

***Arab Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy:
A Complex Encounter***

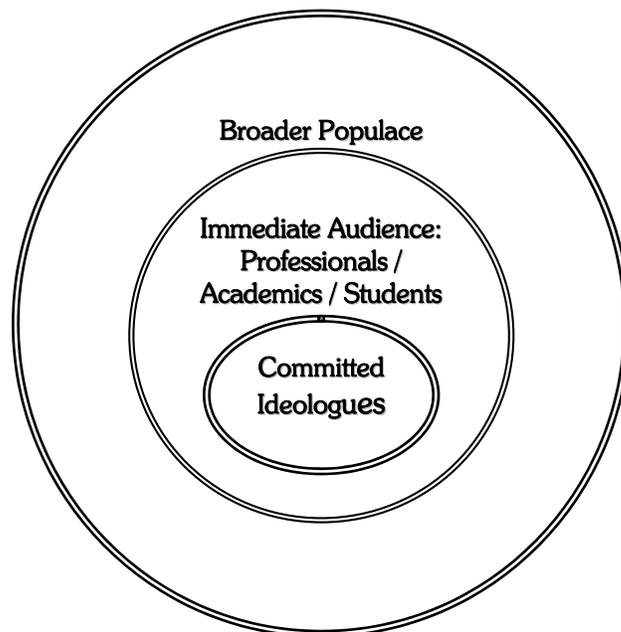
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Summary

Any analyst seeking to explain the relationship between Arab public opinion and American foreign policy must recognize the highly politicized nature of the topic. Pro-Israeli institutions acknowledge that Arab public opinion is hostile to the U.S., but often insist that such hostility reflects deeply ingrained cultural or religious attitudes. “They hate us because they hate us” goes the refrain. Those who speak from a pro-Arab or pro-Palestinian perspective often assert that such hostility is largely a consequence of U.S. foreign policy, and in particular the failure of the Bush administration to play the role of honest peace broker in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Solve that conflict in a fair and just manner, they argue, and much of the anti-Americanism reflected in the Arab press, the speeches of religious leaders, and in recent polling data, will subside.

The purpose of my testimony today is to transcend this politicized debate by providing a more systematic analysis of the roots and implications of Arab hostility towards the United States. This analysis is based on a distinction between Islamist and Arab nationalist ideologues, their immediate audiences in university, professional and religious institutions, and the wider Arab populace. Grasping the relationship between these three circles of influence and interaction is essential.



At the core of these three circles is a group of political activists and ideologues whose hostility to the United States is informed by an *ideology of resentment*. Islamist political activists, some of whom have been educated in the science and medical faculties of Western universities, assert that many aspects of American culture and society threaten the moral, social and political cohesion of the Islamic community (*umma*). Their ideology of alienation is more about identity and power than any pragmatic problem such as the Arab-Israeli dispute. Indeed, for many (although not all) Islamists, this conflict is not about a clash of two nationalisms that is amenable to the logic of diplomacy; rather, it constitutes a non-negotiable dispute between Muslims and Jews.

The second circle of influence consists of the immediate audience of these political/ideological leaders. This audience is made up of university students pursuing religious and secular studies, as well as professionals in law, academia, medicine, engineering and other vocations. These men and women regularly interact through networks that operate within and across professional syndicates, labor unions and other semi-official institutional arenas. While some of these people are potential recruits for the first circle, they are not necessarily irrevocably committed to the ideology of resentment. In short, this second circle consists of *ideological fence sitters*. Whether they join up or not is a function of many factors, not least of which is the question of Palestine and the fate of Iraq as well. I shall return to these points below.

The outer circle constitutes the bulk of Arab society, i.e. men and women whose chief concern is making a living, feeding their families, or simply surviving. While some members of this third circle may echo the xenophobic themes espoused by Islamist or Arab nationalist ideologues, their world-views are not *founded* on an ideology of resentment. That said, and particularly where unemployment is rife, many of the young people in this third circle constitute a potential mass base who, under conditions of regional or domestic crisis, might be mobilized by Islamist or Arab nationalist leaders. Because such mobilization comes in irregular cycles – the sudden cresting of which cannot be long sustained – such spontaneous moments of mass protest rarely pose a dire threat to the very existence of Arab regimes. Still, the cumulative effect of such protests has been to substantially widen the legitimacy gap between Arab regimes and the populace.

