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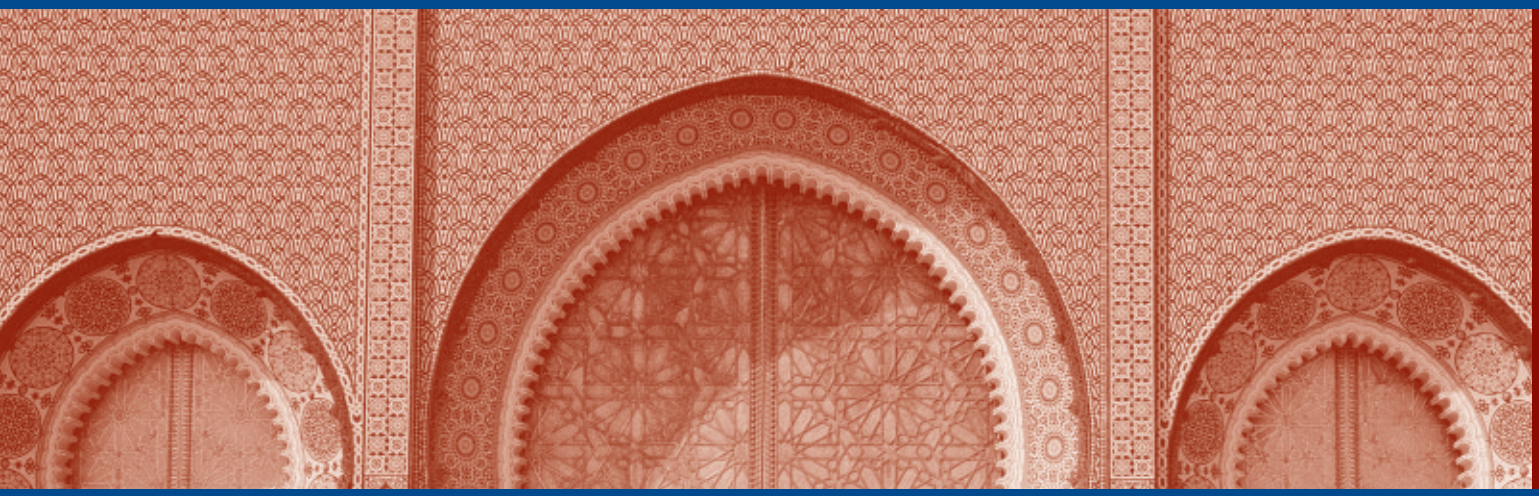

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The 9-11 War Plus 5

Looking Back and Looking Forward at U.S.-Islamic World Relations

P. W. Singer

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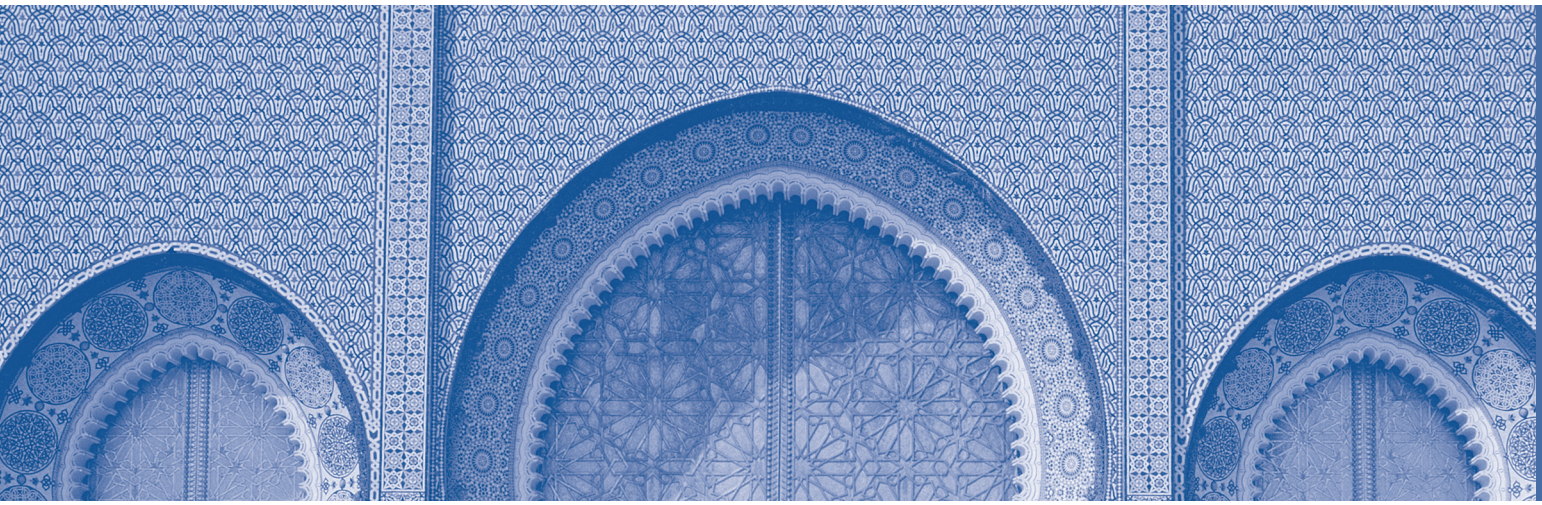

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Executive Summary

It is hard to imagine that it has been five years since the 9-11 attacks. The scope of developments and actions that followed is breathtaking, from two ground wars and over 20,000 American casualties, to a complete jettison of 60 years of American strategic doctrine aimed at preserving stability in the Middle East.

The distance of time now allows us to step back and weigh the consequences. The echoes of the attacks were felt in everything from the invasion of Iraq and the massive political changes that swept Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, etc. to the Danish cartoon controversy. History, though, will judge these to be but theaters within a much larger problematique that will shape American grand strategy over the next decades. Five years in, it is now clear that the 9-11 attacks created a new dynamic for global politics, and thus American foreign policy, centering around the changed relationship between a state and a religion. The most dominant superpower in world history and the world's fastest growing religious community of 1.4 billion Muslim believers now stand locked in a dynamic of mutual suspicion, distrust, and anger. It continues to spiral worse. We have entered the era of the 9-11 War, a contestation in the realm of ideas and security that is quintessentially 21st century in its modes and processes. This melding of hot and cold war is not a battle between, but a battle within. Most worrisome, five years in, it is not going well so far for either the U.S. or the Muslim world.

The ensuing analysis traces how the 9-11 attacks opened up a swirl of debate and controversy on everything from the sources of terrorism to how best to defeat radicalism. It finds that for all the partisan rancor that seems to touch everything from Iraq to the Dubai Ports controversy, an underlying consensus has emerged on the key problems the U.S. faces in the 9-11 War. A new doctrine of constructive destabilization and multifaceted implementation now underlies our grand strategy. This underscores everything from the buzzword of "reform" to the raised attention on the socio-economic processes that support radicalism.

However, the burgeoning consensus is simply not enough. Key hurdles of implementation must be overcome, with a critical need to define just how the U.S. will match lofty words to actual deeds and bold intentions to real policy capabilities. These challenges are tough enough, but, even more important is the recognition and resolution of three crucial questions of strategy that will hover over all policies in the long-term. If it is ever to meet with any success, the U.S. must soon resolve how it will 1) support change while recognizing its incapacity to control which local forces will benefit from it, 2) react to the reform debate within the Muslim world without undermining it, and 3) respond to the massive demographic change that will reorder politics and societies in the generation ahead. Much as the doctrine set in the late 1940s laid the groundwork for ultimate Cold War success in the 1980s, the framework that we now give to our policies will determine our ultimate 9-11 War victory or failure decades from now.

About the Author

Peter Warren Singer is Senior Fellow and Director of the 21st Century Defense Initiative at the Brookings Institution. From 2001-2006, he was the founding Director of the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, located in the Saban Center at Brookings. He is also a founder and organizer of the *U.S.-Islamic World Forum*, a global conference that brings together American and Muslim world leaders.

Dr. Singer is considered one of the world's leading experts on changes in 21st century security. He has written for a range of major media and journals, including The New York Times, Washington Post, Foreign Affairs, Current History, Survival, and International Security. He has provided commentary for a range of major TV and radio outlets, including ABC-Nightline, Al Jazeera, BBC, CBS-60 Minutes, CNN, FOX, NPR, and the NBC Today Show. He is the youngest scholar named Senior Fellow in Brookings's 90-year history. In 2005, CNN recognized him on their "New Guard" List of Next Generation of Newsmakers.

Singer is the author of two books. **Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry** (Cornell University Press, 2003) was named best book of the year by the American Political Science Association, among the top five international affairs books of the year by the Gelber Prize, and a "top ten summer read" by Businessweek. **Children at War** (Pantheon, 2005) explores the rise of another new force in modern warfare, child soldier groups, and was recognized by the 2006 Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Book of the Year Award. An accompanying *A&E/History Channel* documentary of the same title is presently being filmed. He is currently working on a book exploring the impact of robotics and other new technologies for 21st century politics and warfare.

Prior to his current position, Dr. Singer was a fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University. He has also worked at the Office of the Secretary of Defense–Balkans Task Force, Duke University, and the International Peace Academy. Singer received his Ph.D. in Government from Harvard University and previously attended the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University.

