public diplomacy.

Another worry of this strategy is the strategies that develop in response. That is, viewing the varied dangers of the world into one monolithic threat, risks setting oneself up to being manipulated. Since September 11th, a number of regimes have been able to wheedle increased military aid and/or troop deployments from the U.S. to help them fight local foes who may -or may not- be affiliated with al Qaida. The classic situation may well be in Nepal, where the U.S. government now pays over 10% of the local regime's military budget in the name of the war on terrorism. This is despite the fact that the regime is fighting a Maoist rebel group motivated by local land rights, rather than a radical Islamic one with transnational intentions. In other cases, such as Uzbekistan, Xinjiang, and Chechnya, the U.S. has turned a blind eye towards regimes that use questionable tactics to target opposition parties that equally may or may not be affiliated with radical Islam.

A dilemma, therefore, is how our emerging geopolitical strategy can avoid allowing broken regimes from circumventing the hard decisions that they must take in resolving their own problems. Otherwise, American policy may bear the weight of their own local failures to face up to the challenges of building good governance and democracy. This is a most difficult balance to strike.

The issue of distinguishing between terrorism and insurgency also becomes a key challenge in this process, akin to the Cold War challenge of determining whether a local guerilla group was part of the communist onslaught or not. Some Islamic groups are fighting in order to rectify real grievances and have little to do with al Qaida or the U.S. Moreover, their causes may even have merit at some level, such as a defense against government oppression. Whether to differentiate them from other terrorist groups with a direct anti-American agenda, and, if so, how to distinguish them, is a bedeviling challenge for policymakers.

While U.S. policy presently remains confused on this point, an added concern is that clever terrorist groups will be able to leverage local discontent with American policies into a wider transnational battle. For instance, al Qaida's ability to take advantage of shifting contexts, such as its recent moves to incorporate wider anger over Israel-Palestine, has been its core strength in the ongoing war of popular opinion in the Islamic world.

Therefore, while the development of a grand strategy may appear to provide a simple guidepath to American policymakers facing a complex threat, it may also open more questions than it answers. A key uncertainty will not just be how our allies can help us, but also how U.S. policymakers can let them know that the war on terrorism, and accompanying U.S. military aid, is not simply an excuse to crackdown on local opponents.

The emerging doctrine equally presents a new challenge for American allies in the Islamic world and beyond. What role do they play in this war, or more importantly do they have a choice to the role they play and where may they differ? That is, if the war is viewed in the U.S. as a battle of good and evil and our friends demur or carp against us, will they then be cast aside?

If any of these issues ring familiar, a look back at some of the lessons of the Cold War may be warranted. Just like the standoff of communism and capitalism of the last half century, the present war on terrorism is also a conflict of ideas and will. There are parallels between the present approach and the past Cold War response to what was then regarded as a monolithic threat. The key will be how we are able to mine old successes, as well as avoid past mistakes.

Conclusions: A Time for Decisions

A year after the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, American foreign policy still has a series of complex and demanding decisions to make in constructing its policies towards the Islamic world. What is striking is about our most vexing challenges is that they, more often than not, crop up in relation to our policies towards what we usually consider our friends and allies. This makes them more difficult, but also perhaps ultimately more manageable.

A first step in this process is the identification of the dilemmas that bedevil our policies. These must be acknowledged, in order to be overcome. In formulating our policies towards Islamic states and movements, the most demanding challenge is how to navigate between the pursuit of vital U.S.

interests and the need to promote reforms that can help diminish the appeal of violent extremism. Our difficulty is heightened by the fact that numerous tensions exist between what may be good for short-term security and what may be necessary for long-term stability. The menaces of terrorism, autocracy, and oppression also reach into allies and enemies alike, which further complicates the development of strategies to counter them. Finally, U.S. policymakers may also have to confront the legacy of past policy choices, while avoiding the allure of simple but erroneous defaults.

With a greater awareness of the challenges ahead, an agenda must be developed to answer these dilemmas. Simply put, there is a glaring need for the U.S. to articulate a positive vision of its goals towards the Islamic world. This is necessary to not only to help shape our own often disparate policies, but also to present a constructive program to offer. The side-effect of building a cohesive, positive vision is that it will also provide an agenda for allies and friends to side with, as well as a program to contend with other competing visions, as well as those who seek to tar our policies as being something otherwise.

Such an effort will require in-depth analysis of our core interests, threats, and capabilities. A particular focus should be made on identifying the ideal "endgame" in U.S. policy towards the Islamic world. That is, what is the relationship that the U.S. would like to have with Islamic states and movements?

The development of these strategic goals should be carried out at the senior levels of the National Security Council, appropriate executive agencies (State, Defense, and Intelligence community), with input from other interested parties, including legislative bodies and non-governmental expertise. In order to ensure both high-level support and the durability of the strategy, the ultimate findings should be embodied in a National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD, also known as the "Presidential Decision Directives" or PDD in the previous Administration). This document would identify our strategic agenda towards building positive relations with Islamic countries and movements.

With the final goals established, policymakers can then develop a more systematic approach to ascertain how far the U.S. needs to go to reach this target state of relations and what exactly is required to get there. This process will also create a means to elaborate tangible measures along the most important issue areas (for example, the intensity of anti Americanism in certain core states, the levels of cooperation on anti-terrorist activity, the extent of civil society contacts, etc.). The result is not only a methodological approach to evaluating our successes and failures, but also a guide to steer the right course in the future.

If such a programmatic approach proves impossible, then, at the very least, policymakers must begin to establish a metric for weighing the short-term versus long-term impact of their decisions when facing the above dilemmas. It may also be incumbent then on non-governmental actors to fill the void and provide their own identification of the final goals and regular evaluations of the progress made so far.

The underlying lesson of September 11th, however, is that we can no longer defer the hard decisions. The overwhelming tragedy of the attacks has given a mandate to change business as usual in American foreign policy and work on constructing a positive and enduring relationship between the U.S. and the Islamic world. How we solve the dilemmas involved in building this strategy may well determine not only the outcome of war on terrorism, but also its ultimate legacy.

The Brookings Task Force on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World

The Brookings Task Force on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World is a group of invited experts who meet on a monthly basis, to assess the critical issues in both the continuing war on global terrorism and in promoting positive relations with Muslim states and movements.

The task force brings together Islamic and regional specialists, foreign policy experts, and U.S. government officials involved in current and past policy-making. The group assembles not only a broad range of individual expertise and viewpoints (from professors and journalists to diplomats and intelligence analysts), but also as a collectivity, embodies some of the best intellectual capital available on the topics.

The fundamental challenge the group faces is developing an understanding of the forces that led to Sept. 11th and the long-term responses that the U.S. can make. The aim of the Task Force is to share information and viewpoints that will both strengthen American understanding of the ongoing dynamics in the Islamic world and develop effective policy options for dealing with the challenges that stem from them. Through the Task Force meetings and associated activities, including a visiting fellows program and a regional conference series, the Project also hopes to open a much-needed dialogue between the Islamic world and the U.S., as well as create avenues for intra-Islam discussions.

Over the last year, the Task Force has examined topics ranging from the effect globalization has had on Islamic states to how terrorist groups mobilize and recruit. It has also hosted a series of guest speakers, who equally run the gamut of viewpoints, from a Gulf state prince to a former jehadi fighter. Surveys of key Islamic countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, and countries with Muslim minorities, such as the Philippines, were also carried out.

Written at a mid-way point in the course of the Task Force's work, this report does not represent any final conclusions. Consensus on any one finding is not an inherent part of the Task Force's goals; rather, debate is encouraged as part of the learning process.

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