In the short and medium term there is not much that the U.S. can do about the inner core of Islamist and Arab nationalist ideologues who preach anti-Americanism. Their ideology is likely to persist regardless of what American officials say or do. Yet domestic and regional context that helps Islamist ideologues *sell their resentment* to the wider population is not static: such contextual factors must be addressed in ways that do two things: first, reduce the *leverage* of anti-American activists, and second, increase the leverage of Arab leaders who reject the language of hate and who support better relations with the U.S.

How can we achieve these two objectives? Here there is no doubt that substantial and rapid progress towards resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is essential. Over the last few years, especially since the collapse of the Oslo Peace Process, Arab young people have been fed a diet of horrific images of Palestinian young people dying in the streets of Ramallah and Gaza.

That these images are manipulated by pan-Arab satellite TV stations such as *al-Jazeera* to increase anti-Americanism, and/or by governments to detract attention away from their domestic shortcomings, is surely true. But long before such manipulation, the Palestine issue had become the number one issue for millions of Arabs, especially literate, middle class Arabs living in the urban arenas of Cairo, Rabat, Amman, Damascus and Kuwait City. While there will always be other social, economic, educational and political factors that render Arab youth vulnerable to anti-American demagogues, a lasting two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will help take the wind out of the sails of those who trade in hatred and resentment.

Given the importance of the Palestine issue in the Middle East, we must also recognize that an American-led war to topple Saddam Hussein is bound to deepen anti-American resentment, even if such a war sets the stage for the creation of a reasonably pluralistic government in Iraq. Unless the Bush Administration demonstrates in word and especially in deed that it is as fully committed to democracy and self determination in both Israel and Palestine as it claims to be committed to democracy and self-determination in Iraq, the U.S. may win the battle but lose the war.

Beyond the question of Palestine and Iraq, there are a host of other issues that over the long term must be addressed. As the authors of the recently published *Arab Human Development Report 2002* acknowledge, progress on revamping Arab educational systems, and a push for genuine – as opposed to contrived – democratic reforms, are essential.¹ So too are economic reforms that give non-oil producing states the means to increase production in the private sector in ways that benefit the wider society.

But beware! The short term the very quest for economic, political and educational reforms may exacerbate rather than reduce anti-Americanism. Economic reforms often deepen unemployment and social inequity, democratization (at least during its early stages) tends to mobilize *illiberal* Islamists rather than secularists or liberal Islamists, while educational reform will be resisted by many (although not all) Islamists. Given that the short-term side effects produced by the long-term medicine of reforms, over the next twelve months American policy makers must concentrate their efforts on redefining the wider political environment of the Middle East. This project cannot succeed unless the administration pushes for peace in Israel and Palestine as strongly as it seems to be mobilizing for regime change in Iraq.

The Evidence: Public Opinion in the Arab and Wider Islamic World

Overall, public opinion polls conducted in the Arab and wider Islamic world reflect an unfavorable view of the U.S. among Muslims. For example, a Gallup poll held *after* 9/11 with over 9,000 Muslims in Pakistan, Iran, Indonesia, Turkey, Lebanon, Morocco, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia produced the following results: 53 percent of those questioned indicated unfavorable opinions of the U.S, while 22 percent held favorable opinions. Fifty-eight percent of those questioned had unfavorable views of Bush, compared with 11 percent who held positive views. Moreover, while 67 percent held that the 9/11 attacks were unjustified, 77 percent held that the

¹*Arab Human Development Report, 2002*, (New York: United National Development Programme, 2002).

U.S. campaign in Afghanistan was unjustified, a view that may be explained partly by the fact that 61 percent stated that they did not believe that Arabs carried out the 9/11 attacks.

Similarly, a poll undertaken by Zogby International during Winter and early Spring 2002 highlighted the generally negative view that Muslims throughout the Islamic world have of the U.S. Unfavorable ratings of American foreign policy of over 70 percent and as high as 88 percent were found in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, Iranian and even Kuwait. In the latter case 86 percent of those polled indicated an unfavorable rating, a shocking result given the role of the U.S. played in liberating Kuwait during the 1990/91 Gulf War. Moreover, such views transcend policy issues. Substantial minorities in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, the U.A.E. and Indonesia held negative views of American democracy. Similarly, substantial minorities of up to 48 percent held negative views of American people (47 percent in Egypt, 33 percent in Lebanon, 42 percent in the U.A.E., 48 percent in Iran, and 41 percent in Indonesia), while in Saudi Arabia, 51 percent indicated negative views.