The 9-11 War Plus 5:
Looking Back and Looking Forward at U.S.-Islamic World Relations

It is hard to imagine that it has been five years since the September 11, 2001 attacks. Few events are shared across an entire populace, where each of us has a story of where we were when we got the news. "9-11," as it will always be known, was one of those rare, momentous days. Like the Pearl Harbor attacks or the Kennedy assassination, the event, forever seared in memory, will define a generation.

But 9-11 was more than that. As we look back on it five years later, we can now see that it was a force that reshaped global politics. It gave nearly every single global actor, whether states, international organizations or NGOs, a new set of priorities to act on and new pitfalls to navigate. For American foreign policy, 9-11 can now be viewed as a historic wakeup call, shocking it out of the seeming hangover that had defined the "post-Cold War" decade. Security concerns replaced trade as the coin of the realm. Penny-pinching for the "peace dividend" transformed into spending more than a trillion dollars in "war" on a tactic (not a country). A doctrine of "casualty aversion" was shattered by two major ground conflicts and over twenty thousand American causalities. And, a political climate that was veering towards mild isolationism in 2001 transformed into a bi-partisan strategy of forward engagement, on a global scale that many have described as near imperial.

The five years since 9-11 are stunning in the array of action and reactions that followed. Some were easily predictable. The attacks awakened a slumbering power, whose wrath should have been easily foreseen by anyone with knowledge of America. The images of U.S. Marines waging house to house battles in Fallujah may have seemed shocking to those that clung to the idea that Vietnam, Beirut, and Mogadishu had revealed an inherent American weakness. But where Osama bin Laden believed in what he called "the myth of the superpower," he missed that from George Washington and FDR to Natty Bumpo and Han Solo, American politics and culture has long defined itself around the mythology of the reluctant warrior. When the stakes are high, the self-restraints on American power come off, and, as the famous saying would have it, the "tough get going." Likewise, the extent of the ongoing shakeup of the Middle East—ranging from the "electoral earthquake" of the Hamas win to the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon after 25 years of occupation—may seem astonishing at first blush. But the collapse of the prevailing political order in much of the region was only a matter of time; the sclerotic regimes were standing on a self-created house of cards long before 9-11. Similarly, the long festering animosity between the U.S., Iraq, and Iran before the attacks made conflict after 9-11 certain in some shape or form. Yet other aspects were unpredictable. For example, what expert scanning the horizon five years ago predicted that a cartoon in an obscure Danish newspaper would be a central flashpoint in global relations?

One aspect, though, stands out as we look retrospectively at the five years since 9-11. It is now clear the attacks and the responses to them have created a new prism of global affairs, a tension between a state and a religion that plays out on an international level as never before. Relations between the world's undisputed superpower and the world of 1.4 billion Muslim believers can only be viewed as inexorably changed since 9-11.

Over the last 200 years, relations between the U.S. and the diverse set of Muslim states and communities, spanning from Morocco to Indonesia, that make up the Islamic world have veered from positive to negative. The young American state's very first embassy was located in the Muslim world (Tangiers), but so was its first foreign incursion (The Barbary Wars). The ups and downs continued in the centuries since, from the U.S. arguing against European colonial tendencies at the Treaty of Versailles following World War One to the oil embargo that followed the 1973 Yom Kippur War. While the U.S. standing in Muslim states and communities had been on the decline for a while, driven mainly by the prevailing view in the region that it has failed to be evenhanded in the Arab-Israeli conflict, it has never been like this. We have entered a paradigm that is both holistic and global. From the historic heart of the Islamic world in the Middle East to the peripheries in Southeast Asia and in the West, a tension has built that is real and palpable.

As is the case for many great powers, the U.S. clearly has a problem of being globally unpopular. But in the Muslim world, it is a far different and deeper issue at hand. The U.S. is not simply seen as being mean-spirited or unfair, but now, in the wake of the Iraq war especially, nearly 90% of publics in Muslim states view the U.S. as the primary security threat to their country. Around 60% have said in polls that weakening the Muslim world was a primary objective of the United States. While we don't like to admit it, this trend is being mirrored to an extent in the U.S. Americans have long had concerns about radical groups within Islam (crystallizing with the Iranian Hostage crisis), but the number of Americans who have a negative view of the entire religion of Islam itself has grown each year since the 9-11 attacks, to now making up almost half the American body politic.[1] Indeed, a study commissioned by the Council on American-Islamic Relations found that the thing that Americans find most perplexing about Islam is their understanding that it "condones killing in the name of Allah."[2] Even the Grand Mufti of Bosnia, where American troops stopped ethnic cleansing just a decade ago, describes current relations with the United States as "worse than they have ever been before."[3]

Perhaps more illustrative though is the cultural vibe that permeates relations and sets the context for the long-term. For example, one of the most popular movies in Egypt five years after 9-11 was "The Night Baghdad Fell," a black comedy which describes an American invasion of Egypt, the destruction of Cairo, and a faux Condoleezza Rice in a sex scene. In NATO ally Turkey, the most popular film was the action flick "Valley of the Wolves," which fantasizes about Turkish troops wreaking revenge upon evil Americans troops, who have just shot up a wedding and bombed a mosque. Demonstrably, the wife of the Prime Minister even attended its premiere.

But if, as a *Washington Post* article described, Americans are the "bullies, rapists and mindless killers" of pop culture in the Muslim world, Muslims fair no better in their depiction in the airwaves of America.[4] It is hard to imagine listening to five minutes of talk radio without hearing some sort of slam on Islam, while the villains of almost every new action film or TV show invariably have a terrorism link back to a Muslim terrorist group or cause. As Ronald Stockton, a professor of political science at the University of Michigan describes, "You're getting a constant drumbeat of negative information

1 Claudia Deane and Darryl Fears, "Negative Perception Of Islam Increasing: Poll Numbers in U.S. Higher Than in 2001," *Washington Post*, March 9, 2006. Other reports going into depth on the public diplomacy problem include the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, *Building America's Public Diplomacy through a Reformed Structure and Additional Resources* (Washington: September 2002); Council on Foreign Relations, *Finding America's Voice: A Strategy for Reinvigorating U.S. Public Diplomacy* (New York: June 2003); Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, *Changing Minds, Winning Peace* (Washington: October 2003); and Defense Science Board, *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication* (Washington: September 2004).

2 As quoted in Dalia Mogahed, "Rethink Common Views on Islam," Detroit Free Press, June 4, 2006.

3 Speech delivered at 2006 U.S.-Islamic World Forum, Doha, Qatar, Feb. 19, 2006.

4 Daniel Williamson, "In Egyptian Movies, Curses! We're the Heavies," *Washington Post*, March 20, 2006.

about Islam."[5] This camp includes not merely the fringe, but a building mainstream. For example, Simon & Schuster just published a book by former *Wall Street Journal* Washington correspondent Robert Merry that argued that "The enemy is Islam."[6] Michael Franc, vice president of government relations for the conservative Heritage Foundation, has warned of the dangers of "…a real backlash against Islam" and notes that congressional leaders do not help the problem by sometimes using language that links all Muslims with extremists.[7] Indeed, former U.S. diplomat William Fisher recently warned of a "…uninformed and unreasoning Islamophobia that is rapidly become implanted in our national genetics."[8]

Consequently, 9-11 has become the portal into something far bigger. Global politics and U.S. foreign policy has become shaped by a new dynamic between a state and a religion, a schism driven by themes of hurt, fear, and suspicion. It is a contestation in the realm of ideas, shaped by a decidedly tangible security aspect. This conflict is the global security version of the new music type called a mash-up, where a song from one era is overlaid another. It is Mr. X meets Professor Huntington to make a truly 21st century creation.[9]

The conflict is not a battle between, but rather a battle within. It is not two blocs locked in battle or even merely about defeating a certain set of killers, but about a new global construct of mutual insecurity that has emerged. As with all things new, the terms and conditions are still being figured out. Some have pushed that we call this the "Global War on Terrorism." Others have called it "World War IV." Still, others have pushed that it be called simply the "Long War," (the latter ringing not only a bit defeatist, but also revealing classic American impatience).[10] Ultimately, we don't know what history will call this conflict, as the final names selected are often quite capricious and unpredictable (History now records wars whose names range from "100 Years" and "Cold" to "Austrian Succession" and "Jenkin's Ear"). For now, we can best call it by its spark. Five years in, the 9-11 War shows no sign of ending. The only certainty is that it is a conflict that will most definitely play out over the course of a generation or more.

Us or Them? The Primary Debates After 9-11

The 9-11 attacks were not merely a shockwave to the American public, but they also left the country's foreign policy establishment scrambling for answers. The primary thinkers and organizations who shaped conventional wisdom had spent much of the decade before 9-11 trying to figure out their relevance in a globalizing, increasingly trade-centric political environment. For many strategic thinkers, the way to stay relevant was to focus on "the next big threat." The emergence of China as a potential superpower had a gravitational pull in thinking, programming, and grand strategy.

The result was that after 9-11, there was an immense amount of catching up to do when it came to the basic questions. The primary debates in the immediate aftermath centered on the conceptualization of the threat that had just struck – "Who" was it that had attacked us? What was the nature of the threat: a man (Bin Laden), an organization (al-Qa'ida), a movement (al-Qa'idism/jehadism), a group of states ("the Axis of Evil"), an ideology (Islamism), a region (the Islamic World), or an entire religion (Islam)? How these

5 As quoted in Deane and Fears, 2006.
6 Robert Merry, *Sands of Empire: Missionary Zeal, American Foreign Policy, and the Hazards of Global Ambition*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005.
7 As quoted in Deane and Fears, 2006.
8 William Fisher, "Bush's Mixed Signals," *Counter-Currents*, April 21, 2006.
9 "Mr. X" being George Kenan, the famous Cold War strategist. X, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1947, available at www.foreign affairs.org. Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs,* Summer 1993, pp. 22-49.
10 See for example, Eliot Cohen, "World War IV - Let's Call this Conflict What It Is." *Wall Street Journal*, November 20, 200; Norman Podhoretz, "How to Win World War IV," *Commentary*, February 2002; James Woolsey, "A Long War," *Wall Street Journal*, April 16, 2003; "Perspectives on the Long War," *Parameters*, Summer 2006, Vol. XXXVI, No. 2.

questions were answered had great consequences. If it was viewed as the man and his cohorts, the traditions of criminal law offered a program of investigation and prosecution. If it was a group of states, a focus on traditional tools of statecraft was the answer, all the way up to invasion. For a religion, the threat would become even more existential.

These debates soon became wrapped within trying to understand the "how". This became the center of the very mechanistic and bureaucratic debates over the 9-11 Commission findings and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, that revolved around missed opportunities and moving organizational boxes.[11] More controversial though was the why, the causes behind the attacks. The oft-repeated question was "Why do they hate us so much?" That is, the questioning looked outward. What could lead someone to be filled with such hate that they would deliberately plot such an attack to both kill themselves and as many civilians as possible?

This part of the question quickly became fixated on a polarized debate about the causes of terrorism, which roughly broke down as to whether one focused on the context that spawned terrorism or on the individual terrorist in question. Those in favor of the "root causes" approach maintained that poverty, ignorance, and lack of political expression and opportunities provide an ideal breeding ground for terrorist organization, especially recruitment. The conclusion drawn then is that any struggle against terrorism should prioritize political, social and economic development in the Islamic world, from which the Bin Laden, al-Qa'ida, and its supporters had emanated.[12]

By contrast, others focused on the individuals in question and argued that socioeconomic deprivation has no correlation—let alone causality—with terrorism.[13] Bin Laden and his 9-11 buddies, it was argued, are neither poor nor uneducated. Terrorism in this vein was therefore perceived almost exclusively as a "security threat" with no discernible socio-economic roots. Preventing terrorism is achieved by a single-minded focus on intelligence, protection, and coercive action. With the respondent being a state and taking place across borders, the tools of enforcement then became the traditional ones of statecraft in a time of war, military force.

The flow of events since 9-11 has shown that both camps are right, and both are wrong. Terrorists as individuals are motivated by a variety of causes, be they psychological factors, personal experiences (jail-time being quite common), or relative deprivation. The problem is that there is no one "terrorist" profile. For every Saudi playboy, there is a street kid from the slums of Karachi also willing to murder and martyr. But what has become clear is that the threat any individual or groups of individuals presents depends very real contextual factors that determine whether their agenda and recruitment thrives. The fact that a bin Laden can inspire and deploy a Mohammed Atta or Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is what distinguishes him from a Timothy McVeigh. Radical groups exist in all contexts, but their appeal becomes most seductive, and their power most threatening, when economic, political, social, and cultural crises combine, when people feel that they have been repeatedly humiliated, and when opportunities for change are seen as closed. Unfortunately, such a model is tailor-fitted to much of the Islamic world today.

To major controversy, the debate in the U.S. on the causes of 9-11 then reverted inward. Was there something that we had done to cause such a hate? Some focused on the pillars of American foreign policy in the region and

11 See for example, The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9-11 Commission Report*, available at: http://www.gpoaccess.gov/911/index.html and Michael O'Hanlon et al, *Protecting the American Homeland: One Year On*, Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003.

12 The best example of this is Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill,* New York: Ecco-HarperCollins, August 2003.

13 Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Malekova, "Education, Poverty, Political Violence and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?" Princeton University Working paper, July 2002 and David Plotz, "The Logic of Assassination: Why Israeli Murders and Palestinian Suicide Bombings makes Sense." *Slate,* August 21, 2001.

whether they had back-fired. They argued that undue amounts of American support for Israel had poisoned our once high standing in the Islamic world, meaning that even-handedness might be able to stop the anger.[14] The U.S. basing of troops in the region, especially within Saudi Arabia, was another frequently cited sore point. The constantly shifting propagandistic explanations provided by Bin Laden via video-tape, and how the debates fit into various aspects of American electoral politics as well as age-old conspiracy theories, didn't help the clarity of this discussion.

Others felt the cause was not a policy that had gone too far, but rather not far enough. An influential articulation began to be made that U.S. had not been forceful in its support for democracy in the region, treating it by different rules because of oil and other dependencies. This argument also aligned with those who felt U.S. had unfinished business from the 1991 Gulf War, with the tin-pot dictator in Baghdad being a poison in the global system that had to be flushed.[15]

Each of these threads of debate continues hotly today in both academia and government. But what matters most is that as the shock from 9-11 wore off, the theories began to solidify. Policymakers and experts who had once been collectively searching for answers now "knew" what they knew. The lines of argument started to calcify. Ideas began to translate into policy and various answers were tried to each of the above aspects, with varying levels of seriousness. They ranged from a "Road-Map" for Middle East peace that quickly dead-ended to the pullout of American military bases from Saudi Arabia (a "strategic withdrawal" cum retreat that went by with little notice).

Iraq became the ultimate largest testing ground for many of these theories, from the concept of an axis of regimes being the key domino behind terrorism to how regional politics might be reordered through a judicious demonstration of force. Obviously, none met with full success there. Iraq has become not the final piece to defeating extremist groups and restoring America's standing in the Muslim world, but both a new recruiting cause for extremists groups and a far superior urban terrorist training ground than Afghanistan under the Taliban ever was.

With the Iraq experiment gone awry, partisan rancor made its way back into foreign policy in a major way. Much like what happened in the Cold War, it is evident that politics in the 9-11 War will not stop at the water's edge. The posturing and hysteria over the cancelled Dubai Ports deal provided the capstone demonstration. To many, it seems that political party divisions mark the only real return to normalcy to the time before the 9-11 War.

The Surprising Consensus Achieved So Far

Yet, this is not really the case. Beneath the rancor, a striking amount of consensus has emerged. This extends from broad strategic priorities to recognition of key problems areas.

What is most salient about the various lines of thought about the post-9-11 world is the general agreement that we are facing a different type of problem than past global challenges and thus must be guided by a new strategic paradigm. A 60 year belief in the value of stability, which was shared by every presidential administration since WWII, was abandoned in the blink of an eye. Stability is now seen to have yielded stasis, which yielded instability. An internal build-up of authoritarianism and teetering crises, with

14 See for example, John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Harvard Working Paper. Number: RWP06-011, March 13, 2006.

15 The best example of this would be the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), whose 27 founders included future Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. PNAC first called for "regime change" in 1998, followed by a September 20, 2001 open letter to President Bush arguing for the overthrow of Hussein "even if evidence does not link Iraq directly to the attack." Interestingly, the group quietly closed shop in the spring of 2006. Jim Lobe, "New American Century" Project Ends with a Whimper," *Inter Press Service*, June 13, 2006.

radicalism as the release valve, turned national security objectives on their head. From the launch of new initiatives like the "Broader Middle East Initiative" to the invasion of Iraq, American goals have gone from a Cold War holding pattern in the region to a constant focus on what will shake up the failed status quo most effectively. Thus, change is now the dominant thread in American foreign policy objectives. All the underlying debates are not on whether change is needed, but how best the U.S. can be an agent of change. Constructive destabilization lies at the heart of the new strategic consensus of the 9-11 War.

The second area of consensus is the shared recognition that such a long-term problem necessitates a multi-faceted approach. Yes, the issue is framed in terms of a "war," and the major actions so far have been military in nature. But whether one is looking at the 2006 National Security Strategy or the writings of various liberal thinkers and columnists, there is no credible push across the spectrum for the idea that this affair will be solved on the military front alone.[16] This stands in sharp contrast to the chest-beating that once surrounded debate on the issues and any talk of dealing with root causes. Indeed, with the Iraq experience having stung so hard, even the most bellicose members of the Bush Administration are quick to correct that any intentions of "regime-change" in places like Iran and Syria are not to be through military means. Linked with this consensus is the recognition that while we are dominant in the military plane, the U.S. has an incredible problem in its diplomacy, which has become a strategic liability.