While troubling, the key question is whether such findings reflect a deeply ingrained cultural religious or even ideological chasm between “American” and “Islamic” civilizations or cultures, and/or whether they reflect responses to the American policies and/or responses to other domestic or regional conditions that, if changed, might induce a more positive view of the United States. On this critical question the polling data provides some insights. Negative views of American foreign policy are much higher than negative views of American people or culture.

Moreover, the data makes clear that American policy towards the Palestinian issue is a critical factor in such negative views. As the summary of the Zogby International poll states, “in every country but Iran, the ‘Palestinian issue’ is viewed as ‘the most’ or ‘very important’ issue facing the Arab world today.” Indeed, in Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Pakistan, it is the most important issue. Moreover, “those polled in every country except Iran would overwhelmingly react more favorably toward the U.S. if it ‘were to apply pressure to ensure the creation of an independent Palestinian state.’” Respondents in Egypt (69 percent), Saudi Arabia (87 percent), Kuwait 91 percent), Lebanon (59 percent), the U.A.E. (76 percent) and Indonesia (66 percent) demonstrated the central role of American policy towards the Palestinian issue in their overall views of the U.S.

A more recent ten nation Zogby survey, released September 17, 2002, recapitulated the above findings, while also accentuating the role of American policy towards Iraq in shaping the views of Muslims towards the U.S. The poll not only demonstrates that strong majorities in all ten nations oppose a U.S. attack on Iraq; the poll also suggests that their impression of the U.S. “would substantially increase...if the U.S. were to end sanctions against Iraq.” At the same time, majorities favor American movies, television and products, particularly in Iran, Pakistan, Lebanon, and Indonesia. This finding once again suggests that Arab attitudes are largely a function of particular conditions and policies and not a reflection of an essential cultural gap between the U.S. and the Arab Islamic world.

While the above surveys suggest that context and policy shapes public opinion rather than culture or ideology, these polls are not designed to weigh the level of commitment of different groups to a particular ideology or opinion. It is critical to distinguish between broadly

held opinions on the one hand, and deeply ingrained ideologies or world-views on the other. Those who hold the latter are full (or part time) political entrepreneurs: they exploit domestic, regional and global crises to “sell” their ideology of resentment to their immediate audiences, and in so doing, try to attract support in the populace at large. These ideologues need political leverage to be effective, and on this score, this is no doubt that they have gained considerable sway from the persistence of both the Palestinian-Israeli and Iraq-U.S. conflicts.

We must tackle three questions:

- 1) Where do these ideologues come from?
- 2) What conditions help them sell their resentment to their immediate audience and to wider public?
- 3) And what can be done to undermine their leverage and increase the leverage of Arab leaders who reject anti-Americanism?

Circle Number One: The Paradoxical Roots of Islamist Ideologies

The ideology of resentment expressed by radical and even many mainstream Islamists does not have any one primary source or cause. In the wake of 9/11, the American press was filled with stories about the role that the *madrassa* and other Islamic educational institutions play in promoting anti-American views, and even anti-Semitism. But such institutions, particularly those that promote a “jihadist” world view, are not ubiquitous in the Islamic world. They are found in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, less so in Indonesia and Malaysia, but are not widespread in Morocco, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Algeria, and Tunisia. (Indeed, in the latter two countries efforts have been made to advance a more secular and tolerant Islamic vision). As for Iran, the effort to force-feed Islamic dogma through the educational system has produced a climate more *favorable* to American culture. Islamic education is thus one factor, but it is hardly the sole or central force responsible for anti-Americanism.

Indeed, Islamist ideologues are not the products of a purely Islamic culture or education. Analyses of radical Islamists in Egypt reveal the following profile: they come from middle class or upper middle class homes, received some early traditional Islamic education but were then educated in non-religious, public schools. Many obtained college and graduate degrees in engineering, physics and medicine. In some cases, they pursued graduate studies in Britain, Germany, France and even the U.S. Yet their experiences overseas – where they isolated themselves from Western culture while nevertheless encountering it on a daily basis – reinforced their disdain for the “materialist” or “decadent” West. Their subsequent training and ideological indoctrination in Pakistan or Afghanistan constituted the icing on a multi-layered and very contradictory cake.

Islamist ideologues spurn Western culture, but in their efforts to render the nuances of Islam into a comprehensive “Islamic ideology,” they have borrowed from Western ideologies on the left and the right. Al-Qaida’s activists exemplify this phenomenon. Mohammad Atta and Dr.

Ayman al-Zawahiri advanced militant doctrines and tactics that echoed the ideologies and tactics of radical left while they dreamt of an Islamic International.ⁱⁱ

Circle Number Two: Mosque, Syndicate and Network

The ideology of resentment championed by many Islamist ideologues is not only a distinctly modern phenomenon, it is also transmitted via forms of communication, mobilization and interest representation whose very existence derives from the contradictory effects of globalization and even political liberalization. To grasp this phenomenon we must get past simplistic notions of the “Arab Street.” Islamist ideologues are not only educated professionals who bare the imprint of the West and the East; they interact through a host of professional and party organizations that are part and parcel of civil society in the Islamic world. Over the last few years professional syndicates or associations representing lawyers, doctors, engineers, academicians, public sector bureaucrats and workers have increasingly come under the control of Islamists.

This dynamic is especially pronounced in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, and to some extent Morocco. In these countries, the weakness or near irrelevancy of formal political parties leaves opposition political activists with two avenues of organization: professional syndicates and associations – many of which are funded by the state – and the mosque. The two arenas are not mutually exclusive; Islamists organize through informal networks that cut across the traditional arena of the mosque and the modern arena of the professional syndicate or association in ways that facilitate the mobilization of young people in both arenas.

Globalization and political liberalization have abetted this dynamic. Internet access, capital flows, satellite television (see below), travel between the Muslim diaspora in Europe and their home countries in the Middle East, all of these markers of globalization have enhanced the capacity of Islamist ideologues to sell their message to their immediate audiences in universities, professional syndicates, and other arenas.ⁱⁱⁱ Political reform has also enhanced the stature of *mainstream* Islamists who, while spurning the use of violence, nevertheless advocate nativist ideologies that depict American cultural influence as a “invasion” (*ghazwa*) that is corrupting and dividing Muslims. The vast majority of these Islamists are also opposed, in principle, to any

ⁱⁱOn al-Zawahiri, see Lawrence Wright, “The Man Behind Bin Laden,” *The New Yorker*, September 16, 2002, 56-85. On how the role of the Western roots of Islamic radicalism in Iran see Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini, The Struggle for Reform in Iran* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

ⁱⁱⁱHere we must emphasize the close link between Islamist radicalism and the experience of alienation and estrangement that many Islamists have gone through as a result of their experiences in the Muslim diaspora of the United States and Western Europe. See Jonathan Raban’s “My Holy War,; What do a Vicar’s Son and a Suicide Bomber Have in Common?” *The New Yorker*, February 4, 2002, at http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?020204fa_fact. Radical mosques, such as Finsbury Park mosque in London, have played a key role in providing an institutional home to alienated radical Islamists in Europe. See Alan Cowell, “At a Mosque in London, bin Laden Is Hailed as a Hero,” *New York Times*, September 13, 2002.

two-state solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict because, they argue, any such peace would legitimate the existence of a Jewish state in the heart of the Muslim *umma* or community.

Because these Islamists articulate the anger and alienation of Muslim youth, and because they have add at their disposal a network of mosques and professional institutions that facilitate the mobilization of these youth, they have emerged as the most vocal *legal* opposition throughout the Arab world. In Yemen, Jordan, Kuwait and most recently Morocco, Islamists have secured strong pluralities in parliamentary elections. Moreover, because the “liberalized autocracies” of the Arab world have not encouraged the existence of credible alternatives to illiberal, anti-Western Islamism, they have tended to create a bi-polar competitive field in which state and Islamism are in both open conflict and sometimes in implicit cooperation. The rulers of Jordan, Kuwait, Yemen and even Egypt have variously tried to silence, repress, co-opt or echo Islamists depending on the level and nature of the threat they pose. While the strategy of co-optation has sometimes discredited mainstream Islamists – the case of Algeria illustrates this point very clearly – it has also given Islamists room for maneuver that their secular competitors usually lack. This too has enhanced their capacity to sell their ideology to their immediate audience and to the wider populace as well.