The 9-11 attacks were a self-evident violation of all moral and religious codes of conduct, and in their wake the United States should have been able to isolate al-Qa'ida from the broader public in the Islamic world, and thus cut it off from the support and recruiting structures that would allow it to thrive. But five years later we find ourselves the ones isolated, and inversely have seen the stature of bin Laden and al-Qa'ida rise. While the U.S. and its allies have seized some of Bin Laden's lesser lieutenants and assets, the movement remains vibrant and its senior leadership largely intact. As was recently argued in *Parameters*, the journal of the U.S. Army War College, "Contrary to the repeated messages that "al-Qa'ida is greatly diminished" or that a high percentage of its leadership has been killed of captured, al-Qa'ida as both an organization and a movement is defined by its robust capacity for regeneration and a very diverse membership that cuts across ethnic, class, and national boundaries."[17]

al-Qa'ida's popularity is greater than ever, its ability to recruit individuals and affiliate organizations to its agenda unbroken, and its ideology spreading across a global network present in places ranging from Algeria and Belgium to Indonesia and Iraq. As the attacks from Bali to Morocco to Madrid to London reveal, its capabilities may even be growing through its metasis. Meanwhile, in Iraq, the killing of seeming terror mastermind Abu Musab al-Zarqawi by U.S. forces didn't nip the violence. Instead, it was followed by a series of massive terror attacks in the weeks following. Overall, there were nearly double the number of attacks by al-Qa'ida and its affiliates in the five years since 9-11 than in the 5 years before 9-11.[18]

The primary threat then has evolved in the five years from a specific organization that was fairly centralized to becoming self-organized, self-inspired and cellular. The 9-11 attacks were planned at the highest levels of the group in Afghanistan, over the course of almost 2 years, with bin Laden's hand in the tiniest of details. By comparison, bin Laden probably found out about the London bombings by watching TV, while the only link that the 17 man terror cell recently rolled up in Canada

16 See for example, The White House, *The National Security Strategy*, March 2006, available at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/ Peter Beinert, *The Good Fight: Why Liberals---and Only Liberals---Can Win the War on Terror and Make America Great Again*, New York: Harper Collins, 2006.
17 Shawn Brimley, "Tentacles of Jihad," *Parameters*, Summer 2006, p. 35.
18 Ibid, p. 34.

had with al-Qa'ida was by reading about it on the web. We are witnessing the transformation of the threat of al-Qa'ida to the threat of al-Qa'ida-ism.

This evolution makes the deep and rapid deterioration of America's standing in the Islamic world one of the greatest challenges the United States faces. The erosion of American credibility in the region not merely reinforces the recruiting efforts of our foes, but also effectively denies American ideas and policies a fair hearing to the wider populace –the "sea" in which any of our foes must "swim." Winning the 9-11 War depends substantially on winning the war of ideas; unfortunately, by most available metrics, we are not winning that war.

While this problem was initially denied (illustrated best by President Bush leaving the office of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy empty for much of his first term), five years in, it has finally begun to receive recognition at the highest levels. In a January 2005 interview with CNN just prior to his second inauguration, President Bush acknowledged that declining U.S. popularity in the Islamic world would be one of his greatest challenges in the subsequent four years.[19] One result was the subsequent naming of one of his closest confidents, Karen Hughes, to take over this effort. The very act was the message; Hughes was expert in neither the issues nor in public diplomacy, and indeed had no experience in international affairs at all. But her nomination was meant as a demonstrable signal that the problem had been accepted as real and significant.

Likewise, while public diplomacy had once been derided as too soft to be considered with matters of state security, the Pentagon is now one of the leaders in pushing for a refocus on winning the war of ideas, or as is often described in Department of Defense policy documents, creating a "global anti-terrorism environment." For example, Secretary Rumsfeld has weighed in with his typical panache, describing that when it comes to the war of ideas, "The U.S. government still functions as a five and dime store in an eBay world…The longer it takes to put a strategic information framework into place, the more we can be certain that the vacuum will be filled by the enemy."[20]

Within this discussion of who was to blame and what could be done, experts from the region also began to weigh in, and consensus soon built around the importance of human development concerns to both the problem and any solution. The key catalyst was the Arab Human Development Report, first published by the UNDP in 2002 and again each subsequent year. The reports started a crucial debate in both the U.S. and the Islamic world. Most critically, the reports were the products of regional scholars and, as such, have achieved an unprecedented level of legitimacy and recognition.

In exploring the recent rise of radicalism, the reports delved into just how far the region had fallen behind in development, not just behind in comparison to the West, but indeed behind in comparison to most of the world, including trending behind developing world averages. The various data points are telling and go on and on. Sub-Saharan Africa has better internet connectivity than the Middle East. The 22 Arab countries, including the oil-exporting Gulf states, account for a combined GDP less than that of Spain alone; all 57 member states of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) account for one-fifth of the world's population but their combined GDP is less than that of France. A little less than half of the world's Muslim population is illiterate. While there are a few bright spots (for example, the success that Malaysia has found in embracing globalization), overall, in the words of the report, the region is "richer than it is developed."[21]

These failures in development have combined with a region-wide freedom deficit that heightens the problem.

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19 "Bush: Better Human Intelligence Needed," *cnn.com*, January 18, 2005.
20 Donald Rumsfeld, "War in the Information Age," *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 2006.
21 United Nations Development Program, *Arab Human Development Report* 2002, New York, UNDP, 2002.

Authoritarian governments predominate in the Muslim world, with the only exceptions to the rule lying outside the historic Middle Eastern core. The accountability of public authorities is further hampered by the fact that most media is reliant on state support and, at best, can be described only as partly free. In the absence of public accountability and deeply rooted bureaucratic traditions of self-governance, most regimes are prone to corruption, patronage, and clientalism (for example, Transparency International rates all the countries in the Middle East with a "high" Corruption Perception Index).[22] The result is that state structures in the region are at best unresponsive and at worst incompetent when it comes to meeting public needs.

This combination of human development gaps and broken regimes goes a long way in explaining both the failing environment in which radicals thrive and the pool of simmering anger they are able to tap into. It is also credited with the rise of political Islam as a force to truly be reckoned with in the post 9-11 world. With authoritarians quite effective at clamping down on secular and liberal opposition (witness the region-wide prosecution of human rights activists and journalists that rock the boat too much), Islamist groups in particular have been at an advantage in having both the safe ground of the mosque to organize from, and strong credibility on the anti-corruption front. From Pakistan and Palestine to Yemen and Egypt, failing public services have created a vacuum filled by Islamists who provide food, shelter, healthcare, and education. This, combined with their opposition to the U.S., has gained them what the regimes lack, political legitimacy in the eyes of deprived urban and rural masses.

Thus, the final consensus in American policy needs towards the Islamic world has built around the need to solve socioeconomic deprivation as much as political repression. Such a strategy primarily calls for human development, with its strong emphasis on political and economic freedoms. "Reform" is now the oft-repeated buzzword in American policy discussions towards the Muslim world. It is telling that in the two years of being Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice has not given a single speech related to the region that did not include the word "reform."

What Comes Next: The Twin Problems of Strategy

The problem is that consensus on priorities does not yield effectiveness. That we have a buzzword to bandy about does not mean we have a successful policy yet.

Two core problems bedevil any strategy that focuses on change. The first is how to match words to deeds. The United States suffers from a very real credibility gap in convincing regional states and audiences that it is truly serious about change in such areas as reform and democratization. This is shaped both by a history of trying to have it both ways for the last 60 years (trading stability for stasis) and frequently pulling back at the realization of just what such a re-ordering in priorities might mean to short-term interests. For example, democratization in Palestine was viewed as a necessary good, until it brought in Hamas. Moreover, other than the limited set of "rogue states," the vast majority of stagnant and failing regimes we hope to change are putative U.S. allies, or at least states we continue to do business with. A repeated dilemma is that we may hope to change the prevailing regimes, but continually request their help on other regional issues such as the run-down of al-Qa'ida, support in Iraq, Middle East peace, etc. The duality of American policy is illustrated by the case of Egypt, where we give $3 billion in aid to a regime that has thugs beat protesters in the street and shuts down American NGOs for pushing too hard for democracy.[23] Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are like examples of close allies that we wish to change.

22 The 2005 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, available at http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0781359.html

23 For a discussion of the beatings of protesters, "Egypt Cracks Down on Critics" *Cnn.com*, May 18, 2006. The Egyptian has called on the International Republican Institute (IRI) to halt operations after its Cairo head discussed the slow pace of reform. "Egypt Tells US NGO to Halt Activities," *Middle East Online*, June 5, 2006. http://www.middle-east-online.com/ENGLISH/?id=16648

The second problem is how to match intentions to capabilities. The U.S. may be able to put change on the agenda, but it has not proven able to control what comes next. The 2003 Iraq invasion may prove the ultimate demonstration. Three years, $250 billion, and nearly 2500 American lives lost later, its most apt parallel is the 1798 French invasion of Egypt. It bodes a shake-up for the region, but a disaster so far for the invader.

Thus, the future debates in overall U.S.-Islamic world policy will center on how we move from the broad realizations on which consensus has been achieved to actual policy implementation. Five years in, this question still bedevils nearly every aspect of our foreign policy apparatus, from the obvious to the less so, and in no one area is it simple. For example, the U.S. government spends approximately $6 billion on various aspects of science and technology outreach. Much of this is wrapped up in Cold War legacy programming aimed toward post-Soviet states. It has been useful, but to remain relevant, now agencies in this area (from Department of State to Department of Energy) are wrestling with how to reorient such programming towards new strategic needs. The issue they face now is not how to keep too many out of work Soviet scientists occupied, but how to create a new generation of scientists who might help jumpstart economies in Muslim world states.[24]

It is widely recognized that the solution to these twin problems of credibility and capacity must be through a long-term, multifaceted strategy, something called for in policy documents ranging from John Kerry's presidential campaign statements to the Bush administration's latest National Security Strategy. But this is not the crucial question. Rather, it is how can we enact a multifaceted strategy, with the necessary programming, in all the various civilian agencies, in a conflict that remains described and understood primarily in military terms? That is, the strategy has to be executed within a "wartime" political environment that yields a relative free hand for the Defense Department (in that Congress is loathe to deny either its annual budget or now regular infusions of supplementals for fear of being tarred as abandoning the troops), but belt-tightening for all other agencies.

For example, even the Pentagon's own "National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism" describes the equal importance of three pillars to any modicum of victory: 1) offensive operations to dismantle and destroy terrorist networks and leaders, 2) defending the homeland against attack, and 3) "countering ideological support for terrorism," such that the bin Ladens of the world can no longer recruit or meet with any popular support (Within the Pentagon, euphemistically the three are called: Heads on Stakes, Puttin' Up Walls, and Hearts and Minds).[25] The challenge is that while the three are visualized as equally important, only the first is military in nature. The result is a budget out of whack to the very strategy our own military calls for. In FY2006, approximately $560 billon of the U.S. federal budget goes to military operations. Approximately $55 billion is spent for homeland security (plus another estimated $9 billion spent on homeland security at the state and local level). But while the overall U.S. budget for diplomacy and foreign operations is $32 billion, only about $540 *million* goes towards the hearts and minds element (public diplomacy and outreach programs). Of this, only about 27 percent is directed towards the Muslim world, with an overt amount consumed by a showy government run media programming that has failed to crack the marketplace in the region with any credibility.[26]

Indeed, the Pentagon's interest in areas such as strategic communications is driven not so much by bureaucratic imperialism, but simply by frustration at

24 Michael D'Arcy and Michael Levi, *Untapped Potential: U.S. Science and Technology Cooperation with the Islamic World*, Brookings Analysis Paper #8, April 2005.
25 *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism* (Washington: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2006).
26 Cindy Williams, "Budgets to make America Safer," MIT Center for International Affairs Report, June 2006; "The President's FY 2006 International Affairs Budget," Testimony by Secretary of State Condeleeza Rice to Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs, May 12, 2005.

just how bad our public diplomacy has been, and the recognition that if the military doesn't do it, no one else will. This has been reflected in its many stop and go efforts at overt and covert strategic communications (from the ill-fated "Office of Strategic Influence" to the buying of news stories in the Iraqi press), none of which was successful. The simple fact is that as long as a colonel in a psychological operations unit has more to spend on international outreach (the Joint Psyops Support Element of the U.S. Special Operations Command has a budget of $77.5 million) than all the U.S. ambassadors around the world have at their discretion to win hearts and minds, we simply cannot claim that our programming matches our needs of a balanced strategy.

Within this challenge of strategic balance must be the question of how do we leverage America's strengths, capitalizing on the areas and issues for which we are admired rather than hated? Critical areas remain to be fully tapped. Missing so far in the agenda has been the mobilization of the business community, which was a massive participant in all aspects of American foreign policy during the Cold War. Indeed, when it came to actual influence, history judges Coke and McDonalds to have been far more useful weapons in the American arsenal than any MX missile. By comparison, we see no attempt in the current strategy at leveraging America's most powerful vehicle for creating opportunity. Good hearted companies and non-governmental organizations have moved on their own (Models for such action include the programs as the Cisco Academy program, that trains up youth in IT skills, or the Education for Employment Foundation, which has launched a series of vocational schools across the Muslim world), but an overarching mechanism is simply missing.[27]

Despite the differences of what it takes to succeed in Hollywood vs. Silicon Valley, the fore-mentioned science and technology as well as arts and culture sectors are two related outreach areas that could prove important. American technical achievements are renown and Hollywood still wields enormous influence (indeed, American celebrities are consistently more well known across the Muslim world than their local counterparts), such that, despite the overall downward trend, they are the two areas in which polling in Muslim majority state has found still high levels of esteem for the U.S. At the same time, both facets are subversive to agendas of radicals by their very nature. Each encourages openness of thinking and respect for freedoms of choice and opportunity in their own particular way. Yet, both their potentials remain grossly untapped. The Louis Armstrong jazz tours of the 1950s and the mass graduate student fellowships of the 1960s have been replaced by a vacuum of cultural diplomacy and closed borders to the next generation of Muslim students. In the words of one senior public diplomacy official, "It is pathetic." [28]

Finally, the United States must figure out a way to utilize its diversity as a strength, rather than viewing it as a weakness. While the 9-11 conflict has taken on a religious tint, we must remember that we are a uniquely diverse nation, welcoming to all religions. The very success of the Muslim American community (indeed, Muslim Americans have a higher average income and education level than the national rates) is a remarkable demonstration of the opportunities afforded by the U.S. and proof that the U.S. is not anti-Islam. America also provides a model of what citizenship and integration is all about, presenting an example that compares quite well not only to the mostly autocratic regimes in the region, but also to the sub-standard treatment most Muslims face in Europe. Yet, overt government

27 See for example, The Education for Employment Foundation, http://www.efefoundation.org/ and Cisco Networking Academies, http://www.cisco.com/web/about/ac227/about_cisco_corp_citi_net_academies.html

28 While the U.S. regularly sends entertainers ranging from music stars to self-proclaimed "D-list" comedians like Kathy Griffin to meet with our troops deployed in the Muslim world, we have done nothing on the cultural outreach front. Indeed, U.S. government officials were not able to cite one American cultural figure it had sought to enlist in outreach. Interview with senior U.S. government official, July 12, 2006. See also "Arts and the Public Sphere: Arts and Culture Leaders Seminar," Transcript, 2006 US-Islamic World Forum, Doha, Qatar; D'Arcy and Levi, 2005.

surveillance, hate-mongering, and indeed each and every slur made by U.S. government leaders and/or their prominent political allies, undermines what should be a strategic asset and feeds the propaganda of our foes.[29] Moreover, at a time when the U.S. government lacks both credibility abroad and is woeful at representing its views, the distance between our government and the Arab and Muslim American community is stunning. For example, it wasn't until 2006 that the State Department's office for public diplomacy included a single American Muslim on its senior staff. The same diversity problem is repeated across key agencies. The Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, Justice, State, CIA, and AID should all examine how they can better tap the strengths of these communities, both in programming and recruiting.

Stop Feeding the Beast

While Louis Armstrong sang on his tours to win hearts and minds in the Cold War that we have to "accentuate the positive," he also noted that we have to "eliminate the negative."[30] This leads to the continuing problem of implementation, how America carries itself in the world. While we know we have a problem, it is too often depicted as simply poor public relations. For example, President Bush's statements on this issue conceptualize the U.S. as simply being "behind when it comes to selling our own story."[31] But a key lesson that any good PR firm will tell you is that no amount of "selling" can move a bad product. Policies matter, whether it be demonstrating both greater empathy for both sides, as well as at least a modicum of activity, on the Arab-Israeli peace process to finally getting ourselves out of the corner we have painted ourselves into with Guantanamo and detainee policy. We must also be willing to face the realities of a "stay the course" policy ill-suited for an Iraq that is spinning out of control.[32] As former Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi puts it, "We are losing each day an average 50 to 60 people throughout the country, if not more. If this is not civil war, then God knows what civil war is."[33] In short, the U.S. efforts in the 9-11 War could use a little advice from Doctor Phil: "If you're in denial about it, if you're minimizing it, if you're trivializing it, if you're conning yourself about it, then you'll never get where you need to be."[34]

At the same time, how we engage and communicate with the world does matter. The United States is widely perceived as lecturing without listening, arrogant, and uninterested in the opinion of others. While there was great fanfare about Karen Hughes's appointment, the follow-up has been less than stellar; public diplomacy has remained in spin mode, too often treating the endeavor like an extension of an election campaign. Her limited forays have been rife with photo-ops (when asked for a public diplomacy "success story," senior staffers at the State Department cited Hughes going to a cooking class with students in Germany), and staged meetings with pre-screened groups of elites.[35] Hughes's speeches in the region too often stand as a guide on how not to communicate with the Muslim world, veering from pandering references that lack local cultural awareness to finger-wagging lectures.

The diversity of sharp views are telling. A former Ambassador for the current Administration weighs in that "There is no common understanding in the government on what this [public diplomacy] means or who runs the show. The military thinks of a sophisticated version of psyops. Hughes is all over

29 Examples of policymakers and private organization leaders associated with the administration who have made objectionable statements that were later repeated in the regional press include General William Boykin, Jerome Corsi, Franklin Graham, and Daniel Pipes.
30 Lyrics from the song "Ac-cent-tchu-ate the Positive." The song was originally written by Johnny Mercer for the movie *Here Come the Waves* in 1944.
31 Bush: Better Human Intelligence Needed" www.cnn.com , January 18, 2005.
32 Kenneth Pollack, *A Switch in Time: A New Strategy for America in Iraq*. Saban Center Analysis, Number 7, February 15, 2006.
33 As quoted in "Iraq in Civil War, Says Former PM," *BBC.com*, March 19, 2006.
34 Dr. Phil McGraw, "Seven Steps to Breaking Your Addiction," http://drphil.com/articles/article/173
35 Interview with Senior State Department official, April 12, 2006.

the place with no clear focus on audience or means to reach them."[36] A prominent American Muslim imam describes, "She seems to have taken on a very narrow mission - of trying to convince people over there of how correct the administration is, no matter what people might think."[37] An evangelical Christian newsletter in the U.S. was even more blunt in its depiction of a speech she gave at the 2006 U.S.-Islamic World Forum, a conference of more than 180 political, business, and media leaders from 38 Muslim states and communities, "America's relationship with the Muslim world has hit rock bottom….and we have begun to dig."[38]

As Hughes (and her speechwriters) gain on the job experience in public diplomacy, hopefully this trend will reverse. But it is important to point out that any one official is not the problem. As winning the 9-11 War requires reversing the present wholly negative reception given to the U.S. and its policies, public diplomacy must be redefined as an imperative at all levels of government, not an after thought. For example, the impact on the hearts and minds campaign should be a regular part of any evaluation of international programming , as well as written into the annual review of all governmental personnel involved in foreign affairs. Likewise, it should become a regular component of any programmatic budget, rather than be treated as a separate entity. Innovative ideas will also have to be supported and tested for viability. One example is a proposal for the launch of a "micro-posts" program. Described by one book as "a Silver BB in the War on Terror," the strategy would supplement the present clustering of all U.S. government personnel in massive barb-wired embassy compounds in capital cities, with a network of small posts (akin to the old imperial post model used by the British), each dedicated towards aid and outreach in the Islamic world at the provincial and even communal level.[39] Their enhanced engagement would deepen local area knowledge, as well as the reach and quality of outreach.