The American press has devoted much time to the destructive consequences of such regime-led efforts to mimic, co-opt or manipulate the anti-Western or anti-Jewish content of Islamist ideologies, symbols or slogans. Yet the nature and scope of the problem has sometimes been misunderstood. There is no doubt that in Egypt, the Palestinian Authority – and certainly Saudi Arabia – rulers have played this game. A similar phenomenon can be seen in Yemen, Kuwait and Jordan, although it is less pronounced. The consequences have been especially unfortunate for the *Palestinians* since the demonization of Israel, and Jews more generally, has undermined support in both Israel and Palestine for a two-state solution.^{iv}

Still, with the exception of Saudi Arabia, state promotion of anti-Jewish stereotypes is largely a key – if dirty – element of regime propaganda. As it rises and falls in concert with the downs and ups of the Arab-Israeli peace process, its effects would be mitigated by a Palestinian-Israeli peace treaty that was endorsed by Arab leaders. As for Saudi Arabia, here the problem is more complicated and the consequences more severe. The alliance between a clerical elite influenced by the legacy of Wahhabi fundamentalism, and the al-Saud family – whose chief concern is survival and legitimacy – means that the regime must *both* tolerate and contain a certain level of Islamist resentment ideology. While maintaining this tricky balancing act became harder after the stationing of American troops in Saudi Arabia in 1990, the heart of the problem lies in the dualistic nature of the modern/traditional Saudi state. Because that state is here to stay, the problem must be tackled via a combination of educational reforms and wise political

^{iv}For example, in Kuwait, the mainstream Islamic Constitutional Party (ICI) – an organization that is represented by independent Islamists in the parliament– has readily promoted anti-Semitic attitudes. In a publication widely distributed by on if the ICI’s sister organization s– the Soviet for Social Reform–we are told that the “goal of globalization...is to melt away all doctrines, thoughts and ideas so nothing remains other than repressive, Jewish, Western, materialist thought.” See *Al-Awlama fi Mizan al-Islam* (Globalization in the Scales of Islam), (Kuwait: *Jam’iat al-Islah Al-Ijtima’i*, 2001), p. 11.

leadership, one that insists upon the abandonment of all hate speech while taking practical steps to dry up the “private” funding of *madrassa* schools within and beyond the Arab world.

The Third Circle: The Broader Arab Populace

The Arab world currently has a population of some 280 million, about 5 percent of the world population. Some sixty percent of this population is under the age of 20. While illiteracy rates have declined significantly, 65 million Arabs are still illiterate. Moreover, many of those who have received a basic high school or college education do not have the skills to obtain jobs that provide economic and personal security. This means that the potential universe of recruits to the ideology of resentment espoused by Islamists and Arab nationalists is very large indeed. Young people who are frustrated, bored or angry, and who tend to get their news from satellite TV stations rather than a responsible, professional press, are particularly vulnerable to the simplistic slogans of Islamist demagogues, and to the daily images of strife in various quarters of the Islamic world. This is why Arab satellite stations, particularly *al-Jazeera*, have played an important role in shaping the consciousness of Arab young people.

In drawing attention to the role of *al-Jazeera* I am not suggesting that this station has manufactured or invented the news. If this particular station did not exist, Arabs would still see images of violence on the West Bank and Gaza, or elsewhere, broadcast via CNN, BBC, and other global or regional satellite networks. The globalization of news means that one way or another the images of a riot that occurs this afternoon on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem will find their way to the living rooms of tens of thousands of young people in Rabat, Cairo or Jakarta in a matter of minutes. Thus the actual context is an issue of great importance.

That said, having watched hours of *al-Jazeera*, I have no doubt that this station has framed the news in ways that portray black and white, evil versus good images of complex conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Moreover, by regularly hosting extremist ideologues whose racist views merit no more attention than do the racist or anti-Muslim views of “White Power” or extreme-right wing Christian groups in the U.S., *al-Jazeera* has muddled the boundaries between fact and fiction. If many Arab young people today still believe that Arabs were not behind the 9/11 attacks – or worse yet, that Israelis or Jews organized it – this fantastic belief can partly be attributed to the failure of *al-Jazeera* to aggressively discredit a conspiratorial mind set that animates such beliefs.