Cultural awareness must clearly be built up across the foreign policy apparatus, at a far wider level. For example, while the launch of a new initiative to build foreign language skills starting in fiscal 2007 is a nice, though belated, start, the actual funding will yield at most 4500 graduate study fellowships, spread out over multiple languages (ranging from Chinese and Arabic to Korean and Farsi). It remains a drop in the bucket to our overall strategic needs. In this as well, the Arab and Muslim American community can be mobilized. For example, just as political donors and corporate cronies often join governmental foreign travel delegations, core groups of cultural advisors can be assembled to accompany U.S. government officials to help guide them through regional nuances and pitfalls. Within all of these activities, dialogue is key. Any public diplomacy programming must include an element for reaction and feedback (for example, every trip to the region by senior officials should include a meeting with elites, with students, and with local civil society, and every speech should include time for open Q and A) and wherever possible, programming should be jointly developed with local partners, to improve credibility and enhance local impact.

A successful strategy must also be far more nimble in seizing any opportunities to demonstrate American good intent and seriousness of engagement. For example, the U.S. was quite generous towards the 2004 Asian tsunami-stricken regions (and saw an uptick in its standing in Muslim Indonesia as a result). But, when an earthquake in 2005 slammed Pakistan, the response from the U.S. government was meek at best. Those military assets that were already near the area and available (mostly a small group of helicopters

36 Interview with former U.S. Government official, July 10, 2006.
37 Shaker El Sayed, as quoted in "Entrenched Distrust Undermines White House Effort to Reach Out," St. Louis Post Dispatch, Dec. 10, 2005.
38 Institute for Global Engagement, March 2006 newsletter.
39 Keith Mines, "The Micro-Post: A Silver BB In the War on Terror," in Council for Emerging National Security Affairs, *The Faces of Intelligence Reform,* Washington DC, CENSA, 2006.

coming from Afghanistan) deployed to help move aid, but the subsequent follow through was minimal. Overall, the U.S. committed just $26.4 million in aid and said it potentially might give more up to a $50 million limit. This is roughly 3% of the amount that the government gave towards the tsunami regions. Analysts can debate back and forth the relative importance of Pakistan (not only a hub of extremist groups, but also the only nuclear armed Muslim state) vs. Indonesia (the most populous Muslim democracy), but treating this opportunity as only 3 percent as important is clearly poor grand strategy. By contrast, a relative "who's who" of radical groups quickly started a wide range of aid efforts, seeking to fill the absence of the international community in the earthquake region. Affiliate groups of Lashkar-e Taiba ran a field hospital replete with x-ray machines and operating room, Jammat-e-Islami organized relief convoys and refugee camps, while the Al Rasheed Trust (a group whose assets have been frozen in the U.S. due to its suspected al Qaida links) has been up in the forefront of aid and publicity. At best, it was a missed opportunity. At worst, our inflexibility ceded more ground to radical forces, undermining American national security.

Finally, we must figure out how to integrate our own approaches with those of other nations. For all the centrality of the U.S. to this conflict (illustrated by the fact that polling finds Jacque Chirac to be the most popular leader in the Muslim world–mainly for his perceived willingness to stand up to the U.S.), there is a larger historic context of Western relations with Islam, and, in a post-cartoon environment, great willingness on the part of the Europeans to get involved.[40] Indeed, their very strengths and weaknesses complement each other well. From their experiences with integration of the Eastern European states, the EU has far more expertise when it comes to the nitty-gritty details of political reform, economic advancement, and rule of law issues, while the U.S. has convening power that the Europeans can only dream of. Yet their respective efforts are delinked and each suffer as a result. The EU, for example, was unable to get a single Arab leader to attend the last meeting of its Barcelona Process, a respected program that started more than 10 years ago. In turn, the U.S. has programs like MEPI and Forum for the Future that get good participation. But when it comes to actual programming, they are widely perceived as all sizzle, no stamina.

Strategic Dilemmas

Questions of implementation though are not enough. Three major dilemmas of the 9-11 War await decision. Until we develop a strategy on how to solve them, they will hover above all policies. No amount of achievement on the areas of consensus developed so far will matter for much without their resolution.

The first is the real issue that shadows democratic reform, the challenge of sparking change that is beyond our control; or to put it more specifically, the seeming dilemma of Islamist groups and how to deal with their rise. The political spectrum across the Muslim world is quite diverse. In addition to the widely varying regional contexts and concerns (for example, while the Israeli-Palestinian conflict overshadows any discussion of political reform in the Arab world, Indonesians care as much or more about U.S. policy on Aceh), there are also widely differing interest groups and demographic sectors within each area of the Muslim world. These include regime retainers (mostly members of the state bureaucracy and military), secular reformers (the liberal and leftist groups most orientated to the modes of the West, but typically lacking local power and credibility), gradualist main-streamers (the largest set of the professional and business class, who are generally disposed to change, but in a measured approach at amending the status quo), Islamist social conservatives (who seek a far greater role for Islam in society and are thus disposed towards democratic reform, but also quite anti-American), radical Islamists (who advocate a regime overturn and the implementation of full Sharia), and, ultimately, militant activists and terrorists themselves (those who undertake or provide active support to violent action).

40 Shibley, Telhami, "In the Mideast, the Third Way Is a Myth, *Washington Post*, February 17, 2006; Page A19.

Unfortunately, U.S. policy has often failed to appreciate the diversity of opinion, and worse so, held both secular reformers and social conservatives at arms length. While reaching out to like-minded reformers is simply a matter of increased support and often standing up to their repression by regime forces, the critical challenge is how the United States will deal with the rising power and popularity of Islamist groups, who are gradually winning over the "swing vote" that is the business class/mainstreamers. As Middle East expert Professor Shibley Telhami writes, "The reality shown by Hamas's victory in the Palestinian elections is this: If fully free elections were held today in the rest of the Arab world, Islamist parties would win in most states. Even with intensive international efforts to support civil society and nongovernmental organizations, elections in five years would probably yield the same results. The notion, popular in Washington over the past few years, that American programs and efforts can help build a third alternative to both current governments and Islamists, is simply a delusion."[41]

Not only is building democracy a long-term proposition, but the process of change and its success is not in our hands. Others control the final actions of how it plays on the ground, including those we are not fully comfortable with. Thus, if the U.S. is ever to gain credibility for its reform push, it must be willing to engage with Islamist groups, including those such as the Muslim Brotherhood currently banned by its authoritarian allies, and strongly speak out against their violent repression (witness the May 2006 beatdowns in the Cairo streets, where regime thugs attacked Brotherhood activists who had gathered to protest the prosecution of a pair of judges who had questioned the regime's attempted rigging of elections).[42] Such groups may be thought of as akin to the Socialist parties and labor unions of post-World War II Europe. The United States certainly may not be able to persuade them to support American policies, but it is more important to the overall goals we have to prevent their co-option by militant forces. Unfortunately, the United States has so far steered clear of the tough challenges involved in engaging such groups and frequently made the fundamental mistake of assuming that any and every Islamist group is inherently violent and/or al-Qa'ida oriented. For example, even the hint of thinking about talking with the Brotherhood in Egypt or Islamist groups in Pakistan sends shivers down the spine of State Department diplomats.

Failing to appreciate the diversity of groups and ideologies in the Muslim world could have the same strategic consequences that the mistaken lumping together of the Soviets, Red China, anti-colonial nationalism, and Hollywood screenwriters as all part of a singular "Red Menace" had during the darker days of the Cold War. The United States must be flexible enough to open dialogues with the diverse set of social groups and actors on the ground. This may even mean seeking to gain allies with whom we may differ in worldview. The Marshall Plan's true brilliance was cleaving socialist-leaning unions in Western Europe away from the Soviets and Nixon went to Beijing not because he was a fan of Maoism but to divide the Communist Bloc. Likewise, the United States will ultimately have to accept that Islamist political groups are among the most powerful and credible groups in the Muslim world. While we may not see eye to eye with them on many issues, it is time to open dialogues and work on setting a shared understanding of how we can cooperate to improve the lives of the citizens of their countries, as well as the areas in which we cannot. While the concept of U.S. engagement with Islamist groups may sound anathema to some policymakers, the fact is that the die is already cast where it matters most. The United States has already made such compromises with Islamist groups in Iraq—both old guard Islamist leaders like Ayatollah Sistani as well as "young turks" like Moqtada as-Sadr— to help steer them and their supporters away from violence, providing proof that it can be done, and even on occasion quite successfully.

41 Ibid.
42 "Egypt Cracks Down on Critics," *Cnn.com*, May 18, 2006

Thus, the United States must be willing to set aside its qualms and instead focus on the principles of changes it seeks. Any group that accepts the system and the processes of democratic elections and good governance must be engaged, regardless of its ideology or past opposition to our policy. The red line is violent action. Only those groups that continue to maintain armed wings that engage in violence are the true threats that must be isolated.

Some worry that this will mean the creation of a permanent and backward-looking Caliphate across the region. These fears are over-blown. Indeed, akin to the Communists that Mr. X described at the onset of our last long war, Islamism is "…capable of exporting its enthusiasm and of radiating the strange charm of its primitive political vitality but unable to back up those articles of export by the real evidences of material power and prosperity."[43] That is, while the famous fear of "one man, one vote, one time" holds sway, we must remember that it never happened in the case that is most often cited for it, Algeria in the 1990s (where it was a military coup not the Islamists that made such a scenario come true). Instead, from Jordan to Turkey to Morocco to Indonesia, such groups have seen that they would not be able to maintain popular support unless they moderated.[44] Thus, we must have the same confidence that Mr. X advised. Like the Soviet Union, the popularity of radical Islamist rule is greatest where it not yet reached; wherever it might take power, it "bears within it the seeds of its own decay."[45]

The long-term corollary to ensure that this proves correct is that the United States must become serious in its development and democracy promotion, with budgeting and programming expanded to the level of challenge that it represents. Enhanced coordination with the European Union and Japan will not only assure additional funds but will also improve the legitimacy of the whole enterprise by multilateralizing it. This is crucially important given the level of anti-Americanism in the region and the absolute necessity of avoiding the image of a "Made in America" stamp on any socioeconomic development and democratization project.

The policy developed must ensure to have a scope that aims at the core problems identified in both the political and socio-economic realms. Economic reform must seek to enable and empower the private sector. Social development projects should seek to raise up the capabilities of local NGOs and civil society, with a focus on skills to organize and act effectively. Working only with elite, secular liberal groups, as has been the pattern up to now, will undermine the overall effort to be broad-based and make minimal inroads.

Finally, a premium should be placed on the principle of justice in the political sphere, which resonates quite strongly with both secular and Islamist social conservative constituencies (Justice is a core value at the center of Islam, while a push purely for democracy often is negatively associated with the U.S. and experiments gone awry in Iraq).[46] Most importantly, this program has to be synchronized with a simultaneous push for genuine constitutional change. A common mistake of the past has been to accept cosmetic changes or the holding of a vote as signs of democratization. They are not. Constitutional reform to allow freedom of association, speech, the press, and the formation of political parties, the ending of emergency laws, and the setting of actual timelines for reform measures (each of which are supported by all the actors on the spectrum except the two extremes of regime retainers and the terrorists), should be at the heart of the agenda.

The second strategic dilemma lies in the underlying meaning of "reform." Part and parcel of the 9-11 War are the deep debates that are taking place within

43 X, 1947.
44 Steven Cook, The Right Way to Support Arab Reform," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2005, p. 91-102.
45 X, 1947.
46 George Perkovich, "Giving Justice Its Due," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2005.

Muslim states and communities as to the shape and teachings of Islam itself in the 21st century. The issues range from the role and status of women, wrestling with globalization and technology, to perhaps the most critical, *ijtihad*. This last aspect is the question of how and who can interpret Islamic law on modern-day matters not yet clarified in the Koran or other texts, which opens up a debate on freedom of thought, rational thinking and the quest for truth through an epistemology covering science, rationalism, human experience, critical thinking, etc.[47] Many liken the current debates as the Muslim equivalent to the Reformation period within Europe in the 1500-1600s. If this is so, then one must also expect the same violent aspects, when existential and political matters collide.

The tension between historic core and periphery of the Islamic world is one of the most important aspects of this debate, and one that the U.S. has not yet figured out how to weigh in. Many of the most vibrant discussions of the role of Islam in the 21st century are taking place in locales like Indonesia, Malaysia, and among Muslim minority communities in Europe and the U.S. Islam not only has a different historic founding in these areas, coming through trade and immigration rather than through conquest, but also typically operates in a context of greater freedom of expression. Power of persuasion is more important than the power of any secret police, which means arguments over such matters as how to be both a good Muslim and a good citizen are far richer here than in the historic core, in which the debates have either ossified or veer towards stultifying polemics. To paraphrase Samuel Huntington, Islam may have "bloody borders," but if reform is to win out, it will likely come from the outside in.[48]

The challenge, though, is twofold. The first is the convening influence and traditional power of the Arab world. The location of the Holy Sites in the Middle East, the dominance of a few historic centers of learning, such as al Azhar in Egypt, and the monopolization of Arabic over Islamic jurisprudence (a development that is fairly recent –coming after the Wahhabi takeover of Mecca, which included the destruction of Koranic texts in all other languages) give the historic core an influence that is far past the border regions. The second is the viral effect that money coming from the oil-rich Gulf states has in funding conservative movements and schools that seek a sort of counter-reformation against less austere local traditions. Illustratively, the wing of the Muslim Brotherhood led by al Jazeera tele-imam Yusef al Qaradawi has targeted Europe as the key locale for determining the future of Islam, while Indonesia has seen massive amounts of money and itinerate teachers arrive from the Middle East.

Yet, there is beginning a strong backlash, or at the very least strong sub-regional cleavages. In Southeast Asia, for example, along with rampant anti-Americanism, there is growing anti-Arabism. The region is comparatively prosperous, stable, and democratic (certainly compared to the Middle East core), and growing tired of being treated as a periphery that is suitable only to be lectured at. Indeed, the Indonesian government minister for religious affairs recently commented at a conference on Islam in the Age of Globalization that he was "fed up with these Arabs."[49] Likewise, even inside the various Islamist groups, there is regional discord. For example, there are fierce feuds between the Muslim Brotherhood located in the Arab world and radical Islamists coming from the Deoband school in South Asia, as well as in Europe between second and third generation European Muslim leaders and those straight from the Middle East.

The U.S. can certainly not drive such cleavages, nor should it overtly try, recognizing the Medusa-like effect its positive gaze will have on the credibility of any local movement. But it should be attentive to them, ready to engage positively with efforts aimed at moving forward

47 See for example, Muqtedar Khan, "Two Theories of Ijtihad," *Common Ground News Service*, March 21, 2006.
48 Huntington, 1993.
49 *Islam in the Age of Globalization*, American-Pew-Brookings Research Team Trip Report, June 2006.

the reform debate within Islam from the periphery to the core. Five years after 9-11, this trend is only just beginning, with important conferences of leaders taking place in both Mecca and Amman in 2005 that laid the groundwork. Notably, as prominent Indian-Muslim journalist M.J. Akbar described: "The key word of the new vision was clearly defined: reform." (Notice the symmetry back to the keyword for U.S. policymakers).[50]

The important point here is that, in an idealized approach, U.S. policy towards the region would be recognized not only for its consistency and credibility, but also as having depth of understanding, empathy, and nuance in how it engages a diverse world. As an illustration, much has been made of the Muslim religious educational institutions known as madrassas, with many U.S. officials and commentators describing them as "schools of hate" that must be shut down.[51] This misses the fact that only an extremely small percentage of the madrassas in places like Pakistan are affiliated with radical groups. In other states, such as Indonesia, they are mostly government-linked and many are in fact local sources of moderation that seek to counter the growing outreach of pesantren, which are boarding schools more likely to be funded by radical outsiders. In Arabic-speaking countries, "madrassa" is simply the ordinary word for school. As a result, when the U.S. discusses shutting down "madrassas," it is viewed as striking against moderates in some countries, education in general in others, and rarely as focusing merely on the radicals. Recognition of such regional nuances and differences should be part and parcel of any U.S. strategy.

The third and final challenge is the demographic bow wave we are just starting to feel within the Islamic world. A key, but oft-ignored, political fact of the region is its youth. Roughly half the Arab population, 54 percent of Iranians, and 52 percent of Pakistanis are younger than twenty years old. By contrast, only slightly more than one-quarter of the populations of countries such as the United States, European Union, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan are under twenty. Between 2000 and 2050, the population within this region is projected to roughly double, with a growth rate of roughly 130 percent. Within the same 50 year time frame, developing countries as a whole are projected to grow by a total of 67 percent, while the global population growth will be 54 percent.[52]

This growth will certainly change the region in a variety of ways. For example, by 2035, little Yemen will be a population powerhouse, becoming the second largest Arab country with 85 million residents behind Egypt's 92 million. Sudan and Saudi Arabia will likely to be third and fourth with 55 and 49 million respectively. But the real problem may not be in overall growth but in the population structure. In a phenomenon commonly known as the "youth bulge," greater percentages of the population will be in the younger parts of the population segment than is the norm. In Yemen, the youth population, ages 15 to 24, is expected to grow from 3.3 million in 2000 to 21 million in 2050. In Saudi Arabia, the youth population increase will be from 3.9 million to 10 million within the same time period. Iraq and Syria are also expected to witness significant growth in the size of their youth populations.