The vulnerability of Arab youth to anti-American and anti-Jewish conspiracy theories is also due to other factors, not least of which is the absence of participatory forms of government that give young people a sense that they can control or at least influence their futures. As I have noted above, liberalized autocracy is designed to give elites a way of venting frustration. But it is no substitute for effective democratic institutions that mediate between the state and the populace in ways that represent the latter’s views in a responsible and orderly fashion. The widespread perception in Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, and Palestine that governments are fake institutions that have no links to the daily realities of the populace feeds a sense of despair and hopelessness that prepares the groundwork for ideologies of resentment towards other cultures, religions, or even nations.

While the combined effect of economic despair, failed political systems, and the globalization (and partial distortion) of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has increased the leverage of Islamist ideologues, it is doubtful that this combustible formula poses a dire threat to the existence of Arab regimes. Because most young people are busy trying to survive, because they do not regularly participate in interest associations of one kind or another, and because Arab regimes control “the street,” young people are available for rapid mobilization in street protests, university demonstrations, or mass marches. But such spontaneous outbursts are difficult to sustain and can be suppressed. Thus while an American led war to topple Saddam Hussein would trigger violent protests throughout the Arab world, unless the campaign gets bogged down in a protracted war that produces high civilian casualties rates, Arab regimes would survive.

But at what cost? Despite (or perhaps because of) the sudden rhetoric for support of Arab democracy coming from some quarters of the administration, it is likely that Arab regimes would become more *rather* than less autocratic in the wake of a war in Iraq. Confronted by a growing challenge from their Islamist opponents, they would close what few doors they have already opened. The successful establishment of some kind of pluralistic democracy in Iraq – if this were at all possible – would not deter this deliberalizing dynamic. After all, images of Khatami and his reformist allies in Iran or Hamid Karzai and his followers in post-Taliban Afghanistan have not made one iota of difference in the Arab world. Iraq may be much closer to home – a brother Arab state. But since the roots and logic of autocracy are local, they will survive and endure the creation of an American-backed post-Saddam government.

What is to Be Done?

Foreign policy and public relations (PR) are not the same thing. The word “diplomacy” conflates them, but if the U.S. is to develop an effective strategy for countering anti-American (and anti-Christian or Jewish) sentiment in the Arab world, it will have to focus less on “PR” and more on foreign policies and the regional context in which policies are implemented.

The critical question is how to design policies that reduce the *political leverage* of Islamist and Arab nationalist ideologues? Let me suggest a few short, medium and long term ideas.

In the short term we must address the regional conflicts that have created fertile ground for the purveyors of hate language. The most important of these is the Palestinian-Israeli dispute. No effort to remedy any other source of regional instability – such as Iraq – will succeed unless the administration clearly signals that it is as committed to democracy and peace in the Palestinian-Israeli arena as it claims to be in Iraq. In making this point I am not equating the two conflicts, nor suggesting that the U.S. can or should approach the two arenas in the same way. Nor, for that matter, am I arguing that Washington should postpone dealing with Iraq until it has resolved the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. But what I am suggesting is that Arab and Muslim public opinion will turn even more hostile absent a concerted effort by the administration to make it clear in word and (most of all) deed that it will follow up any military campaign in Iraq with a *concerted* peace campaign in Israel and Palestine.

In the medium term the U.S. must also address those government and media elites who have cynically traded in the hate speech and conspiracy theorizing. The U.S. has every right to

make clear to our allies in Egypt, Palestine and elsewhere that while criticisms of Israeli or American policy are legitimate, the use of racist hate language is not. In making this argument, we also need to remember that we have allies in the Arab world. Secular liberals and liberal Islamic thinkers, journalists and professors have bravely challenged hate speech in newspaper columns in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Egypt, as well as in prominent London-based Arab dailies such as *Al-Hayat*. Islamist liberals are an especially important asset, as they reject the xenophobia of their fundamentalist rivals yet speak in the name of Islam.