The impact of this demographic would be huge, regardless of the context. But with stagnant political systems, and weak infrastructure, this rising pool of youth will lack opportunities needed to fulfill their aspirations. They represent what the World Economic Forum has called a "ticking time-bomb."[53]

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50 M.J. Akbar, "the Alternative Voice is Not a Hostile Voice," *Asian Age*, Feb. 20, 2006.

51 Hussein Haqqani, "Islam's Medieval Outposts," Foreign Policy, Nov-Dec 2002, pp. 58-64. See also, Donald Rumsfeld memo, "Global War on Terror," Oct. 16, 2003, available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/dod/rumsfeld-d20031016sdmemo.htm

52 Figures cited in Omer Taspinar, *Fighting Radicalism Through Development*, Washington DC: Brookings Press, forthcoming. See also Alan Richards, *Socio-Economic Roots of Radicalism: Explaining the Appeal of Islamic Radicals*, US. Naval War College Report, 2003.

53 World Economic Forum, *Roundtable on Arab Competitiveness*, Doha, Qatar, April 2005.

If the regimes in place were actually able to produce enough jobs, the youth bulge conceivably could create economic growth (what is known as a "demographic dividend").[54] For example, many East Asian countries experienced such demographic shifts in the 1960s and 1970s and the availability of a larger work force became an engine for higher productivity and growth. But, the Islamic world is presently unprepared to create such employment opportunities. Just to stay at the current level of stagnancy, Muslim majority states will have to create 100 million new jobs over the next 15-20 years.[55]

Needless to say, this is a recipe for disaster. Unless the international community is able to help launch an ambitious program of capacity building and quality improvement in their education and employment systems, a significant proportion of the coming generation will face conditions that political economist Omer Taspinar describes as an al-Qa'ida recruiter's dream. "Hundreds of millions will be poorly educated and lack the necessary skills for employment. They will be living in crowded mega-cities and will become attractive recruits for radical groups and organizations that are alienated from the global economic, social and political system."[56] The next generation will grow up angry and seek someone to blame, in a political atmosphere in which their impressions of the U.S. will be largely shaped by Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo. To steal a phrase from the soul singer Mary J. Blige, we are seeing the rise of the "hateration" within the Islamic world.[57]

At the core of al-Qa'ida-ism's support and popularity has been its ability to draw from (and manipulate), the deep sense of frustration that is felt within these youth. The U.S. strategic agenda must be one that deals with the underlying anger that comes from disappointment at the comparative lack of political, economic, and social opportunity for youth. The only environment in which terrorist groups will be undermined and the U.S. is seen as credible would be one in which our policies are clearly understood as 1) located on the side of change in the region, not on the side of a failing status quo, and 2) as a generator of opportunity. Underscoring the political reform efforts and the standard aid and development programming must be an array of innovative, youth-centered outreach activities that create layers of networks of local partners and affiliates in the public and private sectors. Examples run from linking vocational training to employment programs to enhanced access to the Internet and other technologies that encourage access to information and debate. This squares with the findings from a new Gallup survey of over 41 global Muslim communities that found that only "Comprehensive initiatives aimed at job creation, combined with proactive support for those who wish to make change through the ballot box, will reduce the appeal of those who insist change is possible only through violence."[58]

The unfortunate truth, though, is that there is no ready and easy policy silver bullet to the dark combination of demographics and hate. The storm will simply have to be weathered, moderated and modulated wherever possible.

54 See for example, David Bloom, David Canning, Jaypee Sevilla, *The Demographic Dividend: A New Perspective on the Economic Consequences of Population Change.* Santa Monica: RAND, 2003.
55 Figures cited by Kemal Dervis, Director UNDP, presentation at The Brookings Institution, April 19, 2006.
56 Taspinar, forthcoming.
57 Mary J. Blige, "Family Affair," from the *No More Drama* album, 2002.
58 Mogahed, 2006.

Conclusions

Our challenge five years into the 9-11 War remains the same as the day it started that clear morning in September. An ideology of hate has targeted our security. In the five years since, its objectives to consume relations with an entire region and religion have proved fruitful. Most of the Muslim world hates or at least fears the U.S. In turn, the distrust is reciprocated. Many of the trendlines only seem to be worsening and the divide growing.

The past five years then have been a loss for both the U.S. and the wider Muslim world. The current crisis need not be permanent, though. All radicalisms have a critical weakness. As long as we do not feed them, they ultimately burn themselves out.

It is a vexing realization, but success in the 9-11 War will come when we realize that victory lies both within the reach of our policy, but also beyond our control. In the forces of terrorism we face very real and exceptionally dangerous security threats, to be sure, but their hold on geopolitics depends on a mutual judgment in the realm of ideas. That is, the 9-11 War will not be won through any territorial conquest or individual's capture. It will only end in the realm of perceptions, when the United States and the Muslim world see each other not as in conflict but as operating towards shared goals.

Thus, as our 9-11 War strategy begins to take shape over the next years and decades, it is useful to hearken back to the advice that Mr. X provided at the start of the last "long war" the U.S. faced. He called for a strategy that was "long-term, patient" as well as "cool and collected." As he wrote, "The decision will really fall in large measure on this country itself. The issue…is in essence a test of the overall worth of the United States as a nation among nations. To avoid destruction *the United States need only measure up to its own best traditions...*"[59]

59 X, 1947.

The Saban Center for Middle East Policy

The Saban Center for Middle East Policy was established on May 13, 2002 with an inaugural address by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan. The creation 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 Saban Center provides Washington policymakers with balanced, objective, in-depth and timely research and policy analysis from experienced and knowledgeable scholars 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 broad range of views. The Saban Center's central objective is to advance understanding of developments in the Middle East through policy-relevant scholarship and debate.

The center's foundation was made possible by a generous grant from Haim and Cheryl Saban of Los Angeles. Ambassador Martin S. Indyk, Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies, is the director of the Saban Center. Kenneth M. Pollack is the center's director of research. Joining them 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. They include Tamara Cofman Wittes, who is a specialist on political reform in the Arab world; Shibley Telhami, who holds the Sadat Chair at the University of Maryland; and Daniel Byman, a Middle East terrorism expert from Georgetown University. The center is located in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at Brookings, led by Carlos Pascual, its director and a Brookings vice president.

The Saban Center is undertaking path breaking research in five areas: the implications of regime change in Iraq, including post-war nation-building and Persian Gulf security; the dynamics of Iranian domestic politics and the threat of nuclear proliferation; mechanisms and requirements for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; policy for the war against terrorism, including the continuing challenge of state-sponsorship of terrorism; and political and economic change in the Arab world, in particular in Syria and Lebanon, and the methods required to promote democratization.

The center also houses the ongoing Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, which is directed by Steve Grand. The project focuses on analyzing the problems in the relationship between the United States and Muslim states and communities around the globe, with the objective of developing effective policy responses. The Islamic World Project's activities includes a task force of experts, a global conference series bringing together American and Muslim world leaders, a visiting fellows program for specialists from the Islamic world, initiatives in science and the arts, and a monograph and book series.

The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations With the Islamic World

The *Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World* is a major research program, housed under the auspices of the *Saban Center for Middle East Policy*. It is designed to respond to some of the profound questions that the terrorist attacks of September 11th raised for U.S. policy. In particular, it seeks to examine how the United States can reconcile its need to fight terrorism and reduce the appeal of extremist movements with its need to build more positive relations with Muslim states and communities. Its goal has been to serve as both a convening body for people and research and a catalyst for new questions, new ideas, and policy.

The Project has several interlocking components:

- The U.S.-Islamic World Forum, which brings together American and Muslim world leaders from the fields of politics, business, media, academia, arts, science, and civil society, for much-needed discussion and dialogue,

- A Washington Task Force made up of specialists in Islamic, regional, and foreign policy issues (emphasizing diversity in viewpoint and geographic expertise), as well as U.S. government policymakers, which meets 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 at Brookings, both assisting them in their own research, as well as informing the work ongoing in the Project and the wider DC policymaking community,

- 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,

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

- A Science and Technology Policy Initiative, which looks at the role that cooperative science and technology programs involving the U.S. and Muslim world can play in responding to regional development and education needs, and in fostering positive relations,

- "Bridging the Divide," an initiative that explores the role of the American Muslim community in foreign policy issues,

- "Islam in the Age of Globalization," a joint initiative with American University and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, that explores the issues of authority and legitimacy that underpin leadership in the 21st century, and

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

The underlying goal of the Project 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 decision-makers and opinion-leaders, as well as afford scholars, analysts, and the public a better insight into policy issues. The project has been supported through the generosity of a range of partners and donors including the Government of the State of Qatar, the Ford Foundation, the US Institute of Peace, the MacArthur Foundation, The Carnegie Corporation, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories, the Shorenstein Center, The Pew Forum, American University, RAND Corporation, the Education for Employment Foundation, and the Institute for Social Policy Understanding. The Project Convenors are Ambassador Martin Indyk, Dr. Peter W. Singer, and Professor Shibley Telhami. Dr. Steve Grand serves as Project Director. For further information, please see: http://www.brook.edu/fp/research/projects/islam/islam.htm.

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