Another key element of any medium-term strategy should be an effort to engage the editors and producers at *al-Jazeera* in a critical dialogue about the nature and consequences of its reporting on international affairs. I do not agree with those who argue that we should simply ignore *al-Jazeera*. It is far too big and influential to be dismissed, and there are no likely competitors on the horizon that can emulate its scope of coverage or influence. Instead, American journalists, diplomats, policy makers, and academics should scrutinize its programming and editorial policies to identify those programs that give advocates of hate speech a podium to spread their ideology. We should bring our concerns directly to the producers, writers and TV journalists at *al-Jazeera*, and where possible, encourage an unfettered and sober debate between serious Arab and American thinkers and policy makers. The upcoming October 19-21, 2002 conference in Doha, organized by the Government of Qatar and the Brookings Institution, is a good example of this kind of critical engagement: covered by *al-Jazeera*, if broadcast without interference (i.e. *not* choreographed), might provide one of the first televised fora in which Americans, Arabs and Muslims from the wider Islamic world can debate the major issues affecting U.S.-Muslim relations in a productive manner. If successful, this kind of event should be repeated every four months, switching venues between the U.S. and the Arab world.

On a different level, efforts must be made to increase society-to-society exchanges between professionals, students, and journalists in the Arab world. American NGO's that work in areas such as human rights, women's rights, press freedoms, and democratic development are engaged in such efforts, but much more needs to be done. Moreover, exchanges of professionals concerned with nonpolitical issues of health, environment, drug addiction and the like would draw greater attention to many issues which are not politically controversial, but which nevertheless concern citizen activists in the Islamic world and the U.S. Again, such exchanges already exist, but they should be greatly expanded. How this can be accomplished in the context of recent changes in visa policy is a tricky question. But if the "war on terrorism" is to succeed, it cannot and should not make such society-to-society exchanges harder to initiate and sustain.

In the long term the U.S. should promote educational, economic and political reforms that help Arab reformists reshape national environments in ways that make it harder for anti-American ideologues to sell their wares. In regards to education, the issue is not so much hate speech – although this certainly should be addressed wherever such speech is promoted in text books and other educational media – but rather, the overall weakness and irrelevancy to the modern world of Arab education systems. Rote learning, a focus on patriarchal or patrimonialist values, a celebration of "Islamic" forms of government that are said to be culturally distinct from and even opposed to universal values of democracy and freedom, these are just some of the weaknesses in Arab education. That said, such changes cannot be imposed from without: we can help, but they must be initiated and pursued by Arab education reformers themselves.

Economic reforms that build market economies that make individuals and businesses masters of their own fate are essential. Thus far, economic reforms have been partial and, with few exceptions, have not touched the large public sector industries that dominate many Arab economies. Unwilling to rock the boat, Arab leaders have increasingly relied on oil rents or other forms of external payments to subsidize their economies rather than transform them. This cannot go on forever, particularly since it is expected that by 2010 the Arab world will have a population of 459 million! Still, it must be noted that in the short and even medium term, structural economic reforms create their own costs in terms of increased unemployment, higher market prices (until increased production is obtained), and devaluation of local currencies. Unless Western nations are willing to help Arab leaders create and fund vigorous social safety net programs that target the weakest elements of the population, economic reforms in the short term may produce more rather than less instability.

Finally, democratic reforms that transcend the state enforced boundaries of liberalized autocracy are also necessary^v. If illiberal Islamists have been the first to benefit from political liberalization, this is partly because they represent well organized pluralities (*not* majorities) whereas their secular or non-Islamist rivals lack the means to organize their interests. The promotion of effective, competitive party systems that limit the capacity of illiberal Islamists to impose their views is thus essential. Moreover, unless legislatures are given real authority to represent organized constituencies rather than merely debate and rubber stamp the policies of governments, “democracy” will continue to be viewed as a fake institution designed to prop up autocracy. Still, there should be no illusions as to the short-term costs of real democratization.

The comparative advantage enjoyed by illiberal Islamists today will remain for some time, and thus the U.S. may have to live with election results that give voice to opposition forces that are hardly pro-American. The creation of multi-party coalitions can help limit the consequences of such Islamist gains. But since democracy by definition entails an element of uncertainty, the U.S. must be prepared for a bumpy ride if it is serious about promoting substantive democratic reforms.

^vBrumberg, “Democratization in the Arab World? The Trap of Liberalized Autocracy,” *Journal of Democracy*, 13, No .4, Oct. 2002. http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/Dan_Brumberg.pdf
Also see Marina Ottaway, Thomas Carothers, Amy Hawthorne, Daniel Brumberg, “Democratic Mirage in the Middle East,” *Policy Brief 20*, October 2002, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, at: <http://www.ceip.org/files/pdf/Policybrief20.pdf>